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A Cradle for Life

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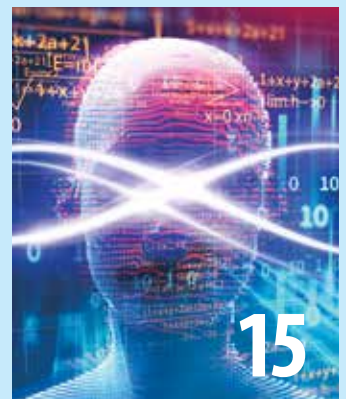
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God, Science and the Bible



Scott Ashley
Managing editor

For years we've been publishing a section titled "God, Science and the Bible" in *Beyond Today* magazine and its predecessor, *The Good News*. We've done so to help our readers see that there's no conflict between real science and the Bible, and that they in fact support and complement each other.

The Bible gives us knowledge about certain things science has not been able to discover through observation or experimentation (such as the origin of life and the universe). And scientific discoveries—at least for those with eyes to see and ears to hear—continually teach us about the astounding thinking, planning and perfection our Creator put into His handiwork that we see all around us. We explore both of these themes in the articles in this issue.

I've had a strong interest in science for as long as I can remember. Back in school I placed first in the science fair three times—with detailed cutaway models

of the various types of cells in the human body, a scale model of an American Indian mound builder village as it would've appeared around the year 1500, and an excavation report and model of an American Indian cave shelter that I and my family had helped excavate as a project of the local archaeological society (of which we were members).

Interestingly, both of those fields of science—biology and archaeology—led me to a firm belief in God and that the Bible is His inspired revelation to mankind. Both of these great truths became clearly evident when I examined the evidence.

Examining the evidence led many giants and pioneers of science to affirm their belief in the God of the Bible. In fact, it was belief in an ordered universe by the hand of a Creator that propelled them to rational scientific investigation. Notice what some of them had to say:

The Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543), whose idea that the earth revolves around the sun profoundly impacted science, wrote: "For who, after applying himself to things which he sees established in the best order and directed by divine ruling, would not through contemplation of them and through a certain habituation be awakened to that which is best and would not admire the Artificer of all things, in whom is all happiness and every good?"

Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) was an Italian astronomer, mathematician and physicist whose astronomical observations revolutionized man's view of the universe. He noted:



Several scientific giants who were firm believers in God and the Bible: from left, Nicolaus Copernicus, Galileo Galilei, Johann Kepler, William Harvey and Sir Isaac Newton.


"When I reflect on so many profoundly marvelous things that persons have grasped, sought, and done I recognize even more clearly that human intelligence is a work of God, and one of the most excellent."

Johann Kepler (1571-1630), German astronomer and mathematician who formulated the laws of planetary motion, was a key figure in the 17th-century science revolution. An early user of the telescope, he saw order and planning in the movements of heavenly bodies that reflected their Creator. He observed: "Geometry . . . [is] coeternal with God . . . and reflecting in the Divine mind has supplied God with the examples . . . for the furnishing of the world so that it became the best and most beautiful, and [even] also the most similar to the Creator."

William Harvey (1578-1657) was an English physician, anatomist and physiologist who discovered how the circulatory system functions. A pioneer of the scientific method, his work affected scientific research for centuries. His studies of human and animal anatomy led him to conclude: "We

acknowledge God, the Supreme and Omnipotent Creator, to be present in the production of all animals . . . All things are indeed contrived and ordered with singular providence, divine wisdom, and most admirable and incomprehensible skill."

Scientific pioneer Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1726) was an English mathematician, physicist and astronomer best known for formulating laws of motion and gravitation. Not coincidentally, he was also a theologian of note. Reflecting on the intersection of science and theology, he commented: "As a blind man has no idea of colours, so have we no idea of the manner by which the all-wise God perceives and understands all things . . . We know Him only by His most wise and excellent contrivances of things and final causes; we admire Him for His perfections, but we reverence and adore Him on account of His dominion, for we adore Him as His servants."

A great deal of our understanding of our planet, solar system and universe rests on the foundational work of scientific giants like these. They saw no conflict between God, science and the Bible, and neither should we. We encourage you to read all the articles that follow to gain a deeper understanding of these issues! 



When we look around, can we still wonder and appreciate the amazing creation we see at every level? So much has been carefully designed for us to enjoy. And most importantly, it can strengthen our faith!

by Mario Seiglie

In the first chapter of Genesis, the Bible majestically describes the three great acts of creation: (1) the universe, including the earth (Genesis 1:1); (2) a restitution of the earth following devastation with new plant and animal life (Genesis 1:2-25); and (3) human beings (Genesis 1:26-27).

After raising the continents from a vast ocean of water, God filled the earth with a variety of living things that now populate every nook and cranny of the planet. When He commanded the living creatures to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the sea, and let the birds multiply on the earth” (Genesis 1:21-22), He was not exaggerating!

We often take all of this for granted, accustomed to seeing the astounding gamut of life, from the tiny ant to the huge elephant or the gigantic whale.

Can we fully appreciate the care and precision that it took to put all of this together? It is compelling evidence for the existence of God and for creationism—the belief that God created the universe. We can see that creation and its creatures were not a lucky accident, as atheistic evolution teaches, but that the universe is a carefully designed masterpiece of the Creator God.

Years ago, I was struck by a statement from two French scientists known as the Bogdanov twins. Asked in an interview *why* there is such order in the universe, they answered:

“This is a fundamental question. The most striking feature of the universe is that *order began from the very start*—at its initial stage. According to some physicists, *everything occurs as if mankind was born in a universe ‘created for them,’* in effect, *intentionally designed* for human beings. *It is similar to preparing a bedroom before the birth of a baby*” (“The Universe Was Not Born From Chance,” *Le Point*, June 10, 1991, emphasis added throughout).

So how is the universe a “cradle” for human life and all other physical life? Let’s go over some key scientific findings. The evidence certainly points to a Creator God.

Light—our life-sustaining source

When we wake up in the morning, sunlight begins to seep through the windows. Then, once outside, we are warmed by the same sun.

Yet few realize how incredibly special is the light

and heat that arrive on earth in the precise amount and type to sustain life. Of all the vast ranges of solar energy possible to bathe the earth, ours happens to be of just the correct wavelength and quantity to produce beneficial effects on life.

Notes astronomer Guillermo Gonzalez: “Our atmosphere participates in one of the most extraordinary coincidences known to science: an eerie harmony among the range of wavelengths of light emitted by the Sun, transmitted by Earth’s atmosphere, converted by plants into chemical energy, and detected by the human eye . . .

“The near-ultraviolet, visible, and near-infrared spectra—the light most useful to life and sight—are a razor-thin sliver of the universe’s natural, electromagnetic emissions: about one part in 10^{25} [or one in 10 trillion trillion]. That is much smaller than one star out of all the stars in the entire visible universe, about 10^{22} [or one in 10 billion trillion]” (*The Privileged Planet*, 2004, p. 66).

What would happen if the light and heat radiated from the sun did not fall within this minuscule range of possibilities?

“Our amazement grows further,” adds biochemist Michael Denton, “when we note that not only is the radiant energy in this tiny region *the only radiation of utility to life* but that radiant energy in most other regions of the spectrum is *either lethal or profoundly damaging*. Electromagnetic radiation from gamma rays through X rays to ultraviolet rays is all harmful to life . . .

“Moreover . . . this fitness [of light] is not merely for simple microbial life, but for the complex organisms *such as ourselves*. It is fit to provide the warmth upon which all life on the earth’s surface depends. It is fit for photosynthesis, which generates the reduced carbon fuels, whose oxidation provides energy for all complex life on earth, and it is fit for vision, the key adaptation [according to evolutionary perspective] through which our own species gained knowledge of the world” (*Nature’s Destiny*, 1998, pp. 53, 70).

Light is a type of energy that is not completely understood by physicists. In any case, without light there would be no life, and so it is a prerequisite for life.

Consequently, it is quite appropriate to read in the account of God making the world habitable for life, “Then God said, ‘Let there be *light*, and

A glowing, translucent baby is shown in profile, floating in a vast, colorful universe filled with stars and nebulae. The baby's arms and legs are raised, reaching towards a bright cluster of stars. The background is a rich tapestry of blue, red, and orange light, suggesting a deep space environment.

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there was light” (Genesis 1:3, emphasis added throughout).

Water—the miraculous liquid

After light comes another wonder—*water* with its uncanny characteristics.

Drinking, washing, cleaning, sustaining crops, having our blood flowing and many other bodily processes—all of these have in common the multiple ways water is essential for all of us.

Scientists are awed by the unique features of water that permit life to flourish. For instance, just before it freezes, water does an about-face at 39°F (4°C) and, unlike other solidifying liquids, begins to *expand* instead of contract—thus becoming *less dense* as it converts into ice. If this were not so, when a lake or river froze over, the ice formed at the top would keep sinking to the bottom, and eventually the lake or river would be frozen solid, killing fish and other life and preventing thawing in the spring. It would prove fatal to the chain of life on earth.

Furthermore, water also has a surprising quality when it turns into a gas. Though water is 800 times heavier than air, when it evaporates it mixes with other gases in earth’s atmosphere. Suspended water droplets form clouds that cover more than half the earth’s atmosphere. This makes the miracle of life-sustaining rain possible.

Another amazing property of water is how gently but effectively it acts as a solvent. While easily dissolving an enormous variety of substances, it is not, unless unusually propelled into fast motion, strong enough to wear down the rocky cliffs by the seashore—otherwise all the continents would have long ago crumbled into the sea.

“It turns out that, as a solvent, water is indeed ideally fit,” notes Denton, “so much so that water approaches far nearer than any other liquid to the alkahest, the universal mythical solvent of the alchemists. This is a property of critical importance to water’s biological role . . . What is so very remarkable about the various physical properties of water . . . is not that each is so fit in itself, but the astonishing way in which, in many instances, several independent properties are adapted to serve cooperatively the same biological end” (pp. 31, 40).

Did all of the peculiar but wondrous characteristics of water just happen by chance? Or were they *designed*?

Denton remarks: “Although water is one of the most familiar of all substances, its remarkable nature never fails to impress . . . Water forms the fluid in which occur all the vital chemical and physical activities upon which life on earth depends. Without water, life that exists on the earth would be impossible . . . Most organisms are made up of more than 50 percent water; in the case of man, water makes up more than 70 percent of the weight of the body . . . As far as the thermal properties are concerned, water would appear to be *uniquely*, and in many different ways, *ideally* adapted for life on earth” (pp. 22, 30).

Scientists still puzzle over the *origin* of the enormous



quantity of water on earth, covering 70 percent of its surface, and they also wonder where all the salt came from to produce the precise ratio found in saltwater that acts as an antiseptic and sustainer of life in the sea.

Genesis 1 tells us simply, “Thus *God made* the firmament [atmosphere], and *divided the waters* which were under the firmament from the *waters* which were above the firmament [the clouds]; and *it was so*” (verse 7).

Carbon—the matrix for life

When we think of carbon, maybe the first thing that comes to mind is coal, which is made mostly of carbon. Yet, carbon is an amazing element that forms the chemical backbone for all living things. Scientists use the term *carbon-based life* to emphasize the importance of this substance in living things. It is another marvel of design.

“A house is built up from wood, brick, stone, and metal components,” explains Denton. “In the case of living organisms, the basic chemical building blocks utilized in their



be carefully balanced between just enough and not too much because carbon, though essential for life, can also be destructive to life. Too much carbon translates into too much carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, and methane. In large quantities, these gases are poisonous. In modest quantities, their greenhouse properties keep the planet sufficiently warm for life. In larger quantities, they can heat a planet's surface beyond what physical life can tolerate" (*Why the Universe Is the Way It Is*, 2008, p. 28).

Note how the Bible mentions that life came from the very compounds of the earth made by God, which include this vital carbon: "Then God said, 'Let the *earth* bring forth the *living creatures* according to its kind, cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind'; and it was so" (Genesis 1:24).

The size of living things—not an accident

We take for granted the size of the living things we see around us, but, as scientists have discovered, these have been carefully created with the optimal dimensions, given their different functions.

"The physiologist Knut Schmidt-Nielsen considered the question," writes Dr. Denton, "of whether or not the blue whale weighing 100 million grams (110 tons,) the giant redwoods (1 billion grams or 1,100 tons) and the smallest existing organism, the mycoplasma, are close to the actual limits on what is possible and concluded, 'There are cogent reasons to believe that the smallest and the largest organisms represent approximate limits to the possible size of animals under the conditions that prevail on our planet'" (p. 309).

Scientists talk about constraints or limiting factors in these regards. If a biological structure exceeds or falls short of the range allowable by the physical laws that govern it,

it simply will not work.

For instance, the method of delivery of oxygen to living creatures falls into two categories—the circulatory system for vertebrates and the tracheal system for invertebrates such as insects and spiders.

Dr. Denton adds: "There are also firm grounds for believing that in the case of certain basic structural and physiological systems, such as oxygen delivery systems, skeletal systems, and excretory systems, *all* design possibilities have been exhaustively exploited . . . There is nothing in the slightest 'accidental' about the fact that it is the larger vertebrates that use the circulatory system, while the tracheal system is utilized by the much smaller arthropods . . . The largest insects are in fact close to the maximum size possible for an organism obtaining oxygen via a tracheal system . . ."

He concludes marveling at such variety: "It is impossible not to be struck by the enormous functional, structural, and behavioral diversity manifested by life on earth. Is it conceivable that there could be a world of life more varied . . . than the one existing on our watery planet? From the tiniest bacterial cell to the immensity of the blue whale . . . *our senses reel before the fantastic panoply [wide array] of carbon-based life forms which clothes the earth*" (pp. 302, 311).

From so many examples of carefully balanced physical properties all around us, it's clear that **God prepared our universe as a "cradle" for life.**

construction are organic compounds—molecules composed of the atom *carbon* (C), in combination with a handful of other atoms . . . The world of *life* is very much *the product of the compounds of carbon*. All the machinery of the cell, and *all* the vital structures of living organisms from the molecular to the morphological [physical shape] level, are constructed from the compounds of carbon . . ."

"Carbon is so uniquely fit for its biological role, its various compounds so vital to the existence of life, that we may repeat the aphorism, 'If carbon did not exist, it would have to be invented'" (pp. 104, 116).

Some writers have envisioned life on other planets having another chemical basis, such as silicon. Yet the more that's known about other possible substances as the foundation for life, the more carbon is found to be the *only* element that fulfills the requirements.

As astronomer Hugh Ross concludes about carbon and the just-right amount of it in the universe: "Without carbon, *physical life is impossible*. No other element displays the rich chemical behavior needed to form the range of complex molecular structures life requires. Given that physical life must be carbon-based, why would God make a universe with so little carbon?"

"Researchers have found that the quantity of carbon must

Yes, virtually every square inch of this earth is teeming with life. Yet all the world's laboratories have not been able to create anything close!

While Denton describes the *fact* of the awesome variety in this vibrant world, we read of its *cause* in Genesis 1: "So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth'" (verses 21-22).

Foresight—the creation of organic backup systems

Some people fear flying in a plane. The idea of being up thousands of feet above the ground can send shivers down their spines. Yet about 4 million people around the world take flights



"And God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.'"

every day, and very rarely does something go wrong. Why?

Two of the reasons are: (1) man has been able to harness the physical laws of flight, and (2) people have carefully designed and built backup systems so that if one device fails, there is another to take its place. Engineers call this *redundancy*. For instance, the space shuttle launched by the United States for the last time in 2011 had five backup computers to ensure its navigational system.

Similarly, the more that's known about life, the more redundant systems are found to protect organisms from minor errors that could destroy them. It throws a real monkey wrench into the idea of evolution through chance mutation.

Denton notes: "And it seems increasingly that it is not only individual genes that are redundant, but rather that the phenomenon may be *all-pervasive* in the development of higher organisms, existing at *every level* from individual genes to the most complex developmental processes . . . Now

this phenomenon poses an additional challenge to the idea that organisms can be radically transformed as a result of a succession of small independent changes, as Darwinian theory [of evolution] supposes . . .

"In other words, the greater the degree of redundancy, the greater the need for *simultaneous* mutation to effect evolutionary change and the more *difficult* it is to believe that evolutionary change could have been engineered without intelligent direction. Redundancy also increases the difficulty of genetic engineering, as it means that the *compensatory changes* that must inevitably accompany any desired change must be necessarily increased" (pp. 338-339).

We see the bounteous and carefully designed life on earth reproducing within special created-kind boundaries described once more in Genesis 1: "And God *created* great sea creatures and *every* living thing that moves, with which the waters *abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth . . . And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good'"* (verses 21-25).

Evidence all around us

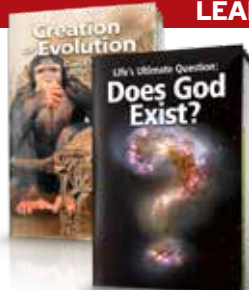
In sum, from the many striking examples of carefully fine-tuned physical properties that are all around us, we can conclude that God did prepare the universe and the earth, just as the Bible describes, as a "cradle" for life—and especially for mankind. How many thanks should we give to our Heavenly Father and His Son for all of this!

