NOT EVERYTHING ON THE INTERNET IS TRUE!

Posted on February 17, 2016 by Eddie

Please don't spread rubbish (I wanted to use a stronger word, but this is a family blog) like this. If you find a story which is too good to be true, it probably isn't. Do a simple Google search for some of the key names or themes in the story and check it out. Or visit Snopes and search for it there.

Category: Observations

Today, a couple of my friends posted a link to anÂ amazing story on Facebook. For reasons that will become obvious, I'm not going to post the link, but to give you a taster, here is the opening paragraph:

> *Suez| Egyptâ€™s Antiquities Ministry announced this morning that a team of underwater archaeologists had discovered that remains of a large Egyptian army from the 14th century BC, at the bottom of the Gulf of Suez, 1.5 kilometers offshore from the modern city of Ras Gharib. The team was searching for the remains of ancient ships and artifacts related to Stone Age and Bronze Age trade in the Red Sea area, when they stumbled upon a gigantic mass of human bones darkened by age.*

Fantastic news; archaeology has proved the book of Exodus.

Call me cynical, but I just had a niggling thought that this story may not be quite what it claims to be.

Let's face it, if this story is true it is hugely significant. I know that the media have a bias against Christianity, but I can't really believe that every major news outlet in the world would ignore a story like this and leave it to some website that I'd not previously heard of. At the very least, I would have expected BBC4 to have done one of its archaeology specials on the find.

Secondly, a quick look at the twitter feed of the organisation that had the story didn't exactly fill me with confidence, here are a couple of recent examples:

https://twitter.com/DiscloseTV/status/699822086202773507

https://twitter.com/DiscloseTV/status/699808244278099968

Basically, this is a bonkers, conspiracy theory website. I'm not sure that I'd want to stake the Bible's reputation on their credibility.

Having read the story, I decided to do some in depth background research. Actually,Â Â I simply googled the name of the archaeologist mentioned in the story. It took less than thirty seconds and thisÂ is what I came up with:

> *On 24 October 2014, the web site World News Daily Report (WNDR) published an article reporting that chariot wheels and the bones of horses and men had been discovered at the bottom of the Red Sea, thereby supposedly proving archaeological proof of the Biblical narrative about the escape of the Israelites from the Egyptians...*
>
> *However, if one is looking for news of an important scientific or historical discovery, World News Daily Report is not the place to look. WNDR is fake news site whose disclaimer notes that the site's articles are satirical and fictitious:*

> *World News Daily Report is a news and political satire web publication, which may or may not use real names, often in semi-real or mostly fictitious ways.* ***All news articles contained within worldnewsdailyreport.com are fiction, and presumably fake news.*** *Any resemblance to the truth is purely coincidental, except for all references to politicians and/or celebrities, in which case they are based on real people, but still based almost entirely in fiction...*
>
> *Despite WNDR's framing of the alleged "discovery" as recent and newly announced, reports of divers finding chariot wheels and the like under the Red Sea are a hoax that has been promulgated for many years now. The WNDR article's use of language such as "this morning" and its claims that a team of "underwater archeologists" in Egypt responsible for the discovery are planning to recover more artifacts from the site reinvigorated interest in the long-discredited rumor, but the details are not only fabricated, they've simply been recycled from past claims and appended with more recent dates. In October 2015, the equally dubious web site Disclose.TV once again jump-started the phony rumors by republishing the year-old fake World News Daily Report article.*

There are a couple of points here:

Firstly, it's always worth taking a few seconds to check the facts of an article you are posting on Facebook or other social media; it really doesn't take long.

Secondly, and more importantly, we risk making the Bible and our faith look silly if we refer to easily disprovable sources in order to support them. From my point of view, this story is an irrelevance, it is something that people made up to generate advertising revenue by getting gullible people to click on their website (which is why I didn't link to the original). However, there are other points of view and there are two which concern me.

- Some people will use the fact that this story is a pack of lies to insist that it shows the Bible is all made up. It's not a logical argument, but since when was the internet a place for serious discussion?
- More importantly, perhaps, many Christians grab hold of stories like this to bolster their faith in the Bible in the face of a hostile society. When the story is proved to be a hoax, their trust in Scripture is weakened.

You may feel that I'm going overboard in writing a longish (by my standards) blog post on this, but I believe it is vitally important. In a world of lies, spin and conspiracy theories, truth matters.

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