Romans 1:20 assures us: "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse" (New

International Version).

Indeed, with all the wealth of evidence we see more and more, we can better understand why Psalm 14:1 declares, as rendered in the Contemporary English Version, "Only a fool would say, 'There is no God!'" BT

LEARN MORE



The world increasingly denies the existence of God, but what does the evidence really say? You need to know! To learn more, download or request your free copy of *Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?* and *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?*

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Sound Science and the Bible

DO THEY CONFLICT?

Science has advanced a great deal since the days of Darwin. If we knew then what we know now, would some of today's bad science—rooted in flawed philosophy rather than firm facts—have ever been believed and accepted?

by Steven Britt, Ph.D.

School children today are routinely taught that we live in an expanding universe that is around 14 billion years old. This perspective is so widespread that it's strange to realize that it represented a dramatic upheaval in the fields of physics and astronomy about 100 years ago!

Just 150 years ago, the idea of evolution was popularized in Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, and, along with it, the underpinning of a fully secular explanation for the origin and diversity of life on earth. Subsequent developments in the fields of microbiology, genetics and biochemistry have been incorporated into the theory of evolution, but not without revealing an overwhelming degree of complexity and diversity that brings the viability of the theory itself into serious question.

Additionally, the modern academic reckoning of the age of the universe puts a hard limit on the amount of time available for the supposed natural processes of evolution to occur, and no well-established findings have explained this glaring discrepancy.

Taken altogether, the last 150 years of scientific discovery undeniably point to a Creator—and not just any Creator! These advancements confirm certain *biblical* statements about God's creation of both the universe and the life we see.

However, this has not lessened objections and denial by secular thinkers, which has ironically resulted in ever-more outlandish and improbable explanations rooted not in scientific fact, but in philosophical approaches that deny even the possibility of a divine Creator!

In the ongoing struggle for sound science, why does it seem that the great minds of humanity today cannot come to terms with the existence of God?

Observation and expanding horizons

Observation is a fundamental component of science. Once a phenomenon is observed, a hypothesis can be proposed and tested, data collected, models constructed and theories established. It's a tedious, rigorous and slow process—yet simultaneously an exciting and enlightening one!

To observe, in the scientific sense, means to inspect or take note of details with the goal of identifying patterns and extrapolating rules that govern the behavior of a system. Human beings are hardwired for pattern recognition—it's an integral part of how our brains make sense of the input from our eyes, ears and other senses on a daily basis, and is fundamental to how we break down and understand language. Our amazing capacity for abstract thought and reason, coupled with the aptitude for noticing patterns, gives us the ability to assemble knowledge and develop understanding of the natural world.

Yet there are clear limitations on our ability to observe. Therefore, one driving force in the advancement of science is the development of *tools* that augment our powers of perception. The telescope extended our power of sight so that we could make exciting observations about the universe that were previously unattainable, literally bringing new worlds to our attention. Likewise, the microscope enhanced what we can perceive on small scales to the cellular level and far beyond, even to



the atomic level in modern times—revealing new worlds in the metaphorical sense all around us!

And it certainly doesn't end with enhancements to our sight. We've developed tools that can perceive electromagnetic waves, magnetic fields, seismic activity, heat signatures, the presence of various chemical compounds and much more!

The story of scientific advancement, therefore, is about not just thought and experimentation, but also the invention of new *observational tools* that serve up entirely new phenomena to investigate. For this reason, advances in technology frequently accompany, complement and stimulate advancements in science.

Scientific success: from a static universe to the Big Bang

Researchers can certainly be forgiven for not noticing something imperceptible to them, as has often been the case in the history of science. The discovery that the universe is expanding is a striking example of how observation fails in the absence of the right instruments of measurement.

Until recent history, all available data supported the common assumption of a static universe, and the idea went largely unchallenged. Under the steady state universe model, space was thought to exist in a fixed state infinitely in all directions, with time likewise extending infinitely into both the future and the past. This concept of the universe fails on two critical and interrelated points that are now for the most part uncontested—that space itself can either expand or contract and that the universe had a beginning point in time.

The static universe thus had great appeal to secular thinkers who wanted to exclude God from their concept of reality. According to their theory, the universe had no beginning and therefore required no Creator to begin it!

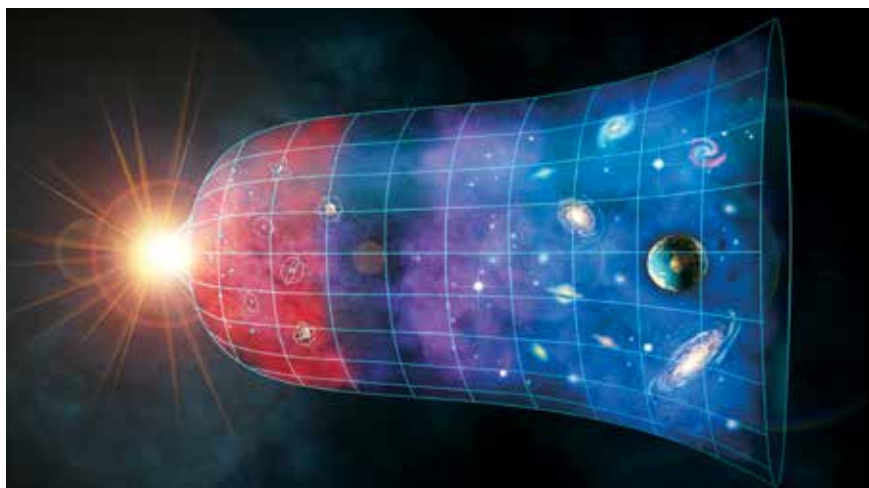
In 1915, Albert Einstein, perhaps the most renowned scientific figure in all history, introduced equations that upended the simpler Newtonian worldview that had prevailed for more than 200 years. However, he noticed a strange quirk: The universe did not seem to be static!

His equations appeared to show that space itself was *expanding* rather than sitting fixed in place. That conclusion flew in the face of conventional thought, and he was so opposed to the idea that in 1917 he famously added, solely to conform to the idea of a static universe, a “fudge factor” known as the cosmological constant to cancel out the calculated expansion completely and maintain a static nature in his description of the universe.

Over time Einstein's cosmological constant was investigated further. It's a beautiful example of what the scientific method can achieve when properly heeded, because suddenly people were asking a new question: If the universe *were* expanding, how could we tell?

Astronomer Edwin Hubble formulated a way to do so by observing the wavelengths of light from distant stars. In 1930, Hubble's analysis revealed that distant stars appeared redder than they should due to the Doppler effect, the property of physics that makes a car sound different to a stationary

observer as it passes. Just as the sound waves are distorted based on the relative velocity, the degree of “red shift” of distant galaxies indicated they were moving away at increasing



Science has come to grasp a fundamental truth recorded in Genesis thousands of years ago: *The universe had a beginning.*

velocities based on their distance. Hubble's red shift is the cornerstone observational evidence confirming Einstein's theoretically predicted expanding universe.

With the expansion of the universe on solid ground, the next logical step was that this expansion must have started from some point—now known to us as the Big Bang. At long last, modern science was brought back to a fundamental truth encoded in the very first verse of the Bible—the universe had a beginning point in time. As stated in Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

Through further experiments, measurements of the most distant visible light from stars and other factors, scientists have now estimated that the universe began about 14 billion years ago as a tiny, dense ball of concentrated energy that suddenly expanded, stretching out in every direction, changing and maturing until stars and planets were eventually formed.

The afterglow of this expansion, known as the cosmic microwave background, was observed by sensitive radio telescopes in 1964, and physicists have been hard at work ever since trying to piece together exactly how and why the Big Bang happened.

Before this pivotal shift in understanding, people never noticed that the universe was expanding. Not only did they lack the tools that could observe this expansion, but they also were so comfortable with the idea of a static universe that they felt no reason to attempt to verify it. Likewise, the constraints and limits of human observation, alongside a rejection of what Scripture reveals, contributed to the rise of the theory of evolution around 50 years before the debut of Einstein's general theory of relativity.

Darwin's observations and evolution

In 1859, Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* was

published, with its central thesis of evolution through natural selection. As Darwin traveled the Galapagos Islands, his critical insight was that the finches on each island had different characteristics based on available food sources and other factors unique to the island they resided on.

He realized that a few finches must have first come to the islands in some way, and that the diversity in the finch populations developed over time from those original birds. Thus the concept of natural selection was born, as he reasoned that the birds with the most advantageous traits for their particular environment thrived and passed on those traits.

However, Darwin didn't stop at simple natural selection and the adaptation of a creature to its environment, but made a rather extreme extrapolation. He proposed that *all* creatures might come from a few common ancestors or just one!

In an 1871 letter to Joseph Hooker, he disclosed his private thoughts for life's origin apart from a Creator God: "But if (and oh! what a big if!) we could conceive in some warm little pond with all sorts of ammonia and phosphoric salts,—light, heat, electricity, etc. present, that a protein compound was chemically formed ready to undergo still more complex changes . . ." (quoted by Monica Grady, *Evidence*, Andrew Bell, John Swenson-Wright, Karin Tybjerg, editors, 2008, p. 81).

This became the foundation for the idea of *abiogenesis*—that in some "warm little pond," life spontaneously assembled from a dense mixture of just the right materials that arrived there at random. As you might have gathered from his words, Darwin himself was skeptical of the notion!

Kind reproduces after kind

Darwin knew nothing about genetics. His method of gathering data was quite crude. He drew pictures of similar-

looking birds until it dawned on him that creatures have some ability to adapt to their environment over generations.

Given that this was the quality of observational data available to him at the time, his proposition of tracing all species, including man, back to a single simple organism that sprang up in a "warm little pond" was utterly unwarranted. However, it took root in the minds of those who wished to find a material naturalist cause for the origin and development of life that leaves God out of the picture!

The Bible is not at all contrary to the principle of adaptation by natural selection that Darwin observed, which is known as *microevolution*. The Genesis account states a truth that scientific evidence confirms—that every life form, from plants to animals to man, reproduces "according to its kind" (Genesis 1:11). In other words, from that original small flock of finches that arrived in the Galapagos Islands came a diversity of different subtypes of finches—but those finches always reproduced "according to their kind," never resulting in something that *wasn't* a bird!

On the other hand, the principle of *macroevolution* suggests that a simple organism like a bacteria can eventually become a completely different and more complex creature like a frog, bird, tiger or elephant after a sufficient number of generations. This is not only contrary to biblical teaching, but is also *not supported by scientific observation or evidence whatsoever*. Indeed, the idea was born from using the same type of crude visual comparison Darwin originally made, such as the classic progression of images that show an ape coming to walk upright as it evolved into man.

Today, nearly 160 years beyond *On the Origin of Species*, the prevailing secular scientific worldview pushes a narrative that clings to Darwin's unsupported suggestions of simple

Even More Amazing Discoveries About the Universe

The unraveling of the universe's mysteries certainly did not end with Albert Einstein, Edwin Hubble and the discovery of the Big Bang. It seems that the further scientists investigate the universe, the more evident it becomes that life as we know it could not exist in a universe that was even slightly different. This has come to be known as the "anthropic principle"—the fact that the universe appears to be finely tuned to support human life.

The late physicist Stephen Hawking made a rather startling admission of this fact in his famous book *A Brief History of Time*: "The laws of science, as we know them at present, contain many fundamental numbers, like the size of the electric charge of the electron and the ratio of the masses of the proton and the electron . . . The remarkable fact is that the values of

these numbers seem to have been very finely adjusted to make possible the development of life" (1996, p. 129, emphasis added).

How do these "fundamental numbers" influence the universe's potential for life? For one, it's noted the strength of various physical forces determined the rate of expansion of the universe. If it had expanded too quickly, we would have a universe sparsely scattered with gases but no stars or planets—and thus no life as we know it. If it expanded too slowly, the rate of formation of black holes would be much higher, again making the universe totally inhospitable.

Further, as stars burn hydrogen to produce light, nuclear fusion takes place to form carbon, nitrogen and oxygen, and all of the other elements that are essential to life as well as the foundations of a planet to host it. These fusion reactions intimately depend on the strength of the strong nuclear

force—another fundamental number—and a small change in its value would mean that these reactions could not take place.

Scientists explain that these and many other physical constants—*hundreds* of them, by some assessments—all have to be set within very narrow ranges for this elaborate, ages-long process of planet formation to play out just the right way to provide a life-supporting environment.

We are then faced with the incredible number of ways that the universe could conceivably have formed that would not have supported the formation of stars and planets at all—let alone complex life! According to physicist Paul Davies, "There is now broad agreement among physicists and cosmologists that the universe is in several respects 'fine-tuned' for life" ("How Bio-Friendly Is the Universe?" *International Journal of Astrobiology*, April 2003).

life beginning by chance in a warm little pond and eventually developing into human life by macroevolution.

The contributions of new fields of study, rather than being weighed evenly, were often *interpreted through this lens*. When looking at the contributions of genetics and biochemistry, one finds great discord between actual scientific observation and this atheistic agenda—and the contradictions come fully to light when coupled with the understanding that the universe began 14 billion years ago.

Genetics and biochemistry: What does the evidence say?

If natural selection seems like a painfully obvious truth today, it's due to the overall increase in knowledge about the natural world. We now know many basic truths that Darwin didn't—namely, that the different traits he saw in finches were genetically encoded in the DNA of the parent birds.

The field of genetics offered a mechanism that seemed to have the power to explain Darwin's enormous leap of faith toward macroevolution. Whereas Darwin suggested that all life forms shared common ancestors, the study of genetics eventually led to suggestions that random mutation in genes, through which hereditary traits are passed on, could sometimes cause small changes that, if advantageous, would be passed on by natural selection.

Without regard to practical reality, random mutation was married to natural selection as the engine of evolution. This was finally seen by many as a clearing of the final biological hurdle in explaining how life evolved and grew in complexity with no need for a Creator.

It tells a story that sounds believable on the surface—but does it stand up to reason and available facts? Let's examine the evidence.

Biochemistry has revealed just how immensely complicated even simple life forms are—that there really is no such thing as “simple” life! If evolution were true, it must take place not at the *visual* level, as Darwin noted the changes in finches' beaks over generations, but at the *cellular* and *molecular* levels.

Irreducibly complex systems

As complex and diverse as life looks to the naked eye, it is *many thousands of times more complex* under a microscope. How did the finch's cells (or any living cells, for that matter) develop the ability to regulate the delicately balanced feedback mechanisms by which only certain molecules pass through cell membranes? Or the intracellular transport systems that carry molecules from cells in one part of the body to a specific destination in another?

These questions are far more fundamental than how finch ancestors developed a structure like a beak or the acute senses of taste and smell, and it turns out they are not any easier to answer. The difficulty comes down to the existence of *irreducibly complex systems*—like little ready-made molecular machines that assemble themselves and perform tasks crucial to the cells in which they reside.

An irreducibly complex system is one that would fail to operate if any one of its multiple components were absent or not functional. Simple logic dictates that such a system cannot develop gradually through random mutations but must necessarily come together all at once in order to function at all.

Consider that a car will not function in the early stages of the assembly of its parts. And it still would not work even if the car were fully formed and functional in every way *except* that the wheels were square and wouldn't turn.

Notice further that we're not talking about a car without wheels, but with something already very close to wheels. The fact that it's close doesn't matter because the car is not functional. And when it comes to living creatures, functionality is critical to survival and would be necessary for passing new biological features on to successive generations in an evolutionary process.

Irreducibly complex biological systems must be formed together *all at once*, raising the bar for the “random mutation” hypothesis *insurmountably high*.

Possibilities, probabilities and reality

Random mutation is a very rare event. Out of the 3 billion base pairs of the human genome, only about one mutated base pair is expected in the transmission of genetic information from parents



to a child. If we personalize this fact, you can imagine that each person has a single base pair mutation, much like picking a single number on a lottery ticket. In this analogy, the lottery ticket represents a specific gene with an advantageous function, and the numbers are base pairs of which the gene is composed.

Human genes can contain thousands or millions of base pairs each, but let's assume that an advantageous gene is only 2 base pairs away. While that sounds easy, the odds in this lottery are utterly absurd. The probability of getting a *single* correct mutation is 1 in 3 billion—10 times worse than the chance of winning most state lotteries! Since the entire human race of 7 billion people is playing, the reality is that a few people would get one of the two needed mutations in our fictitious genetic lottery after just one generation—but it is almost certain that no one will ever get a winning ticket.

The probability of a future descendant gaining the other correct base pair is again 1 in a billion, but now only the few who have inherited one of the winning mutations are still playing, not the full human population. Ignoring population growth for the sake of simplicity, this means that it would take about *one billion generations* of human beings to get a single winner!

Since human generations are about 25 years long, even this extremely simplified case would take about *25 billion years*. The reality is certainly much bleaker—a genetic lottery ticket may well have dozens or hundreds of numbers to be matched, and dozens of genes may be involved in gaining a useful function.

The constraining factor is obviously *time*. Most scientists today consider the universe to be around 14 billion years old, as noted earlier, with the earth somewhat younger at about 4.5 billion years old. Most believe life on earth to have begun about 3.5 billion years ago in a “warm little pond.” And this is where the mathematical probabilities further demonstrate the absurdity of Darwin’s macroevolution proposition. As unimaginably long as 3.5 billion years is, it is still nowhere near enough time for the mechanisms proposed by evolution to successfully develop even a *single* irreducibly complex system!

However, there is yet more improbability in this story. Not only does macroevolution fail to explain how very simple life forms became very complex ones in the estimated time

never been observed—and not for lack of trying!

The Miller-Urey Experiment in 1952 has at times been offered as evidence of abiogenesis—life arising from nonliving matter. However, the reality falls utterly short of such a claim. The experiment began with a mixture like what Darwin suggested—water, methane, ammonia and hydrogen swirled in a flask with sparks of electricity applied to simulate lightning.

Not a single life form was generated, yet the results have been heralded as evidence that life could spring from nothing. The only thing produced were some amino acids—chemical compounds that are certainly essential for life and used by living organisms, but that in no way resemble a functional living organism that can self-replicate.

Furthermore, the limited success of this experiment was only after many *failed* experiments with slightly different balances of the chemical soup involved. In other words, they couldn’t even produce these building blocks of life without *designing* a delicate and finely tuned environment!

Leaps of faith to wrong conclusions

So why is there a rush to jump to such a weakly supported conclusion as abiogenesis? In fact, when

considering again the probabilities involved in the formation of a “simple” first life form capable of self-replicating, the numerous hurdles involved point to the inescapable conclusion that *it would take far more time than the 14 billion years commonly accepted as the age of the universe*, and even many times that.

This problem of origins is equally potent in physics. Just as the question of how life came from lifeless material has befuddled biologists, the question of how something came from nothing plagues physicists. Recall that the perspective-altering consequence of the Big Bang was that the universe *had a beginning*, which begs the question: If matter and the universe did not simply always exist, then how and why did they come into being? In other words, how can something come from nothing in the absence of any reason or cause?

Stephen Hawking, the recently deceased physicist regarded as the greatest scientific mind of our generation, wrote the following unsatisfying answer in his 2010 book *The Grand Design*:

“Because there is a law like gravity, the universe can and will create itself from nothing. . . . Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing, why the universe exists, why we exist. It is not necessary to invoke God” (p. 180).

But there is no sense at all in such a statement, for it simply raises the question of *why the law of gravity itself exists*, where it came from, and why the universe seems tailor-made for life. And further, such laws have no creative power to generate something from nothing!

Observing the invisible God

The apostle Paul left us his assessment of those who fail to recognize that there is a Creator: “[They] suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his

Biochemistry has revealed just how immensely complicated even simple life forms are—in other words, there really is no such thing as “simple” life!

available, but it doesn’t even touch the equally tricky issue of how those simple life forms first got their start!

The problem of origins

The material naturalist explanations of life and the universe hinge on questions of origin. Exactly how did life develop from unorganized, lifeless chemicals?

Just decades before Darwin, the microbiologist Louis Pasteur conducted a series of experiments that struck down the long-standing fallacy of “spontaneous generation”—the biological equivalent of the physicists’ “something from nothing” dilemma. Spontaneous generation is a strong form of *abiogenesis*—the idea that life can come into existence on its own from nonliving matter.

Yeast, for example, was thought to simply appear out of thin air since no one could see evidence of it until after it had grown. After all, in the absence of microscopes to show life existing at a scale not visible to the naked eye, this was how it seemed!

Pasteur showed that yeast would not grow in an uncontaminated, sealed container—in other words, that life did not just come out of thin air, but that it must already be present for the yeast to “appear.” He thus established the principle of *biogenesis*, which says that *life can only come from preexisting life*. This revolutionary discovery was the backdrop against which Darwin’s work came, and is perhaps why Darwin himself was unwilling to seriously propose that life on earth originated from nonliving materials, having only speculated so in his private letter.

The principle of biogenesis stands in clear opposition to the idea that life arises from nonliving matter. Experiments since that time have universally affirmed biogenesis—that life comes only from existing life.

This returns us yet again to the matter of observation, the lifeblood of science, where we find that the spontaneous generation of simple life forms from nonliving materials has



eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse” (Romans 1:18-20, New International Version).

Macroevolution and abiogenesis are just not true, and they do not represent good science. Neither phenomenon has ever been observed, and both are crippled by the inability to account for how life came to exist within the relatively short age of the universe.

Yet, in spite of the complete absence of evidence—and even evidence to the contrary—many have swallowed these unproven and mathematically impossible theories of abiogenesis and macroevolution, taking a huge leap of faith and ignoring the fact that they still have no explanation of why there is *something* rather than *nothing*. Paul went on to say that “as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind” (Romans 1:28).

On the other hand, what we *can and do* observe that are inextricably linked to life are irreducibly complex systems. These systems could not have come into existence by chance. They can only exist by the deliberate design and effort of supreme intelligence! When we observe the universe around us, we see that it not only permits and sustains human life, but it does so against all odds of random circumstance! (See “The Universe: Cradle for Life” beginning on page 4.)

To chalk this up to blind chance is foolish. This is the work of “a master craftsman” (Proverbs 8:30), a Creator of supreme intelligence and power. Proverbs 8 describes how God established the created order *by wisdom*—not by chance!


In figurative language, the quality of wisdom is here personified as speaking: “The LORD possessed me [wisdom] at the beginning of His way, before His works of old . . . while as yet He had not made the earth or the fields, or the primal dust

of the world. When He prepared the heavens, I [wisdom] was there, when He drew a circle on the face of the deep . . . When He marked out the foundations of the earth” (verses 22-31).

And notice how God very clearly communicated many scientific truths to us thousands of years ago: “God the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk on it” (Isaiah 42:5).

Did you catch that? God not only “created the heavens,” but He “stretched them out”—which precisely fits what scientists have discovered! And God didn’t stop there, but created the earth as the perfect environment for human life. He demonstrated in His work the principle of biogenesis that Louis Pasteur proved regarding the physical world—that life can only come from life. In God’s description of this process, we see that man’s life came not from the dust—out of which man was formed—but directly from God by His breath (Genesis 2:7).

As to God Himself, the Bible reveals that He, unlike the universe, is without beginning and therefore was not created by another. He simply exists and always has existed, just as scientists once taught that the universe did. Regarding His life, John 5:26 tells us that “the Father has life in Himself.” Just as God’s existence transcends that of the physical universe and gives rise to it, so also His life essence transcends that of all other life and is the source of all life that we see!

The God of the Bible designed all that man can observe, whether we look with the eye, the telescope or the microscope. We are all, as Paul put it in Romans 1:20, “without excuse,” and the only way that one might deny God is by obstinately choosing to. By exercising our God-given powers of observation and rational thought, we can verify the truth of God’s existence, power, wisdom and glory! 

The Multiverse: A Desperate Attempt to Deny God

For those who still wish to deny the role of a Creator when faced with realities such as those described in the accompanying article, the idea of the “multiverse” has become the popular explanation.

Since the idea of life arising from non-living matter and the evolution of our planet’s astounding variety of life from a common ancestor are mathematically impossible, the idea has recently arisen that we live in one of an infinite number of slightly different universes and that, in fact, new universes are popping into existence all the time so that anything that *can* happen *does* happen.

Not only does this idea make room for alternate universes with different physics, but also alternate universes with the same physics but where events just occur slightly differently—universes where you

got hired for a different job or didn’t make the basketball team, for example. In this way, the mathematical probabilities that disprove the random development of a life-giving universe, abiogenesis, and macroevolution all cease to matter because there are infinite chances for it to happen!

Let’s be clear that this is not a scientific theory, but a philosophical daydream! There are no experiments at all that have been or can be done to test it, which is ironically the same claim many make against God!

Where the ability to make observation is not present, we are no longer in the realm of science, and this is where the multiverse stands—it is merely an intellectual idea with no observational evidence whatsoever. Its only appeal is that it makes it a little easier to pretend that the existence of God is not necessary. But

further still, the multiverse fails to even approach the fundamental question of why there should be any universes at all, let alone an infinite number of them, and thus gives no resolution whatsoever to the “something from nothing” problem.

University of California, San Diego, physics professor Brian Keating summed it up well when he said: “The same scientists who reject God’s existence due to a lack of evidence pin their hopes on a theory so all-inclusive and vague it can never be refuted. Those who believe God created the universe are intellectually honest enough to admit that they do so on the basis of faith” (“What’s a Greater Leap of Faith: God or the Multiverse?” PragerU, April 23, 2018). However, I beg to differ on this last point: In fact, our human capacity for observation and reason lead us squarely to a rational belief in the Creator God!

The Race for IMMORTALITY

People want to live forever. Many scientists say that artificial immortality may soon be possible—but at a great cost to all. Are you ready?

by Victor Kubik

The news of extended human life, possibly even for centuries through artificial means, seems good. Accelerating trends in medical devices, nanotechnology, 3D printing and biotechnology are converging to potentially achieve what was once thought impossible—*human-engineered immortality*.

We're not talking about immortal life trapped in an older body wracked with painful arthritis, debilitating spinal degeneration and fading mental capacity. An emerging scientific focus squarely targets youthful immortality—being always young—*forever!*

But what will this pursuit amount to? Is there a real path to immortality? Just what does the future hold?

Steps toward youthful immortality

Some anti-aging measures are already here, while others are being developed. Breathtaking advances make possible routine joint repair and replacement, extending active lives. Kidneys, lungs, livers, even hearts are all resettled from person to person in an almost commonplace way.

Yet expectations include the capacity to one day “create” fully functioning organs through 3D printing. Neuroscience advancements are supposedly paving the way for computers and human brains to communicate directly and stave off age-related cognitive disorders like dementia. We appear to be on the cusp of massive change (see “The Fourth Industrial Revolution: A Giant Leap to Where?” on page 19).

Elon Musk, mega-industrialist of SpaceX and Tesla fame, backed a new brain-computer interface venture in 2017 known as Neuralink. While chip implants in people are becoming more common—companies in Sweden and the United States are already using them with employees—a *direct* interface between brains and computers is currently in early development. (Though interested in mind-computer interfaces, Musk is no fan of Artificial Intelligence—see “AI:

‘More Dangerous Than Nukes’” on page 20.)

MIT *Technology Review* recently profiled a mind-preservation service being explored by a startup company called Nectome. Those involved are “committed to the goal of archiving your mind.” But here’s their current challenge: The initial procedure is 100 percent fatal. You have to die first (Antonio Regalado, March 13, 2018).

But it does further the question: Can people put their knowledge, personalities and very being into a digital “cloud” to thereby live on forever?

Old body worn out? Just print out a fit and healthy new one, and download digitally backed-up memories and personality traits. And keep repeating the process.

Still, many yet hope in preserving the bodies they have. In an interview with Britain’s *Sunday Express* newspaper, Google’s director of engineering Ray Kurzweil said: “I believe we will reach a point around 2029 when medical technologies will add one additional year [per year] to your life expectancy” (quoted by Sean Martin, March 20, 2017). He believes super-tiny “nanobots” will soon be constructed and programmed to patrol human bodies to clean up disease and make repairs at a molecular level.

Earlier, in 2013, Google established its secretive Calico division, a group with more than \$1.5 billion to invest in delaying aging and age-related disease. Company leaders hint at delivering a “profound” development to the world within a decade.

Meanwhile, Jerusalem-based historian and *New York Times* best-selling author Yuval Noah Harari makes even bolder predictions. He writes in his controversial 2017 book *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*: “In the 21st century humans are likely to make a serious bid for immortality . . . The breakneck development of fields such as genetic engineering, regenerative medicine and nanotechnology fosters ever more optimistic prophecies. Some experts believe

that humans will overcome death by 2200, others say 2100.”

The driving force of the super-elite

What’s currently driving this obsession? Consider for a moment: What if you were a multimillionaire or billionaire and a recognized industry leader for many decades? But as you see the inevitable end of your life approaching, you resentfully feel like you’re just getting started. It’s a terrible feeling.

Your understanding of technology, financial insights and managerial innovation will all soon be lost. In spite of all your awesome resources, you can’t stop your frail human body from breaking down. You already see your friends, family and associates carving up the fruit of your many achievements. You will soon be *dead*.

That is, *unless* you find the secret of immortality.

Thus, the uber-rich daily pour tons of cash, people and resources into a near-frenzied race for immortality. The deadline is the no-turning-back moment of death, the greatest all-time fear of humanity.

Ascension to godhood?

What is the end game in all this?

Harari writes in his popular work, “We will now aim to *upgrade humans into gods*, and turn *Homo sapiens* [Latin for “wise man”] into *Homo deus* [or “god man”]” (emphasis added throughout).

Ready for a shocking thought? As people “advance” toward man-made immortality, they have *no need* for any belief in a supernatural

God, claims Harari. He touts that humanity is now posed to supremely transform “incomprehensible and uncontrollable forces of nature into manageable challenges. We don’t need to pray to any god or saint to rescue us from them. We know quite well what needs to be done in order to prevent famine, plague and war—and we usually succeed in doing it.”

He further asserts that, as part of this transformation, the “big project of humankind will be to acquire for us the divine powers of creation and destruction.”

Is such incredible arrogance justified? It is really idolatrous blasphemy to assume we can take on ourselves the powers that belong only to God.

Others in the high-technology realm, like Elon Musk, fervently desire to export these exclusive “god men” beyond planet earth, eventually settling on Mars or farther out in deep space. (But see “Immortality Through Space Travel?” on page 17.)

Early joint venture to reach the place of God

Here’s a critical point: Those obsessed with man-made immortality generally disdain the ancient writings of the Bible, tragically dismissing critical truth that would lead to real prosperity and peace. Without this truth, terrible consequences will ensue, many at man’s own hand.

The Bible is plain that this is *not* the first time humanity was collectively poised to delve into things that seemed to bring godlike powers.



Those obsessed with man-made immortality often disdain the writings of the Bible, dismissing critical truth that would lead to real prosperity and peace.

Around 4,000 years ago, the collective mental and physical creativity and innovative powers of humanity were cresting. People were joined together in technological achievement. The leaders of these innovators boasted, “Come, let’s build a great city for ourselves with a tower that reaches into the sky” (Genesis 11:4, New Living Translation).

The real God—God the Father and the Word who would later become Jesus Christ—watched this development, stating: “Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now *nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them*” (verse 6).

Once the city was established, how long would it take to become one like ancient Alexandria with an incredible, world-changing library? Or even, within a short time, an early Silicon Valley of the Middle East?

The potential was there. As would actually happen thousands of years later in the first Industrial Revolution, accelerating technology could bring humanity from a horse-and-buggy agricultural age to the nuclear and space exploration epoch in barely more than 100 years.

But in God’s plan for humanity, it was not time for this to happen then. He wanted a full 6,000 years for humanity to learn the hard lessons from every man-made way of governing and directing human affairs, to contrast it with the divinely revealed way of God we find in the Bible.

So God intervened, stopping human interaction and collaboration in this enterprise *cold*. God said, “Come, let Us

Immortality Through Space Travel?

Some futurists and entrepreneurial industrialists tout a mission to Mars as the first step to the preserving the human race. Elon Musk effectively referred to Mars colonization as a “backup drive” for civilization (“Elon Musk: We Need to Leave Earth as Soon as Possible,” *Business Insider*, Oct. 10, 2015).

What challenges are posed by a journey to Mars of around nine months each way?

Much has been learned about the barriers to long space voyages from astronauts spending extended time in earth orbit. Here are a few of the challenges as detailed by NASA:

- *Vision problems, possible blindness.* Many male International Space Station (ISS) astronauts suffer severe eyesight problems beginning during spaceflight. NASA calls countering eyesight problems among male astronauts (some permanent in nature) its “top priority” in space medicine for long-term spaceflight, including a manned mission to Mars. Issues include the flattening of the back of the eyeball, folds in the vascular tissue behind the retina, and excess fluid around and presumed swelling of the optic nerve.

- *Immune system issues.* During prolonged space flight, astronauts develop seriously weakened immune systems. T-cells, a critical component of white blood cells, do not reproduce properly in space. Further, research found that microbes adapt to the space environment and can become more virulent and resistant to antibiotics than on earth.

- *Cosmic radiation risk.* NASA lists

radiation risk as its top concern for interplanetary travel. Unless a spacecraft is adequately shielded, astronauts on interplanetary voyages can suffer DNA damage, potentially aggressive cancer and radiation-induced cataracts (including severely impaired vision) from exposure to cosmic radiation.

An episode of extreme solar weather (such as a coronal mass ejection) could prove fatal to astronauts traveling outside the earth’s magnetic field (which protects the planet’s surface from deadly cosmic radiation), even if the spacecraft were shielded. Severe neurological health risks also are thought to exist from cosmic radiation exposure, including brain damage.

- *Bone density and muscle loss issues.* Serious bone loss associated with time in space, called spaceflight osteopenia, begins after an astronaut has been in space for three to four months, according to NASA. Some astronauts take up to four years to recover from bone loss after their return to earth. Confirmed muscle loss takes place among ISS astronauts, which could be of serious concern to astronauts completing a long round trip to Mars.

- *Mental health issues.* Being confined in small space for months at a time can lead to serious interpersonal conflict and even mental health issues. Immediate connections to friends and family living on earth would become impossible as a spacecraft moved further away, producing a real source of stress. Cosmic radiation can produce minor visual and odor hallucinations.

- *Cardiac issues.* A microgravity

environment contributes to atrial fibrillation and other heart rhythm disturbance in ISS astronauts.


- *Decompression illness and barotrauma.* Astronauts working outside the ISS in space-suits generally work in an atmosphere of 100 percent oxygen at less than a third of normal sea level air pressure. This allows for a higher and easier range of motion. Decompression illness can occur if considerable care is not taken as astronauts reenter the more earth-like pressurization in the International Space Station.

- *X-rays not permitted.* Radiation-based diagnostic CT scans and X-rays are not permitted on the ISS. Ultrasound techniques presently substitute, but images must be transmitted back to earth for medical interpretation and recommendations. During a long space flight, transmission delays could be problematic, even fatal.

Does all of this amount to some kind of divine prohibition for interplanetary human travel? Humanity has overcome many challenges in the past regarding aviation, deep-sea diving and other seemingly unsurmountable barriers.

C.S. Lewis once stated: “Let’s pray that the human race never escapes from Earth to spread its iniquity elsewhere.” With the present considerable barrier to human space travel, one can wonder whether God has already taken care of that in the short term.

But remarkably, God has much more in store for humanity. He intends for us to ultimately inherit the entire universe! Be sure to read our free study guide *Why Were You Born?* to learn more.



NASA’s Mars exploration rover Opportunity captured this view of the western rim of Endeavour Crater in the Meridiani Planum region of Mars.

go down and confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another’s speech” (verse 7). The result? The combined technology and innovation effort collapsed. The once-united peoples migrated away, and “they ceased building the city” (verse 8).

Yet today, in this latter stage of the working out of God’s incredible plan for humanity, He has determined to allow the

world to experience the full impact of human folly.

Eternal bliss—or a dark future for most?

What does the future *Homo Deus* paints look like? A *New York Times* review of the book said this: “The short, chilling answer: a future that looks like Westworld [a dystopian fictional world of androids], rather than Disney World. A

small breakaway republic of superhumans and techno-elites will eventually split off from the rest of humanity. Those who acquire the skills and proprietary algorithms to re-engineer brains, bodies and minds—the main products of the 21st century, Harari suspects—will become gods; those who don't will be rendered economically useless and die off" (Jennifer Senior, Feb. 15, 2017).

Despite the fact that major figures like former President Barack Obama and Microsoft founder Bill Gates have highly recommended *Homo Deus*, the reviewer ends with this warning: "If any part of the future Harari describes is true, all I can say is: #Resist."

Even Harari recognizes that humanity is flawed, and people who can live forever will carry those flaws with them, even magnifying them. Such would be the outcome of an interplanetary venture, despite all good intentions. As Christian apologist C.S. Lewis once wrote, "Let's pray that the human race never escapes Earth to spread its iniquity elsewhere."

Technological advances possess a dark side. As *Wall Street Journal* columnist Peggy Noonan wrote following the recent Florida school shooting: "What has happened in the past 40 years or so to produce a society so ill at ease with itself, so prone to violence?" Her answer? "We have been swept by social, technological and cultural revolution . . . America is experiencing a mental health crisis, especially among the young" (Feb. 15, 2018). Who wants to live forever in a state of mental illness?

And then there are all those left out. The techno-elite focus on man's immortality is blindingly expensive and utterly exclusive. Riff-raff need not apply. Man's artificial, technology-powered "immortal life" (if this theoretical idea could even be achieved) is limited by physical barriers. And such a flawed "life everlasting" leaves people and loved ones behind.

In powerful contrast, God has a great plan for humanity's future that offers immortal life as a *free gift to all*.

The future God intends for His children

When people commit to a changed life that focuses on spiritual transformation, embracing and exhibiting the fruit of God's Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), they become, as 1 John 3:1 states, actual children of God! And if we are children of God even in this life, what shall we be when born again into the eternal family of God?

Again, what *Homo Deus* purports to achieve in a short-sighted, exclusive fashion is *idolatrous blasphemy*. It assumes

we can make ourselves divine. Moreover, God actually does intend that we be raised to eternal, divine life—but only as His gift to us and on His terms. This is the singular theme of the



"Those who acquire the skills and proprietary algorithms to re-engineer brains, bodies and minds . . . will become gods."

Bible and the purpose revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

God created human beings in His own image and likeness—according to His kind, to be like Him (Genesis 1:26-27). Jesus later quoted Psalm 82:6 in stating, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, *You are gods*'?" (John 10:34), the psalm further calling us "children of the Most High"—children being like their parents in terms of what they are or will become.

Returning to 1 John 3, consider this powerful truth: "Beloved, now we are the children of God; and . . . we know that when He [Jesus Christ] is revealed, *we shall be like Him*" (verse 2).

Can we grasp what this means? The apostle Paul makes it plain: "We also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly [human] body that it may be conformed to His glorious body" (Philippians 3:22-23). This glorified body is described in Revelation 1:13-17, the resurrected Jesus' head and hair being "white like wool, white like snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire . . . His

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The Fourth Industrial Revolution: A Giant Leap to Where?

We stand today at the beginning of what is commonly called the Fourth Industrial Revolution, a time of expected rapid change. Whether we like it or not, widespread change today blurs the lines between the physical, digital and biological spheres. Massive changes are ahead in artificial intelligence, biotechnology, nanotechnology, robotics, the Internet of Things, 3D printing, materials science, energy storage and quantum computing.

Neural backup and transfer

Advances toward man-made “immortality” supposedly hinge on an unrealized breakthrough—the uploading and storing of human knowledge, memories and personality to an external “cloud”-type storage device. How far off is this?

Not far at all, if one can believe neuroscientist Kenneth Hayworth of Harvard University. A few years ago Hayworth, who founded a new field of neural brain mapping called “connectomics,” said in an interview with *The Chronicle of Higher Education*: “The human race is on a beeline to mind uploading: We will preserve a brain, slice it up, simulate it on a computer, and hook it up to a robot body” (quoted by Evan Goldstein, “The Strange Neuroscience of Immortality,” July 16, 2012).

Hayworth wants his own brain to be the first—after being plastinated and encased in resin, believing it will be revived sometime in the 22nd century after critical technological advances.

Genetic engineering

Other advances are occurring in genetic engineering and gene-splicing. On paper, genetic engineering holds much promise, including the virtual eradication of disease and birth defects. In application, numerous nightmare scenarios exist, including mutated viruses run amuck. At least one person has already died in a clinical gene therapy trial.

Social historians such as Yuval Noah Harari, author of *Homo Deus: A Brief History*

of Tomorrow, predict (even advocate) that future mothers will elect to fertilize several eggs and then have them tested. The best of the lot will then be reinserted into the mother for a full pregnancy. The remaining fertilized eggs with genetic flaws can then, prior to being discarded, be considered for genetic “repair.”

3D printing of human organs

The Fourth Industrial Revolution presents complex 3D printing of almost any device or component. 3D printing is a common name for additive manufacturing, which involves material being joined or solidified by computer to form three-dimensional objects. Now widespread, it’s particularly useful in rapid prototyping of new inventions. It has even been introduced to orthopedic surgery to better match joint, spine and bone implants.

Today, some medical professionals tout

Organs,” April 5, 2014).

The availability of widespread 3D organ printing, coupled with advances in genetic engineering, could one day lead to the chemical production of all-new human genomes. The end game here could be to create human beings without the involvement of human parents. One bioengineer noted that, although highly controversial, it would then be possible to sequence and synthesize human genomes based on highly successful people like Einstein.

Spiritual matters

Does the Bible say anything about these near-miraculous discoveries? Tragically, many secular academics and scientists reject the revealed all-important knowledge of the Bible. The Bible shows that there exists a divinely created and sustained “spirit in man” (Job 32:8; 1 Corinthians 2:11). This human spirit enables physical human

Whether we like it or not, widespread change today blurs the lines between the physical, digital and biological spheres. Massive changes are ahead in artificial intelligence, biotechnology, nanotechnology, robotics, the Internet of Things, 3D printing, materials science, energy storage and quantum computing.

the 3D printing of human organs as a future viable alternative to “growing” organs in a laboratory. Called “bioprinting,” several scientists believe such artificial production holds great promise.

According to a CNN report, future bioprinting could follow this pathway: medical professionals first harvest human cells (stem cells) and enable them to multiply. The biological material is then inserted into a specialized 3D bioprinter, which recognizes and arranges cell types, sculpting the mixture into a replicated organ or organ part. The completed 3D “part” is then transplanted into a human host to repair or enhance human function. Companies like the California-based Organovo are already actively researching and creating artificially produced tissues (Brandon Griggs, “The Next Frontier in 3-D Printing: Human

brains to develop self-awareness, intellect, creativity, personality and temperament. This non-physical spiritual component of the human mind *cannot* be retained or replicated by physical means.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution holds some very dark portents for humanity. As Jack Ma, the executive chairman of the Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba warned, “In the next 30 years, the world will see much more pain than happiness” (quoted by Bloomberg News, April 23, 2017).

The Bible explains why people will experience such pain, and it also powerfully shows the way to true happiness and the true purpose for humanity. Our free study guide *Why Were You Born?* explains in detail what the Bible has to say about real immortality and the future of humanity. Request or download your copy today!

voice like the sound of many waters.”

Perhaps the best attribute is that immortal life from God includes the matchless gift of divine love—unlike the greedy, death-fearing techno-elites anxiously seeking an artificial quasi-immortality. God *is* love (1 John 4:8, 16), and His marvelous love will *fully saturate* every aspect of His coming immortal Kingdom!

We can now only barely begin to grasp the fullness of the transcendent spiritual life ahead (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Consider this critical fact: The *Homo Deus* construct only allows for the super-rich and techno-elites to achieve some form of physical immortality. Billions of people are left out. This man-made scenario is highly exclusive. It shuts out common people. It represents an astonishing “haves and have nots” divisive barrier. Further, families and friends would rarely—probably never—be reunited.


God, in stark contrast, plans to bring “*many sons to glory*” (Hebrews 2:10). God is totally inclusive, desiring that all would come to salvation (1 Timothy 2:4-5). That includes *all* who have ever lived!

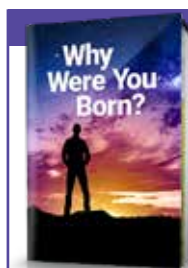
The greatest human fear is the fear of death. For millennia people have wondered what lies beyond one’s final breath. Those who tragically reject the Bible also reject the comforting and inspiring knowledge that Jesus, who came to lead us in following God, has *already conquered* death! As Paul wrote, “Our Savior Jesus Christ . . . has *abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*” (2 Timothy 1:10).

The true pathway to immortality

There exists a defined pathway for you and me to achieve immortality. While the actual gift of immortality comes only from God and cannot be “earned,” God does expect that those to whom He would give eternal life embrace and adopt His way of life—the way of ultimate peace, prosperity and blessing.

Those who commit to God’s way of life have their names written in His Book of Life (Revelation 20:12). If your name is written in this book and you don’t turn away from God, you have nothing to fear. Your immortality—youthful and vibrant life everlasting—in the coming Kingdom of God is assured.

Don’t allow yourself to be led astray by those who would—however well-meaning—pursue a flawed and exclusivist man-made “immortality.” Instead, seek true immortality, an incredible gift of God, where you may, as Daniel 7:18 says of those who ultimately remain faithful to God, “receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.” 



LEARN MORE

The marvelous truth of what we can become has only been lightly touched on in this article. You need to know more. Be sure to request and read our free study guide *Why Were You Born?* It will show you what God Himself has in store for you!

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AI:

“More Dangerous Than Nukes”

In the quest for immortality and other high-impact achievements, many scientists and technologists embrace the accelerating growth of Artificial Intelligence. AI, as it is commonly abbreviated, appears to hold much promise. In the past, computers largely operated on a binary—on/off, yes/no—platform and outcome. Artificial Intelligence comes about when computers perform tasks that involve the nuances of perception, patterns and tonality of human speech, optical recognition and inference.

This is a good thing, right? Not according to industry titans like Elon Musk, founder of billion-dollar companies like Tesla, PayPal and SpaceX. At the 2018 South by Southwest (SXSW) Conference, he publicly warned: “Mark my words: AI is far more dangerous than nukes” (March 11).



In a recent documentary, Musk went further. He believes that AI will potentially create the possibility of “godlike digital superintelligence” that, if subverted, “could take over the world . . . Then you’d have an immortal dictator from which we can never escape” (quoted at CNBC, April 6, 2018).

Going on, Musk cautions, “If AI has a goal and humanity just happens to be in the way, it will destroy humanity as a matter of course without even thinking about it.”

Musk created and founded a company called Neuralink in part to corral and direct AI development in a manner that holds more of a promise of benevolence. Others, together with Musk, call for strict government regulation of AI, particularly in weapons deployment.

The Bible specifically warns that the worst time of conflict and devastation ever is yet ahead of us, when no one would survive if God did not intervene (Matthew 24:21-22). Terrible and destructive use of technology will certainly be a factor in this.

Yet there is good news! God will intervene. To learn more, request or download your free copy of our study guide *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* at ucg.org/booklets.

Don’t get ensnared. Learn what God has in store for you!



Honeybees

Tiny Testimony to a Great God

A great deal of life on earth is sustained by the amazing life and work of the tiny honeybee. Without its carefully tuned and executed cycle of pollination, many kinds of plants would cease to exist—and even mankind would be at risk.

by Robert Curry

The amazing honeybee testifies to God's amazing handiwork. Regarding the eight species (of the genus *Apis*), of which the Western honeybee is the best known, observers admire how perfectly they are designed and how flawlessly they function in carrying out their crucial roles in life on earth.

All the intricate details of pollination had to work right the first time for the bees to thrive and for the flowering plants that rely on them to reproduce and bear fruit. Author Holley Bishop puts it simply, "Flowering plants are a prerequisite for the bee, and vice versa" (*Robbing the Bees: A Biography of Honey*, 2005, p. 116).

It's a good thing a honeybee is perfectly equipped to locate and collect nectar, because, as Bishop writes, one pound of honey represents 55,000 bee miles and more than 2 million flowers. No wonder honey has been called "liquid gold"!

Quantified another way, in the words of a classic film presentation, just over one ounce of honeycomb "represents over 20,000 bee miles for collecting the nectar, over 100,000 bee hours for changing the nectar into honey and wax and an additional 18,000 bee hours spent in working the wax into honeycomb—all according to a precise pattern" (*City of the Bees*, Moody Institute of Science, 1962).

That last phrase aptly describes how a scout bee, after locating a source of nectar, pollen or water, conducts a briefing session back at the hive, presenting the kind of food it's found, the sugar content, distance and direction.

Think about it: Conveying all of this information accurately would be challenging enough for human beings blessed with voice and shared language. How does the scout bee do it? Incredibly, it's done with an energetic dance some liken to a bee conga line!

The dance that sustains life

This amazing dance "language" of bees conveys an incredible

amount of important information. Note again the four aspects just mentioned. The scout bee points out what kind of source it has found, passing out samples stuck to its hairy body. Bishop describes a bee's hind legs as "phenomenal pollen-collecting architecture."

Next, a bee's dance tells the hive about the sugar content of the find. The audience judges this by the vigor of the scout's waggle.

Next the hive learns about the distance to the source. The scout does a round dance if it's close by or a figure-eight if it's farther away, up to a mile. Sensing movements with their antennae, the bees note the length of time the scout spends shaking its body and the number of pulses of sound emitted in each buzz.

The bee's dance also shares the direction of the find. If the dancer shimmies straight up, it means other bees should fly toward the sun. If the dance is downward, that means away from the sun. The dance's angle relative to the vertical axis means the bees need to fly that many degrees left or right of the sun.

God's design of the bee is so perfect that He even included a built-in "compass" in its physiology. A honeybee is equipped with a polarized light compass built into its complex eye!

Imagine the first honeybee long ago "thinking up" this intricate dance as a way to meet the life-and-death need for all this critical information. Knowing how confused some of us get trying to analyze and copy some relatively simple dance steps, how likely is it that the bewildered bees could have derived essential meaning from another bee's movement?

A perfect design at work

Thankfully, by design, the honeybees interpret these movements correctly. Moody Institute scientists marked the specific bees watching a dancer and verified that those were the ones that showed up at the food source. Other groups appeared

Who's Behind Beyond Today?



Who's behind the *Beyond Today* magazine and television program? Many readers have wondered who we are and how we are able to provide *Beyond Today* free to all who request it. Simply put, *Beyond Today* is provided by people—people from all walks of life, from all over the world, as enabled by God.

And we all have a common goal—to proclaim the gospel of the coming Kingdom of God to all the world as a witness and to teach all nations to obey everything Christ commanded (Matthew 24:14; 28:19-20).



We are dedicated to proclaiming the same message Jesus Christ brought—the wonderful good news of the coming Kingdom of God (Matthew 4:23; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43; 8:1). That message truly is good news—the answer to all the problems that have long plagued humankind.



Through the pages of this magazine, on our TV show, and in dozens of helpful study guides (also free), we show the biblical answers to the dilemmas that have defied human solution and threaten our very survival.

We are committed to taking that message to the entire world, sharing the truth of God's purpose as taught by Jesus Christ and His apostles.

The United Church of God has congregations and ministers around the world. In these congregations believers assemble to be instructed from the Scriptures and to fellowship. For locations and times of services nearest you, contact us at the appropriate address on page 39. Visitors are always welcome.

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at the sources communicated by their respective dancers.

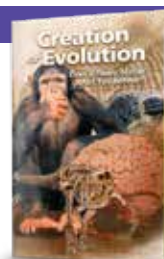
“Bees actually stake their lives on the accuracy of the information they have been given,” explains the video, because the bees only fuel up with just the right amount to make it to the source. This ensures that the bees don't deplete the hive's honey resources and that the workers have storage room in their stomachs for nectar. They also fill up two tiny saddlebags called corbiculae, or pollen baskets, which are hidden on a bee's back legs for the purpose of carrying pollen.

A bee flies about 15 miles per hour and makes 30 to 50 trips per day. It covers about 500 miles in a lifetime and can haul up to half its weight of 40 milligrams. In flight, bees generate static electricity, which causes pollen to jump onto the minuscule hairs of their charged bodies. This static cling proves absolutely vital for pollination, as this enables the bee to spread the pollen to other plants so they can reproduce and carry on their life cycles as they were designed to do.

Be thankful for bees!

This is just a small sample of the fascinating and intricate details scientists have discovered about honeybees. We should be grateful to our Creator that “the most important insect on earth” has been carefully designed and provided as part of this magnificent creation to pollinate and generate food for us to enjoy.

So the next time you encounter a humble honeybee, consider how it plays an intricately planned part in making life here on earth not only possible, but enjoyable for us all! **BT**



LEARN MORE

The honeybee is testimony to the fallacy of random, unguided evolution. To learn more about what science really reveals about evolution, download or request our free study guide *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?*

BTmagazine.org/booklets

Has Evidence of the Prophet Isaiah Been Found?

In biblical times carved stone seals, typically about the size of a fingernail, were used to stamp small lumps of clay or wax to denote authorship, authenticity or ownership of documents and other objects. The resulting clay impression is called a *bullā* (plural *bullae*). Such seals are mentioned often in the Bible. A number have been found bearing the names of biblical figures, demonstrating the accuracy of Scripture.

A remarkable archaeological find in Jerusalem of a bulla was made public in February in the combined March-April-May-June 2018 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review* under the stunning title “Is This the Prophet Isaiah’s Signature?” The author, archaeologist Eilat Mazar, directed the excavation where the bulla was found south of the Temple Mount.

A fingerprint is even visible on the clay. “If the owner of the seal was the Prophet Isaiah, we have here the fingerprint of the prophet,” Dr. Mazar said, although she cautions we can’t be certain (Amanda Borschel-Dan, “In Find of Biblical Proportions, Seal of Prophet Isaiah Said Found in Jerusalem,” *Breaking Israel News*, Feb. 22). The edge of the impression is damaged by the fingerprint, leaving some question and dispute about its wording—yet there’s good reason to believe it’s that of the biblical prophet.

The Isaiah bulla was found in 2009 amid other debris and artifacts, including a number of seal impressions—one of them bearing the name of Judah’s King Hezekiah, which was announced in 2015.

Scripture tells us that “Isaiah the son of Amoz” was a prophet of God “in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah” (Isaiah 1:1)—in the decades before and after 700 B.C. Isaiah was a valued adviser to the righteous Hezekiah, Mazar commenting in her article that the two “are mentioned in one breath 14 of the 29 times the name of Isaiah is recalled (2 Kings 19–20; Isaiah 37–39). No other figure was closer to King Hezekiah than the prophet Isaiah” (p. 70).

It should perhaps not be surprising, then, that the Isaiah bulla was found less than 10 feet away from the Hezekiah bulla in the area of what apparently was then the upper palace complex earlier built by Solomon.

The Isaiah bulla is divided into three sections or lines called registers. The upper register, with the top broken off, shows “a grazing doe, a motif of blessing

it could have been at the end of the second register in the damaged area.

Mazar’s associate, archaeologist and epigrapher Reut Ben-Arie, observed that the oval border in the damaged area would have been far enough to the left of the inscription to allow room for both the missing *waw* or *u* at the end of *Yeshayahu* and the *hey* or *h*, meaning “the”—as well as for an *aleph* at the end of *nvy* on the lower register, to thus yield “of Isaiah the / prophet.”

Mazar notes: “One can wonder why the seal’s designer would choose to insert the definite article at the end of the second register instead of at the beginning of the word *navy*’ on the third register, where there seems to have been enough space. But, as strange as it may seem to us, this division of words is not unusual in ancient Hebrew writing. In fact, a good example of this can be seen in King Hezekiah’s bulla, where the name of his father, Ahaz, spreads over two registers, with the last letter pushed into the lower one” (p. 72).

This, then, appears to be quite a major find. Isaiah is a prominent figure in Scripture, not just in the Old Testament but in the New, where he is the most quoted of the prophets by far.

The Times of Israel (Adam Berkowitz, “Clay Seal of Isaiah Found but Mystery Remains,” Feb. 22) quoted



The top row of letters on the Isaiah bulla reads “[belonging] to Isaiah,” followed on the second line by *navy*, the Hebrew word for “prophet,” but which could also indicate the father’s name or name of a town. At left is an inscription specialist’s reconstruction of the damaged portion with missing letters that would indisputably read “Isaiah the prophet.” The blue oval indicates the border of the original seal. The missing top portion apparently showed a grazing doe.

and protection . . . present also on another bulla” (p. 70). The middle register reads, from right to left in early Hebrew script, “*leyesha’yah[ui]*,” meaning “of Isaiah” or “[belonging] to Isaiah,” the final letter *vav* or *waw* missing, as the left edge is damaged. While Isaiah was a common name, only people of some importance had such seals.

The lower register of the bulla reads *nvy* before ending at the damaged left side. If followed by the letter *aleph* in the damaged area, the word would mean “prophet,” represented in English as *navy*’ (or *nabi* or *nebi*).

Some scholars contend the word should be read as a father’s name, as to say Isaiah son of Nvy or Nebai—thus not the prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz, as he is referred to 13 times in Scripture. Two seal impressions from Lachish read *bn nvy* or “son of Nebai.” The Isaiah bulla doesn’t have the *bn* (or *ben*) for “son,” but there are examples of seal impressions without this where space is tight. Other scholars, however, note there was plenty of room for the letters *bn* on this seal, so that “son of Nvy” was likely not meant. Another suggestion is that Nvy meant a resident of the priestly town of Nov or Nob, but there’s no other example of a seal with a personal name followed by a place name.

Some think Isaiah would not proclaim himself “prophet,” but this was an occupation identifying him. He writes of himself as “Isaiah the prophet” in Isaiah 37:2, 38:1 and 39:3. Others note the missing “the” (*h*- or *ha* in Hebrew) before the word *nvy* as an argument against “the prophet” here. Mazar notes it’s not always present in mention of this role, and she further says



Looking northward, this photo shows the location of the Ophel area to the south of Jerusalem’s Temple Mount where the bullae of King Hezekiah and Isaiah were discovered.

new *Biblical Archaeology Review* editor Robert Carrigill, a self-described skeptic who has spent much of his career debunking false archaeological claims, as stating regarding Mazar’s discovery: “She didn’t rush to conclusively say she had found the seal of Isaiah . . . In our article she gives the possible alternatives . . . But if you’re asking me, I think she’s got it. You’re looking at the first archaeological reference of the prophet Isaiah outside the Bible . . . It’s amazing.”

—Tom Robinson



King Hezekiah’s seal impression gives his name and the name of his father Ahaz in the top row of letters, with his title “King of Judah” on the bottom row.



China looks to unseat America as top global power

America remains at the top of the global order, and its place seems fairly secure—at least for now. With a strengthened economy and several recent foreign policy victories (albeit in the midst of many more unresolved), the United States looks determined to remain top dog for some time. Yet there are challengers to the status quo, and one in particular looks set to keep pushing over the next decades to take the top spot.

China, one of humanity’s oldest civilizations, plans long-term. “China has outlined strategies for 2018, 2025 and 2050 all designed to displace the United States as the dominant global economic and national security superpower . . . While America dawdles and bickers, China is thinking long-term—and acting now, everywhere. There is no U.S. equivalent of a plan for 2025 or 2050—or really for next year” (Jim Vandehei, “China Is the Greatest, Growing Threat to America,” *Axios*, May 21, 2018).

One of the chief factors in Chinese President Xi Jinping’s decades-long development program is a focus on domestic and foreign infrastructure. “The truth is that the West long ago ceded leadership in this area to China, a phenomenon that was largely driven not by foreign policy but by domestic infrastructure policy. The same factors that keep large infrastructure projects from getting off the ground in the United States and Europe make Western-sponsored projects in developing



Shanghai, China, demonstrates modern Chinese infrastructure.

countries less viable than their Chinese counterparts” (Bushra Bataineh, Michael Bennon, and Francis Fukuyama, “Beijing’s Building Boom,” *Foreign Affairs*, May 21, 2018).

While much of U.S. infrastructure crumbles amid bureaucratic inefficiencies and poor funding, China now spends a total of 9 percent of its GDP on infrastructure, three times what America spends. If these trends continue, America can’t expect to remain on top for long. (Sources: *Axios*, *Foreign Policy*.)

Russia testing powerful ballistic missile

A nuclear submarine under the White Sea in northwestern Russia recently test launched four ballistic missiles. *The Daily Mail* reports, “It is the first time four missiles have been simultaneously launched from a vessel of the kind used in the exercise, which according to reports was the biggest of its kind since the Cold War” (Tariq Tahir, “Russia Launches Four Ballistic Missiles From Under the Sea in What It Claims Is the Most Powerful Weapons Test From a Single Submarine Since the Cold War,” *May 23, 2018*).

Photos and videos show massive plumes of smoke exiting from the sea during the test. The supposed range for these weapons is 6,200 miles, but initial reports say the test did not go as expected. “The Kremlin has denied US claims that Russia’s nuclear-powered cruise missile with ‘unlimited’ range crashed after only 22 miles” (Alec Luhn, “Putin’s ‘Invincible’ Missile Crashes After 35km Says US,” *The Telegraph*, May 24, 2018).

The vessels these missiles launched from are new submarines Russia put into service just last year. It plans to have eight of these submarines by the year 2025.

Whether this test was a success or failure, the Russians will no doubt continue development until they meet their target. As has been the case for centuries,

advances made for military purposes trickle down to consumers and are used in everyday life. Sadly, war and conflict have fueled much of the technological advances we now think of as commonplace.

But the power and threat of weapons of mass destruction have a shelf life. We look forward to the return of the King of Kings, Jesus Christ, who will usher in world peace. This peace will spread throughout the whole world. We pray for His Kingdom to come as we read these headlines—not praying in fear of these, but in hope for the bright future God has promised. (Sources: *The Daily Mail*, *The Telegraph*.)



Sweden sends citizens war-prep pamphlet

The Scandinavian nation of Sweden has not fought against other nations since the Swedish-Norwegian War in the 19th century. While Sweden often provides support to U.N. policing efforts around the world, the government itself is rarely in conflict with another.

It might seem strange, then, that the Swedish government has distributed a pamphlet to its citizens on what to do should war break out. With a title translated into English as “If Crisis or War Comes,” it “explains how people can secure basic needs such as food, water and



heat, what warning signals mean, where to find bomb shelters and how to contribute to Sweden’s ‘total defence.’

“The 20-page pamphlet, illustrated with pictures of sirens, war-planes and families fleeing their homes,

also prepares the population for dangers such as cyber and terror attacks and climate change, and includes a page on identifying fake news” (Jon Henley, “Sweden Distributes ‘Be Prepared for War’ Leaflet to All 4.8m Homes,” *The Guardian*, May 21, 2018).

To the Swedish government’s credit, it’s good to prepare (Proverbs 22:3). And the release of this pamphlet is an acknowledgment of the thin layer of civilization that often overlays a darker, more violent human nature. War and conflict are the inescapable products of existing apart from a close relationship with God and the way He has established that leads to peace and safety for mankind. (Source: *The Guardian*.)

Lesser-known global conflicts worthy of our attention

While all eyes rest on the perennial global hotspots of North Korea, Jerusalem, Iran, China and Russia, several other areas in the world are well worth our attention due to developing and potentially dangerous situations that could easily lead to greater conflict.

Foreign Policy's Steven Cook provides a rundown of several of these lesser-known areas of interest:

"Take, for example, the Aegean Sea, where Greek and Turkish warplanes routinely engage each other in a long-running dispute over territory and airspace" ("And Now for Some Crises That Are Completely Different," May 15, 2018). This old conflict over territory recently turned deadly after a Greek pilot died in a crash related to Turkish forces.

"Then there is Bosnia and Herzegovina . . . [where] nationalist Serbs are no longer willing to live with arrangements that brought peace to the region with the 1995 Dayton Accords" (ibid.). The uneasy peace of the Balkans can be upset

at any moment, as we have seen time and again in the past century.

Finally and perhaps most troublingly, he points to burgeoning multinational conflict in northeastern Africa. "The Egyptians are at loggerheads with the Ethiopians over the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, which threatens a 1950s treaty that gives Egypt the bulk of the Nile River's water . . . The Sudanese have sided with the Ethiopians in an apparent effort to secure for themselves more Nile water and to pressure the Egyptians on areas near the Red Sea . . . that Egypt controls but Sudan claims. Add to the mix Turkey and Qatar, both of which have upgraded security ties with Sudan" (ibid.).

This goes to show that, while most media coverage is understandably focused on a few high-priority news items on the international scene, there is truly much going on that we may not know about. Staying abreast of some of the lesser-known goings on in the world helps in maintaining a balanced and knowledgeable worldview. (Source: *Foreign Policy*.)

U.S. moves embassy to Jerusalem

In May the United States acted on a 1995 law that dictated the U.S. embassy move from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Politically, this validates Israel's capital, which is already in Jerusalem. The move was met with immediate protests at Israel's border with Gaza, which is ruled by the terrorist group Hamas and which threatened to overrun the border and attack and kidnap Israelis.

"The opening ceremony is at a U.S. consular building in the Arnona neighborhood. It will house an interim embassy for the ambassador and a small staff until a larger site is found" (Stephen Farrell, "The U.S. Is Opening an Embassy in Jerusalem. Why Is There a Furor?" Reuters, May 14, 2018).

In addition to the United States, Guatemala and Paraguay moved their embassies as well. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "said in April 'at least half a dozen' countries were now 'seriously discussing' following the U.S. lead. He did not identify them" (ibid.).

The relocating of the U.S. embassy and subsequent protests show the importance of the city. Jerusalem is a spiritually and historically important site for the three great monotheistic religions—Judaism, Christianity and Islam—and has been a hotbed of conflict for millennia.

Why now? "Trump acted under a 1995 law that requires the United States to move its embassy to Jerusalem. But Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama consistently signed waivers delaying the relocation. Announcing his decision on Dec. 6, Trump cited the Jerusalem Embassy Act and suggested his predecessors had 'lacked courage.' He said: 'They failed to deliver. Today, I am delivering'" (ibid.).

Jerusalem is a city we should take note of anytime we hear it in the news. It's a location at the center of Bible prophecy. We read that before the return of Jesus, armies from around the world will surround the city. It's easy to see from the headlines that it doesn't take much in this area to ignite international contentions. (Source: Reuters.)

Cholera plagues Zambia

The cholera outbreak that began last October, one of the worst in recent years, has infected more than 5,000 people and killed 110, according to Chitalu Chilufya, Zambia's health minister" (Adrian Blomfield, "We Are Facing a Sanitation Crisis: Zambia's Uphill Struggle Against the Deadly Scourge of Cholera," *The Telegraph*, May 22, 2018).

Cholera is one of those diseases that in the Western world is a distant memory. Yet there are parts of the world where pestilence is still very much reality. Cholera is a bacterial infection of the small intestine spread through contaminated water and food due to poor sanitation. It leads to the deaths of tens of thousands of people every year.

The cholera outbreak in Zambia is heartbreaking for this African country that is typically peaceful compared to its neighbors.

Zambia is not the only nation fighting this disease. "There have been nearly 1,200 deaths in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In Yemen, experiencing the worst epidemic in the world, 1 m[illion] suspected cases and 2,000 deaths have been reported since 2016.

"But all three countries have been in the grip of wars and conflicts, dating back decades in the case of Somalia and Congo. War causes basic health and sanitation infrastructure to collapse, allows cholera to spread rapidly in overcrowded refugee camps and hampers the ability to respond to an outbreak" (ibid.).

Cholera is most often spread through contaminated water. Because of some of the conditions in the nation, Zambia is reaching a sanitation epidemic. Contaminated water supplies not only affect the health of the citizenry but also the economy. Many business and street vendors have had to shut down to prevent the spread from going any further.

We look forward to the return of Jesus Christ when He will bring not only spiritual healing to this earth, but physical healing as well. There will be no more diseases causing pain and suffering. (Source: *The Telegraph*.)

How can you make sense of the news?

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What's Behind the War on God?

The freedom to worship and obey God is under attack in many parts of the world. You need to understand why this is happening and what Bible prophecy explains is ahead for all humanity.

by John LaBissoniere

Throughout history many have sought to comprehend the meaning and purpose of their existence. It is each person's prerogative to pursue this transcendent aspiration so as to learn about, understand and worship one's Creator.

Importantly, this fundamental right does not emanate from any human government but from God alone. Today there is widespread recognition that religious liberty is a basic human right (via United Nations Human Rights Council international agreements). Even so, many people are unable to fully exercise this vital privilege due to increasing persecution and constraint.

The freedom to worship and obey God is under attack in many nations. This is particularly true for those who profess Christianity. In some countries such attacks take the form of physical violence and even murder. In other nations it arises through censure, restrictions and intimidation by individuals, secular organizations and various government entities.

Indeed, *a war on God* is taking place in today's world. You need to understand why this is happening and what Bible prophecy explains is ahead for all humanity. Although this problem affects people in many countries, for illustration purposes we'll primarily

individual desired was ultimately enshrined in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution in 1787 with these words: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . ."

The impact of the Bible and Christian values was plainly evident in the lives of many of America's founding fathers and early leaders who studied the Scriptures and worshipped their Maker and Sustainer. For example, James Madison, a key leader in the creation of the U.S. Constitution, wrote: "Before any man can be considered as a member of Civil Society, he must be considered as a subject of the Governor of the Universe."

George Washington, the country's first president under the Constitution, penned, "It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor."

Even more recent national leaders expressed faith in and worship toward their Creator. For example, Dwight Eisenhower, the 34th president of the United States, stated: "Without God there could be no American form of government, nor an American way of life. Recognition of



"It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor."

—George Washington, first president of the United States

focus on how the influence of God and His way of life is under attack in the United States in a major cultural shift. First, however, let's examine briefly the legacy of Christianity in America.

The impact of the Bible and Christian values

History records that the Pilgrim settlers who voyaged to the New World from England in 1620 did so specifically seeking liberty to worship and obey God as they chose. Following the Pilgrims, other Christian groups of various denominations sought religious freedom when they landed on American shores.

The profound desire and longing to worship God as each

the Supreme Being is the first, the most basic expression of Americanism. Thus, the founding fathers of America saw it, and thus with God's help, it will continue to be."

Religion a bedrock of American culture

Respect and honor given to God formed the bedrock of American culture. This provided major benefits to society for many generations. In 1996 the Heritage Foundation released a report titled "Why Religion Matters: The Impact of Religious Practice on Social Stability." Written by Patrick Fagan, Ph.D., a senior fellow and director of the Marriage and Religion

Research Institute, the report, which is posted at the Heritage Foundation's website, summarized findings described in professional social science literature about the positive consequences arising from religious devotion. It concluded:

"The strength of the family unit is intertwined with the practice of religion. Churchgoers are more likely to be married, less likely to be divorced or single, and more likely to manifest high levels of satisfaction in marriage. Church attendance is the most important predictor of marital stability and happiness.

"Religious belief and practice contribute substantially to the formation of personal moral criteria and sound moral judgment. Regular religious practice generally inoculates individuals against a host of social problems, including suicide, drug abuse, out-of-wedlock births, crime, and divorce.

"The regular practice of religion also encourages such beneficial effects on mental health as less depression (a modern epidemic), more self-esteem, and greater family and marital happiness."

The Bible's teachings profoundly effective for good

The Bible's teachings have had a profound effect for good in America as well as Western civilization and the world. Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) is a classic example. Not only is the story a part of cultural parlance, but it's the foundation for many Western concepts and legislation about the duty of all human beings to offer compassion and assistance to needy individuals. Similarly, Christian principles played important and influential roles in ending or severely limiting the abominable practices of human sacrifice, infanticide and slavery.

In addition, Jesus' teachings upholding sexual morality had a positive influence in society regarding the sanctity of marriage and in child rearing and family life. Additionally, Christian values strongly elevated the status of women by condemning extramarital sex, divorce, pornography and prostitution.

Throughout history individual Christians have made countless

valuable contributions to human progress in a wide variety of fields including the sciences, health care, philanthropy, law, government, literature and business.

Paul Maier, writing the forward to the book *How Christianity Changed the World* by Alvin Schmidt, Ph.D., said the following about how the values Jesus Christ taught had an enormous impact on humanity's overall well-being: "No other religion, philosophy, teaching, nation, movement—whatever—has so changed the world for the better as Christianity has done. Its shortcomings, clearly conceded by this author, are nevertheless heavily outweighed by its benefits to all mankind."

An atheist applauds Christian works

These benefits have been recognized and acknowledged even by those who do not profess any religious affinity. For example, Matthew Francis Parris, a South African political writer and self-proclaimed atheist, wrote the following on the TimesOnline website on Dec. 27, 2008:

"Now a confirmed atheist, I've become convinced of the enormous contribution that Christian evangelism makes in Africa: sharply distinct from the work of secular NGOs [non-governmental organizations], government projects and international aid efforts. These alone will not do. Education and training alone will not do.

"In Africa Christianity changes people's hearts. It brings a spiritual transformation. The rebirth is real. The change is good. I used to avoid this truth by applauding—as you can—the practical work of mission churches in Africa. It's a pity, I would say, that salvation is part of the package, but Christians black and white, working in Africa, do heal the sick, do teach people to read and write; and only the severest kind of secularist could see a mission hospital or school and say the world would be better without it."

Major changes affect society and culture

While individuals and families of previous generations have been aided significantly by their worship of and obedience to God, profound and disturbing changes have taken place

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over the past several decades. Institutions and individuals in the United States have been subjected to an increasing number of attacks and restrictions on their freedom to worship and obey God and proclaim Him and His Word to others.

For example, the Supreme Court ruled in 1962 that prayer in public school was unconstitutional. In 1963 it declared that public schools were to no longer allow the Bible to be read in classes. In 1973 the Supreme Court legalized abortion, which struck at the heart of the Sixth Commandment prohibiting murder. In 1980 the court ruled that posting the Ten Commandments in public schools violated the Constitution.

These and other court decisions effectively disallowed the teaching of moral values that a majority of faiths in the country recognized as proper and necessary.

Since then, pressure has been relentless to realign society from a religion-accommodating orientation to a secular, agnostic and even atheistic one. And this is having a decidedly negative effect. As a November 2015 Pew Research Center study pointed out: “The change in Americans’ religious beliefs coincides with the rising share of the U.S. public that is not affiliated with any religion. The unaffiliated not only make up a growing portion of the population, they also are growing increasingly secular, at least on some key measures of religious belief.”

The same study also revealed that “the share of Americans who say they are ‘absolutely certain’ God exists has dropped sharply from 71% in 2007 to 63% in 2014.”

In addition, the report states: “The falloff in traditional religious beliefs and practices coincides with changes in the religious composition of the U.S. public. A growing share of Americans are religiously unaffiliated, including some who self-identify as atheists or agnostics as well as many who describe their religion as ‘nothing in particular.’ Altogether, the religiously unaffiliated (also called the “nones”) now account for 23% of the adult population, up from 16% in 2007.”

Social ills have seen a dramatic increase

Without the foundation of God and the Ten Commandments at work in people’s lives, it’s not surprising that the deleterious result is reflected in the popular culture. This is seen in people’s increasing appetite for illicit sex, pornography, violence, drug and alcohol addiction, and other evils. For instance, consider the following statistics published in December 2013 by the Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation, Inc., titled “The Effects of Removing Prayer and the Bible From the Schools in 1962”:

“Criminal arrest of teens is up 150% according to the US Bureau of Census; teen suicides in ages 15-19 years up 450% according to the National Center of Health Services; illegal drug activity is up 6,000% according to the National Institute of Drug Abuse; child abuse cases up 2,300% according to the US Department of Health and Human Services; divorce up 350% according to the US Department of Commerce.”

David Barton, founder of WallBuilders, an organization dedicated to presenting America’s forgotten history with an emphasis on its moral, religious and constitutional heritage, released a report in January 1997 titled “America: To Pray or Not to Pray.” Illustrated with more than 100 pages of graphs and statistical data, it showed that crime, venereal disease, premarital sex, illiteracy, suicide, drug use, public corruption

and other social ills exhibited a dramatic increase after the 1962 Supreme Court decision banning school prayer.

Growing hostility toward God

What has been the result of turning away from God and the Bible? Beside the social afflictions just mentioned, American society is also paying a terrible price in a growing hostility toward God and His righteous ways.

A conflagration of animosity has emanated from private organizations, politicians, government agencies, school and university officials and teachers, militant atheist groups and the media. In the midst of this firestorm, dedicated Christian individuals and institutions, while clinging tightly to their beliefs, are experiencing increasing intolerance.

For example, the Family Research Council has issued a comprehensive report titled “Hostility to Religion: The Growing Threat to Religious Liberty in the United States.” The initial report in 2014 revealed how religious freedom violations across the United States were high and increasing. An updated version in 2017 found that the number of incidents had grown at an alarming rate. “The first edition—spanning over a decade—contained 90 incidents. Yet 69 new incidents have been added in the short time since the last report. That is a 76 percent increase in just under three years.”

Increasing attacks on religious freedom

In addition, First Liberty Institute, a leading legal advocate for religious freedom and a close ally of the Family Policy Alliance, published a comprehensive 420-page report in 2017 titled “Undeniable: The Survey of Hostility to Religion in America.”

First Liberty’s president and chief counsel Kelly Shackelford, executive editor of the report, said in an interview with Bill Sherman of *Tulsa World* on May 5, 2017, “I’ve been doing this for over a quarter of a century, and I’ve never seen anything like the level of attacks on religious freedom that we’re seeing now.”

In speaking about the 418-page report, which includes more than 1,400 cases—a number that has doubled in the past three years—he said: “And those are just the published ones, so that’s just the tip of the iceberg. It’s just exploding.”

In referring to the newest battleground, the workplace, Shackelford said, “It’s a priority for us now.” He further stated, “If you lose religious freedom in the workplace—that’s where most people spend most of their waking hours—then you’ve really lost religious freedom.”

In the public arena, which includes government and the workplace, religious individuals and groups are facing increasing demands to hide their faith or sacrifice their beliefs in order to keep their jobs and maintain their livelihoods. Here are headlines illustrating a small number of the hundreds of legal cases that have been or are being brought before the courts for litigation:

- *Christian Counselor Fired for Referring Homosexual Clients to Other Counselors.*
- *Faith-Based Child Services Provider Denied Children Because of Religious Content.*
- *Kentucky Biblical Heritage Display Attacked as Unconstitutional.*

- *Lawsuit Challenges County Commissioners' Prayers Referencing Jesus.*

In the school system—from elementary through graduate school—students and teachers face professional, academic and personal duress for living out their faith. Below are sample cases among many hundreds:

- *Public School Bans Bible Club in Name of Nondiscrimination.*
- *School Bans Instrumental Music Associated With a Religious Song.*
- *Christian Club Risks Being Kicked Off Campus Because It Wants Christian Leaders.*
- *Group Demands School Band Stop Playing "God Bless America."*

There are also numerous threats against churches and ministries where religious leaders are censored, churches are

A growing share of Americans are religiously unaffiliated, including atheists or agnostics as well as many who describe their religion as "nothing in particular."

sued and ministers, priests and the laity are told they must violate their religious beliefs or face exorbitant fines. Here are a few of multiple dozens:

- *Church Sues for Right to Expand Building.*
- *Ocean, New Jersey, Blocks Orthodox Jewish School.*
- *African-American Church Denied Permit to Use Church Building as a Church.*
- *Former Teacher Sues Catholic School for Holding to Catholic Beliefs.*

In the military, chaplains and service members are increasingly being told that they cannot express their faith. Here are some example cases out of many that have been documented:

- *ACLU Sues Virginia Military Institute Over Prayers Before Meals.*
- *Marine Court-Martialed for Refusing to Remove Bible Verse From Desk.*
- *Air Force Veteran Forcibly Removed From Retirement Ceremony for Mentioning God.*
- *Group Coerces Air Force Into Changing Official Oath Due to Reference to God.*

Eroding the nation's moral and ethical foundation

We've also seen a number of recent incidents in the news demonstrating clear prejudice toward those who hold tightly to their Christian beliefs. On April 12, 2018, Mike Pompeo, President Trump's then-nominee for Secretary of State, faced an offensive line of questioning from U.S. Senator Cory Booker. The senator demanded to know if Pompeo opposed same-sex marriage and if he thought gay sex was perverse even though his views on marriage were unrelated to his intended position.

In questioning Pompeo, Senator Booker appeared to suggest that Pompeo's Christian faith and religious beliefs made him unsuitable to be Secretary of State. Here is the line of questioning, which was repeated more than once:

Booker: "Is being gay a perversion?"

Pompeo: "Senator, when I was a politician, I had a very clear view on whether it was appropriate for two same-sex persons to marry. I stand by that."

Booker: "So, you do not believe that it's appropriate for two gay people to marry?"

Pompeo: "Senator, I continue to hold that view."

Family Research Council president Tony Perkins wrote about this exchange on Twitter: "Not satisfied with Pompeo's pledge to treat everyone with respect and dignity, Sen. Booker demanded an endorsement of gay sex. Is this the Left's new litmus test for public service?"

Similarly, on June 10, 2017, Senator Bernie Sanders treated Russ Vought with similar disdain in his confirmation hearing to be deputy director of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. Senator Sanders asked Vought, who is a Christian, if he stood by a past statement he had made about his beliefs.

When he declined to deny it the senator reprimanded him.

It's important to consider that it was only a few decades ago when a well-qualified, law-abiding person who professed Christianity and sought to promote the sanctity of marriage would have been welcomed into higher governmental office. But it's completely different in today's America as secular, cultural and political "progressives" actively seek to malign and even destroy such a person's reputation.

We should recognize that it's becoming increasingly difficult for Christians to practice their religion without criticism or intrusive restrictions.

Religious liberty is being threatened. Indeed there is a war on God taking place in America. God, who has greatly blessed the nation throughout previous centuries, is under attack. Indeed, a systematic effort is underway to expel Him and His commandments from the public square, which, as a result, is eroding the nation's moral and ethical foundation.

We wrote previously of the war on God in America in the November-December 2014 issue of *The Good News* (available online). Clearly that war yet rages on.

No fear of God before their eyes

What does the future hold for America if this situation continues and prevails? Let's examine what happened in ancient Israel when many of its people ceased honoring and obeying their Creator and Sustainer. While doing so let's note that since God's character does not change (Malachi 3:6) and that "there is no partiality" with Him (Romans 2:11), His blessings for keeping His laws or enacting punishments for breaking them are universally applicable—and remain so today.

Although the prophet Amos was originally a sheepbreeder, God nevertheless sent him to give Israel's people and leaders a prophetic warning during the reign of King Jeroboam II who ruled from about 782 to 753 B.C. Amos boldly and strongly

proclaimed God’s divine message, which included the urgent need for people to repent of sin and return to Him (Amos 6:1-3).

Sadly, the people didn’t listen and had no interest in changing. Due to their prosperity and pleasure-seeking they had lulled themselves into a false sense of security (verses 4-6). The national mood was simply to ignore anything to do with a so-called “God.”

During Amos’ day, true religion had no purpose or meaning for many people. They were simply filled with pride, self-satisfaction and self-indulgence. And through Amos, God told them what He thought of their irresponsibility and what He was going to do to get their attention (verse 8). We see, then, that many in ancient Israel lived in a secular world of their own making and couldn’t have cared less about anything to do with God.

Is it much different in today’s society? Where is the love and deep respect for God and His righteous ways? What has happened to God-ordained morals and values?

God’s name is not treated with reverence, and His commandments are ignored or defied by an increasing number of people. The esteem for the God-created institution of marriage has nearly all but disintegrated. The God-ordained intent of sex within the bounds of a loving marriage relationship is often ridiculed. The tragic crime of abortion takes the lives of nearly a million innocent babies each year in the United States. Forty million Americans are regular visitors to pornographic Internet websites. The list could go on and on!

A growing number of people seem to think they can do almost anything without facing consequences. All this is indicative of the sorry state of our society. As the apostle Paul put it bluntly in Romans 3:18, “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

He also wrote in Romans 1:28 of those who “did not like to retain God in their knowledge.” This is so true of society today! Lawlessness is mounting, and many people casually partake of sinful ways while thinking it’s no big deal. But it is a big deal to God!

In the midst of the increasing corruption and degeneration in our culture, God is looking for those who will stand out from the crowd and do what is right. He seeks courageous, obedient, upright men and women (Ezekiel 9:4). God will hear their prayers and cries just as He heard and answered those of the patriarchs, prophets and disciples of old.

The prophet Malachi delivered a decidedly unpleasant prophecy about the time immediately preceding the return of Christ. He explained that the unthinkable will happen: “For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,” says the LORD of hosts, ‘that will leave them neither root nor branch’” (Malachi 4:1).

While this terrible trouble will fall on the ungodly, Jesus Christ promised to make a way of escape for many of His faithful, obedient people (Luke 21:36; Revelation 12:13-17).

What manner of persons ought you to be?

But we now live in a society where a growing number of people don’t want to be corrected for their disobedience and contempt toward God (Isaiah 30:9-11). And they ignore critical warnings—proclaimed by God’s Church—that *could save their*

lives (see Matthew 24:14; Ezekiel 33:4-5).

The systemic lawlessness and corruption occurring in the world is like the proverbial bulge in a rock wall—which has been there so long it’s been taken for granted and ignored. But the day is coming when that wall *will collapse*. “Therefore, this is what the Holy One of Israel says: ‘Because you have rejected this message, relied on oppression and depended on deceit, this sin will become for you like a high wall, cracked and bulging, that collapses suddenly in an instant’” (Isaiah 30:12-13, New International Version).

This is what awaits our society unless people turn to God in repentance and obedience. Sudden destruction will occur that will utterly shock the world’s citizens (1 Thessalonians 5:3). “Life as usual” will come to a crushing, grinding halt! The comfortable existence filled with the latest electronic devices, entertainment and pleasure will come crashing down! The wall of this man-made, Satan-influenced civilization will topple and crumble (see Ezekiel 5:12-15).

A time of punishment is approaching for God-denying, God-defying society. But thankfully, that will be followed by an amazing time of restoration after Jesus Christ installs His global Kingdom on earth at His second coming. At that time He will give His faithful saints awesome power and immortality, and they will help Him administer the government of God throughout the entire world.


God’s question for you and me

The terrible events prophesied in Scripture are certain to come on those who don’t change their ways. Even so, God has a vital question for you and me: “Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?” (2 Peter 3:11).

As mentioned earlier, in ancient times God looked for courageous, faithful men and women who would stand up for truth and righteousness.

He seeks the same now. And He can find them in you—if *you faithfully do as He asks*. God provides tremendous help and power through Jesus Christ to all those who love, respect and obey Him, even as the God-resisting society around us continues its reckless degeneration.

Human beings are destined to ultimately lose their self-destructive war on God. In the meantime, however, as we watch the attacks on Christian values in today’s society, let’s pray for a desperately needed reversal toward spiritual repentance and renewal. Indeed, the only answer is in turning wholeheartedly to God while seeking His divine forgiveness, strength and support.

He will provide this gladly to all who sincerely go to Him in humble repentance and obedience. Will you be one of these? 



LEARN MORE

Does Bible prophecy have anything to say about society’s hostility toward God? Yes it does, and it shows how it will lead to the destruction of major nations! To learn more, download or request our free study guide *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.

BTmagazine.org/booklets



“Jerusalem’s Temple Mount: Center of Conflict”

I want to commend you for the time and effort put into this article. I’ve wondered about the location of the temple for quite a while. This article sheds a whole new light on the subject, citing many facts and evidence that the previous temples were indeed built where the Dome of the Rock is located. I now know some valuable information that I didn’t know before.

From the Internet

“Jesus Wasn’t Crucified on Friday or Resurrected on Sunday”

I read the article “Jesus Wasn’t Crucified on Friday or Resurrected on Sunday” online and thought it did a fantastic job laying out the evidence! It made me really curious if there is a list of what the United Church of God believes. I’ve had a really hard time finding a church that is willing to strictly follow the Bible based on the evidence of what it says, even if that means giving up preconceived notions of what we think, and to always put God’s ways above the ways of man.

From the Internet

Thank you for the compliment. We have a study guide called Fundamental Beliefs of the United Church of God that explains our 20 primary doctrines. You can read it online or request a copy at ucg.org/booklets, or write or call the office nearest you listed on page 39.

Responding to *Beyond Today* television

I always record your show on the Word Network, but lately nothing has recorded. I have checked my settings and all is good. Have you cancelled your show? I really feel I need it. This show has opened my mind to intense Bible study, and I do not know of any other Bible study that compares. Thank you and God bless.

From the Internet

*Thank you for checking with us. On April 6 *Beyond Today* began airing every week on WGN America, reaching a potential audience of 82 million households in all 50 U.S. states. *Beyond Today* ended programming on the Word Network on March 31, 2018. To find the WGN America channel locations in your area please visit wgnamerica.com/channel-finder/ and enter your zip code. You will be shown the providers and channel number(s) on which you can watch WGN America in your area.*

I watched your program “Is God A Trinity?” Wow, you said much of what I believe to be truth! Is this the answer I have been praying for? I have always been confused about Jesus being God. I really hope this is the answer I was seeking. I want and need Jesus in my life to fight the horrible anxiety and depression I always feel. Maybe He can help me!

From the Internet

Thankful for free literature

I want to thank you for sending me a free copy of your study aid *The Ten Commandments*. My wife got it first out of the mailbox. I haven’t gotten my chance to read it yet, but I’ve thumbed through it and can’t wait much longer. In fact it has gone “viral,” and now my wife’s family, my family and a host of my prayer group want to get their hands on a copy!

From the Internet

I really enjoy the wisdom *Beyond Today* magazine publishes from the Bible. It helps me to understand world conditions in the present and what to look forward to in the future.

Subscriber in India

Hello there and God bless you. I just ordered two booklets from your website. Thank you very much and we are praying for you!

Reader in Iran

Looking for a congregation with the same beliefs

I am searching for a church home that does not practice pagan holidays, that practices the truth revealed by Jesus, observing His appointed days. I am in need of podcasts, as I am in the process of recovering my life after Hurricane Irma. I can’t always afford to go very far. Please send me all you can so I may not grow weary, and that I may be renewed in the Word. I practice reading the Bible daily, and only want to follow the true teachings of Christ.

From the Internet

In my area I can find no churches that preach the biblical truth. They do not seem to know or understand the Word of God. They teach that the soul goes to heaven at death, that the Sabbath was changed to Sunday, etc. Where is there a church that observes the true Saturday Sabbath? I feel compelled to attend a local church, but do not understand how so many can be misled.

From the Internet

*Thanks for your letter. The United Church of God has congregations in many areas, and one may be near you. Visit ucg.org/churches to find the closest one to you and to get information to contact our nearest pastor, or write or call the office closest to you listed on page 39. Our website also offers a vast amount of video and audio teaching, including hundreds of episodes of our *Beyond Today* television program, a live weekly Sabbath service webcast, and archived sermons from many UCG ministers across the country, to name a few.*

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*I really enjoy *Beyond Today* magazine. It gives a good understanding of the Bible and highlights information not given in mainstream Christian faiths. I highly recommend this magazine to all.*

—K.T., Facebook fan



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Lepers All Were We

When Jesus healed a group of lepers, outcast and despairing, only one returned in thankfulness. This story has much to say about our own lives.

by Robin Webber

Over the years I have talked to war veterans who mentioned that when coming under enemy fire and seemingly moments away from death they prayed, “Oh God, if you get me out of this one, I’ll go to church every week.”

Were their pleas for rescue sincere? Sure! But in our human weakness, we stop thinking about what God has done for us and fail to remain thankful and committed. Time and distance create a cloudy amnesia to the intense need expressed in our moments of desperation. Words under pressure are momentarily sincere, but at the end of the day talk is cheap.

Remembering where, when and how we personally encountered God’s intervening love is one of the surest markers that we are responding to Jesus’ invitation of “Follow Me” (see Matthew 4:19; John 21:19). It’s the stepping stone to a new and different life—no longer alone. It’s a key factor enabling others to know through our witness that their life need not be destined towards despair, but to wellbeing unimagined. Grateful remembrance is the necessary springboard to a transformed existence.

Such is the encounter discovered in Luke 17:11-19, where Jesus, in moving through the adjacent regions of Galilee and Samaria on His trek towards His ultimate rendezvous with destiny in Jerusalem, encounters 10 lepers. Time is precious, yet important lessons will be presented among those Jesus personally encounters that day—lessons that are also for us.

Jesus enters where hope is lost

When He came to a certain village, 10 desperate men “lifted up their voices” in crying out, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” (verse 13). It’s here that Jesus enters where hope is lost.

We are not told the composition of the 10, except that some were Jews and at least one was a Samaritan. These may have ostracized one another earlier in life, as Samaritans were considered by the Jews to be “half-breeds” and their religion to be worthless and contrary to God. They were the “others” to be loathed and despised. But now they are bound as one in adversity, for all are lepers.

Leprosy, a scourge of the ancient world, was a progressively deteriorating disease that attacked limbs and nerve endings of the body. Its festering lesions were external manifestations of the creeping corruption of the body below the skin’s surface.

Scripture here places these “walking dead” as standing “afar off” (verse 12), a fact corroborated by other records of the customs of that day regarding infected individuals. They were to remain isolated, keeping at least six feet from others, 150 feet if upwind. They had to warn others of their presence from a distance to avoid contact with the land of the living and healthy. They were considered cursed, as the cultural mindset

of the day linked physical ailments to personal or generational sin (see John 9:1-3).

The Son of God intervenes in the lives of these without hope, telling the 10 lepers, “Go, show yourselves to the priests” (Luke 17:14). This was in alignment with Leviticus 14:1-32, which offered lepers acceptance back into the community if their condition was no longer detectable.

But notice that when Jesus gave instruction to go, they had not been healed—yet! Luke 17:14 further says that it was on their departure in obeying Jesus’ instruction that they were healed. Imagine their joy as the lesions disappeared and their flesh was given new life!

But in the next few verses Jesus calls out, by means of an exception, a terrible human malady—that of ingratitude: “And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. [What?!] So Jesus answered and said, ‘Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?’ And He said to him, ‘Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well’” (verses 15-19).

This story is our story

How do we personalize the lessons mentioned in these few verses? Is being grateful simply offering a big “thank you” as soon as possible, or is it something more profound?

Let’s first realize that Jesus’ earthly ministry was not accidental, but rather by design. His encounters were not random, but intentional. We simply don’t worship an accidental Savior. He didn’t stumble into that village or bump into those lepers because His GPS wasn’t working. He said early on, “I must be about My Father’s business” (Luke 2:49).

The theme of Luke’s writing is crystalized in Luke 19:10, in which Jesus discloses that He came “to seek and save that which was lost.” Luke penned a Gospel saturated with stories about gentiles, women, lepers and people plagued with demons—all those who were culturally and conveniently kept “outside the camp.”

He later wrote the book of Acts, the early story of the Church of God, the Body of Christ with members joined together against spiritual isolation. The proverbial safe distance from that which is unclean is erased through Christ and His sacrifice. Luke never missed a beat in sharing God’s reaching out to those cast aside.

Yet those were not the only outcasts needing rescue. We should recognize that, under the lens of God’s perspective, *we were all lepers at one time—spiritual lepers!* Some of us may



Under the lens of God's perspective, we were all lepers at one time—*spiritual lepers!*

have forgotten this, and some may not realize this yet as God enters the village of our existence.

Sin can be likened to leprosy. Consider the story of Aaron and Miriam's dispute with God's role for Moses in Numbers 12. Sibling rivalry, personal pride and a spirit of accusation led to God briefly punishing Miriam with leprosy, externally exposing what was internally eating her up.

Scripture declares that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). It's our sins, the spreading lesions on our heart's nature, that caused us to be separated from God, with His face hidden from us (Isaiah 59:2)—a gap much wider than even 150 feet, this one of our own making.

But God heard your cry and hears our cry now, echoing the lepers' cry of "mercy!" God the Father sent His Son who came willingly as the unblemished Lamb, One without any lesions in heart, soul or body—yes, "Him who knew no sin to be sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21), paying the penalty of sin so we could live.

Continually offering the sacrifice of praise

Hebrews 13 offers a colorful description of Jesus' suffering and isolation from the land of the living for our sakes and what our response should henceforth be: "Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate [like a leper]. Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach . . . [And] therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (verses 12-13, 15).

What specific steps do we incorporate *now* in offering such sacrifices of praise as we heed Christ's call of "Follow Me"? Perhaps until now you too have suffered from the plague of spiritual amnesia regarding God's intervention. How do we, as the thankful Samaritan, glorify God with a loud voice?

As he did, we are to fall down in devoted praise and grate-

fulness—in worship. This is more than a quick head nod and obligatory "thank you." We display how we value God's initial and ongoing intervention—transforming us from the walking dead to a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17)—by yielding our thoughts, words and deeds 24/7 before the great and loving Giver of life, surrendering all outcomes into His hands. He alone is able to erase the distance that separated us from Him and others. He alone gives us a joint future of close fellowship in His family forever.

One vital way we worship Him is in acknowledging His grace, His favor, every day by treating every human being who is made in the image of God with dignity and respect. Perhaps it's time to eliminate our own safe-distance rule regarding those we feel are outside God's ability to reach. To heed Christ's invitation of "Follow Me" is to understand that it's not our role to choose who can be part of God's family.

Like the Samaritan, we will discover that when God enters our lives He will always give us a job to perform. He could do everything all by Himself, but He wants us to partner with His grace our responding obedience.

Sometimes it won't make sense to us in the moment, like when He told the lepers to go to the priests even before they were healed. But we need to come to understand that God sees things as if they already are! At the end of the story, we saw that Jesus gave another job to the thankful Samaritan: "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well" (Luke 17:19). He was to carry on in life in thankfulness, remaining aware of what had been done for him.

Again, God is always going to give us a job! When is the last time we asked God, "What is my job—did I miss it?" It may be a little job or big job. It makes no difference, because we worship a big God who takes our "little" and makes it great to serve His purposes.

One of my lifelong jobs and privileges is to encourage people about God's ability to heal. When I was an older teen I was divinely healed of a dreaded disease. I have not forgotten and remain eternally grateful. As a minister for more than 40 years, I've had opportunity to share my story with those facing their "valley of the shadow of death." Like the thankful leper, I obey our common Master's call to go on our way in life with gratitude and share the story that God has given me. Are you sharing yours?

A grateful heart is a growing heart

Like the thankful Samaritan, let's appreciate that our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ are always willing to give audience to a grateful heart. Gratefulness allows us to grow and gain in understanding about God's purposes for us and through us. When the Samaritan returned in thanks, he discovered a missing piece of the puzzle in what made his healing possible when Jesus told him, "Your faith has made you well" (verse 19).

What does God have in store to share with you as you return to Him again and again in accepting the most incredible invitation offered to mankind—"Follow Me"? Let's find out together as we move forward till next we meet again in this column—we who have realized that we were all once lepers, and would remain so, but for the grace of our Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ our Lord. **BT**

The Beast, & The False Prophet & The Antichrist

Welcome to the 12th lesson in the “Bible Prophecy and You” series! Today one can hear or read every imaginable interpretation or speculation about the meaning of the apocalyptic figures of Bible prophecy referred to as the *Beast*, the *False Prophet* and the *Antichrist*. This lesson will introduce you to what Bible prophecy really says about these fascinating and frightening subjects!

What or who is the end-time “Beast” of the book of Revelation? What or who is the prophesied “Antichrist”? What will international geopolitics be like in the end time? With this lesson, we’ll get an overview of these issues.

An unholy church-state union

Following is the important story—much abbreviated—of how “Christianity” became a state-sponsored religion. It will set the stage for understanding the prophesied figures in question here.

In the prophecy Jesus Christ gave on the Mount of Olives shortly before His crucifixion, the first thing He warned about was a counterfeit Christianity (Matthew 24:4-5). Almost from the start, deceivers began trying to influence the early Church.

Before long, there were several versions of “Christianity”—one group trying to stay faithful to the pure truth of the Bible and Christ’s teachings while others blended biblical teaching with other beliefs and philosophies. Such blending is called *syncretism*. Various popular pagan Roman beliefs were adapted and fused to Christian teaching, many of these actually originating with the ancient Babylonian mystery religion.

The Roman emperor Constantine the Great decided to make Christianity the official state religion to further unify and strengthen his empire. He used his power to bring different factions of Christianity together, and the result was official recognition of various beliefs that were similar in many ways to the popular pagan Roman sun worship. For example, by this

time the visible majority church had adopted pagan Sunday observance in place of biblical seventh-day Sabbath-keeping.

The state-sponsored church further evolved and grew in power and became known as the Roman Catholic Church. It came to hold great political as well as religious authority, so much so that at times the bishop of Rome, who came to be known as the pope, could enthrone and depose emperors. Because of the intimate relationship between church and state that continued through various revivals of the Roman Empire, for several centuries the state power was called the *Holy Roman Empire*—yet it was quite an *unholy* church-state union. The combined church-state persecution of other Christians became especially intense during that time.

The Roman Catholic Church adopted a governmental structure strikingly similar to that of the old Roman Empire. Historians have remarked on the Roman Catholic Church being a mirror “image” of the Roman Empire.

Gaining clarity concerning “antichrist”

In the Bible, the word “antichrist” is mentioned in four verses, all in John’s epistles: 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7. John clearly established what he meant by “antichrist”—meaning “against Christ” or “enemy of Christ.” All teachings that contradict Christ’s identity or teachings are antichrist.

In the first reference here John tells his readers that while they had heard that “the Antichrist” was coming (the Greek word for “the” being present in the majority of early New Testament manuscripts), there were nevertheless already *many* “antichrists” who had come—and there have been many since.

Most people who are interested in Bible prophecy believe there will be one evil leader in the end time who will fulfill the role of the Antichrist. But the Bible actually talks about *two* evil leaders working together in the same end-time church-state union—called “the beast” and “the false prophet” (Revelation 19:20). Which one will be the Antichrist? Or will both together be the Antichrist?

To obtain a better understanding of what the Bible says—and does not say—about “antichrist,” download or read our free study guide *Who Is the Antichrist?* available at ucg.org/booklets.

Most of this lesson will focus on what the Bible tells us about *the Beast* and *the False Prophet*. Then we will come back to the subject of *the Antichrist*.

► What four great world-ruling empires are illustrated by the image in Daniel 2 and the beasts in Daniel 7 and Daniel 8?

At the time of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 2, several great empires had already fallen, including Egypt and Assyria. The image in the dream represented the geopolitical future from Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylonian Empire (the “head of gold”) until “the latter days” when Jesus Christ will return to establish the Kingdom of God (Daniel 2:28, 38, 44-45).

It is obvious from history that the next three empires were the Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman Empires. Daniel’s vision in chapter 8 confirms that Babylon was followed by “the kings of Media and Persia” and then “the kingdom of Greece” (Daniel 8:20-21). The four beasts of Daniel 7:3-7 represent the same four empires mentioned in Daniel 2. Both Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 tell us that the final empire extends to the end of the age. This empire will not end until it is *crushed by Jesus Christ* at His return (Daniel 2:35, 44; 7:9, 13, 21-22).

► What are the various “beasts” referred to in Daniel and Revelation?

In prophecy, the word “beast” (here a wild, dangerous animal) can refer to a gentile (non-Israelite) kingdom, a false church or a dictatorial leader of a kingdom or church. Following are the several prophetic “beasts”:

Successive *gentile empires* are pictured in Daniel 7 as “four great beasts”—a lion, a bear, a four-headed leopard and “a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible” (Daniel 7:3-7, 17). These four correspond to the four parts of the image in Daniel 2, representing the empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome (see chart on page 37).

In Revelation 13:1-4 and in Revelation 17, “the beast” is the Roman Empire, *culminating in the last revival of the Roman Empire* before Christ returns.

Revelation 13 transitions from speaking of the revived Roman Empire as a “beast” to speaking of the *political and military dictator* of that empire as the “beast” (verses 4-8). This is in line with other prophecies of kings and the kingdoms they rule being referred to interchangeably. The “beast” dictator is also referred to in Revelation 17:12-13. Many people think that *he* is the future *Antichrist*.

In Revelation 13:11, there is “another beast” who “had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon.” A lamb is a biblical symbol of Jesus Christ and a dragon is a biblical symbol for Satan the devil. This, then, is a *powerful religious authority* that claims to represent Christ but is, in reality, a tool of Satan. This figure “deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs [false miracles]”—using them to gain worldwide allegiance (verses 13-14). Many people think that *this* one is the future Antichrist.

And *Satan* himself can be called a beast. After all, he is called a “dragon” and “serpent” in Revelation 12:9. He “deceives the whole world,” and he has many “angels” (demons) who follow

him. He is actually the power behind the other two beasts of Revelation 13 (verses 4, 11).

► Does the Roman Empire fall and then experience 10 revivals, seven of which are “ridden by the great harlot”?

“After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns” (Daniel 7:7).

“Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name . . . And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast” (Revelation 13:1, 3).



Two mysterious figures the Bible calls “the Beast” and “the False Prophet” will play prominent roles in prophesied end-time events.

“Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls [of the last plagues] came and talked with me, saying to me, ‘Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.’ So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns” (Revelation 17:1-3).

The “deadly wound” refers to the fall of the Roman Empire in A.D. 476, but the empire has been “healed” through successive revivals (Revelation 13:3). By the time Christ returns, the empire will have experienced 10 revivals, represented by the 10 horns of the fourth beast in Daniel 7 and the 10 horns of the beast in Revelation 13.

The “little horn” of Daniel 7 (verses 8, 20) symbolizes a powerful church whose leader speaks “pompous words”—making authoritative pronouncements that are claimed to be *infallible*. Three horns “fell” before this “little horn,” showing the false church in opposition to and prevailing against the first three revivals of the empire (7:8, 20, 24).

The seven heads of the beast in Revelation 17:3 represent

the last seven revivals of the Roman Empire—the seven that are “ridden” by the “great harlot.” In prophecy, a woman can be symbolic of a religion or church. In this chapter, a powerful church (and her leader) attempt to steer the “beast” (the empire) from which she gets support. For a further explanation, see “The Two Women of Revelation” in our free study guide *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* (at ucg.org/booklets).

► What forces will bring about another revival of the Roman Empire?

“Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men” (Revelation 13:11-13).

Until several decades ago, many people were skeptical that another restoration of the Roman Empire could or would ever happen. But since the Treaty of Rome in 1957, Europe has continued to make progress toward unification. Today, the idea of a United States of Europe doesn’t seem far-fetched at all. The impetus toward unity is driven by the perceived commercial, financial, political and military advantages it will bring, in line with what’s portrayed in Revelation 18.

However, the greatest unifying force in the future will likely be submission to one common religion (which may become more powerful as a result of an ecumenical movement and a backlash against encroaching Islam). Once the religious leader (the second beast) “performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,” most people will eagerly submit (Revelation 13:13).

► Will the final revival be composed of “10 kings” under one “beast” ruler?

“You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image [of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream] on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth . . .

“And in the days of these kings [represented by the 10 toes of the image] the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Daniel 2:34-35, 44).

“So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns . . . The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast.

“These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful” (Revelation 17:3, 12-14).

The 10 toes of the image in Daniel 2 represent 10 political entities—nations or power blocs—that will voluntarily submit to the supreme power of a world dictator. This must take place shortly before Christ returns, because the prophecy tells us that the two feet with 10 toes will be broken by the great “stone” that represents Christ returning to establish the Kingdom of God on earth (Daniel 2:34-35, 44).

The 10 political powers are also represented by the “ten horns” of Revelation 17:3. “The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour [a short time] as kings with the beast. These are of one mind [in agreement], and they will give their power and authority to the beast” (verses 12-13). The next verse proves that this takes place shortly before Jesus Christ returns because “these will make war with the Lamb [Christ], and the Lamb will overcome them” (verse 14).

► What is revealed about “the great harlot” in Revelation 17?

“Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, ‘Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.’

“So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

“I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement . . . Then he said to me, ‘The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues . . . And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth’” (Revelation 17:1-6, 15, 18).

Consider this remarkable imagery:

- She has powerful influence worldwide—over “peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues” (verses 1, 15; see also 18:3).
- She is a “harlot” committing “fornication,” effectively prostituting herself to the world’s political leaders—compromising principles and exchanging favors (verse 2).
- In her history, she has embraced “blasphemy” and “filthiness” (verses 3-4).
- Many of her teachings originated in the ancient Babylonian mystery religion (verse 5).
- She is considered the “mother” church of many other churches (verse 5).
- She has been responsible for the persecution and martyrdom of many true Christians (verse 6).
- The “woman” is headquartered in the world’s great imperial city (verse 18).

► Who is “the false prophet”?

“Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he

deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone” (Revelation 19:20).

John was seeing in vision a powerful religious leader who worked signs or false miracles *in the presence of* the Beast or *on behalf of* the Beast. The False Prophet is the same as the one called “another beast” who performs miraculous “signs” in Revelation 13:11. He is also the leader of the false church (“the harlot”) in Revelation 17:1-5.

As the head of this system named “Mystery, Babylon” (verse 5), he is the same as “the man of sin” and “lawless one” who presides over “the mystery of lawlessness” and uses “power, signs, and lying wonders” in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-9. He is also referred to as “another horn” who will “persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law” in Daniel 7 (verses 8, 20-22, 24-25).

► **Will the power of the end-time “beast” reach around virtually the entire world?**

“Thus he said: “The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all other kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, trample it and break it in pieces” (Daniel 7:23).

“And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, ‘Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?’ And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months.

“Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:3-8).

“The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’ And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore” (Revelation 18:9-11).

The end-time empire “shall devour the whole earth” (Daniel

Succession of Kingdoms Prophesied in Daniel and Revelation					
HISTORICAL FULFILLMENT	IMAGE (DANIEL 2)	FOUR BEASTS (DANIEL 7)	BEAST FROM SEA (REVELATION 13)	SCARLET BEAST (REVELATION 17)	
Neo-Babylonian Empire (625-539 B.C.)	First kingdom: Head of gold (verses 32, 38)	First beast (lion) (verse 4)	Beast with seven heads, leopard body, bear feet and lion mouth) (verses 1-2), corresponds to four beasts of seven total heads in Daniel 7	Scarlet beast has seven heads and is ridden by an immoral scarlet woman representing a great false church (verses 3-6)	
Medo-Persian Empire (558-330 B.C.)	Second kingdom: Chest and arms of silver (verses 32, 39)	Second beast (bear) (verse 5)			
Greek Empire (divides into four parts after death of Alexander the Great)	Third kingdom: Belly and thighs of bronze (verses 32, 39)	Third beast (leopard with four heads) (verse 6)			
Roman Empire (31 B.C.-A.D. 476) and its revivals throughout history until Jesus Christ returns to reign on earth	Fourth kingdom: two legs of iron (verses 33, 40-43)	Fourth beast (of iron) has 10 horns (verse 7), first three uprooted by “little horn” (verses 8, 20-27), last seven with its approval	The beast’s seventh head has 10 horns (verse 1)		
Kingdom of Vandals		1st horn (uprooted)	1st horn		
Kingdom of Heruli		2nd horn (uprooted)	2nd horn		
Kingdom of Ostrogoths		3rd horn (uprooted)	3rd horn		
Justinian’s Empire		4th horn	4th horn		1st head
Charlemagne’s Empire		5th horn	5th horn		2nd head
Otto the Great’s Empire		6th horn	6th horn		3rd head
Charles V’s Empire		7th horn	7th horn	4th head	
Napoleon’s Empire		8th horn	8th horn	5th head	
Hitler-Mussolini Axis		9th horn	9th horn	6th head	
Final revival of the Roman Empire yet to come, with 10 rulers united under a single leader	Two feet with 10 toes of iron and clay (verses 33, 42)—10 rulers destroyed at Christ’s return (verses 34, 44).	10th horn Fourth kingdom’s last horn destroyed at Christ’s return (verses 24-27).	10th horn	7th head with 10 horns or 10 rulers who receive power with the Beast for a short time and are destroyed at Christ’s return (verses 12-14).	

7:23). The “dragon” will give the Beast “authority . . . over every tribe, tongue, and nation” (Revelation 13:4-7). The other “beast”—the religious leader—causes all “to worship the first beast” (Revelation 13:12). He also causes all “to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name [666]” (Revelation 13:16-18). Thus there will be huge financial pressure on everyone to submit to the authority of the Beast.

Together with the False Prophet, the Beast will rule over “Babylon”—an evil worldwide system that entangles everything—spiritually, commercially and culturally. (The term *Babylon* represents this system that goes all the way back to Babel and in John’s day seems to have been a code word for Rome as the successor in the sequence of gentile empires that began with Babylon.) When Christ sends down plagues and overthrows the greedy and evil empire, “the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore” (Revelation 18:11).

► Who and what will people be required to worship under the end-time Roman Empire called “Babylon”?

- *The False Prophet* will demand to be worshipped. He is described in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 as “the man of sin . . . the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God [*despicably antichrist!*]” In Daniel 7 we read that the “other horn . . . shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law” (verses 20, 25).

- *The Beast*—the evil dictator—will be worshipped because Satan will exalt and empower him (Revelation 13:4). “All who dwell on the earth will worship him” (verse 8). And the other beast (the False Prophet) “causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast”—much like the worship of the Roman emperors of old (verses 11-12). Both the Beast and the False Prophet will be possessed by the spirit of “the dragon [Satan the devil],” which explains why they will have amazing power and charisma (Revelation 16:13; 12:9). In fact, people unwittingly worship Satan himself in all this, as the symbolic heads, horns and crowns of the Beast power spring from the dragon (compare Revelation 12:9; 13:1, 4).

- *The “image of the beast”*—primarily a powerful church organization—will be worshipped (Revelation 13:14-15). Evidently it is a powerful church organization that is structured like the early Roman Empire (“the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived”—verses 3, 14). It is led by “another beast”—the powerful religious leader who “performs great signs” (verse 13). The religious leader demands worship of the image, and those who refuse will be killed (verse 15).

- *Babylon the Great* of Revelation 17 and 18—a worldwide commercial and cultural system with a one-world religion as a unifying foundation. “She says in her heart, ‘I sit as queen,

and am no widow, and will not see sorrow” (Revelation 18:7; compare Isaiah 47:5, 8-9). The merchants of the earth especially will mourn her fall, “saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls” (Revelation 18:15-16). “By your sorcery all the nations were deceived” (verse 23).

► Whom should we regard as the end-time Antichrist—the Beast or the False Prophet?

The Beast will lead the armies of the earth to make war against Christ (Revelation 19:19). And many call him the Antichrist, with the False Prophet seen as merely his promoter. Yet the False Prophet clearly leads the lawless mystery religion John was also decrying in his descriptions of “antichrist.” If there is one preeminent human Antichrist this would seem to fit.

However, the Beast will represent this religious system as well. Since both men will be enemies of Christ—both will demand to be worshipped, both will persecute the saints, and they will be working together in a partnership of sorts, though likely jostling for control—it is probably accurate to refer to them both as *antichrists*. They will receive the same ignominious punishment at the same time. Right after Christ returns, John sees in vision that “these two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone” (Revelation 19:20).

Of course, the ultimate Antichrist is the one who truly leads and empowers these figures and all who have opposed God through history—Satan the devil.

When Christ at last returns, *all antichrists will be removed!* And Satan, the ultimate Antichrist, will be bound and put away (Revelation 20:1-3). When the seventh angel blows his trumpet, there will be loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever” (Revelation 11:15, English Standard Version).

Apply Now

It’s important to stay aware of developments in the world in light of what the Bible tells us will soon happen. One way to remain informed is to keep reading the “World News and Prophecy” section of *Beyond Today* magazine.

And for more on the topic covered here, we recommend that you download and read our study guides *Who Is the Antichrist?* and *The Final Superpower*. Also do a search at ucg.org for “Europe and the Church,” which will bring up a fascinating series of articles covering this subject. **BT**

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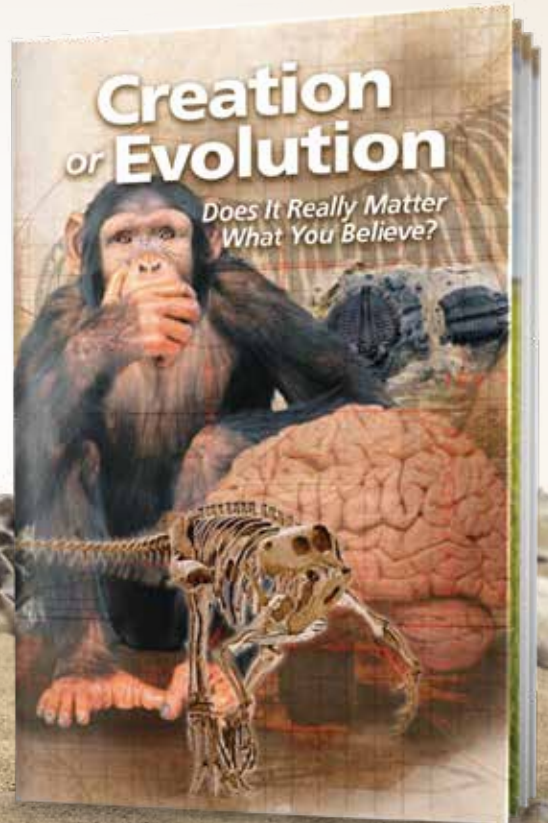
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