

The Good News

March-April 2012

A MAGAZINE OF UNDERSTANDING

Planet Earth:

Lucky Accident or Master Handiwork?

Do Science and the Bible Conflict? 8 • Prove There Is a God Even Without the Bible 14
Why Was Jesus Christ Crucified? 25 • What Does Easter Really Commemorate? 32



Never have we seen atheists so aggressively promoting their cause. In the city where I live, an atheist group is paying to put up billboards that read: “God is an imaginary friend. Choose reality, it will be better for all of us.” Several years ago it paid for other billboards that said: “Don’t believe in God? You are not alone.”

In London, a campaign several years ago plastered 800 of the city’s famous red double-decker buses with signs stating: “There’s probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life.”

And of course, we’ve seen a recent spate of books by atheist authors bearing such titles as *The God Delusion*, *The End of Faith* and *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*.

We find ourselves standing at an odd crossroads in human history. Never have we seen atheists so aggressive in pushing their anti-God agenda while scientific discoveries are demonstrating again and again the existence of a divine Creator!

“We still have to come to terms with the origin of the laws of nature. And the only viable explanation here is the divine Mind.”

The number of revelations from many scientific fields is steadily growing as researchers peer more deeply into the mysteries of things as tiny as the cell and as large as our planet and the universe. Everywhere they look they see handiwork that can only be explained by miraculous power and divine intelligence—things that could never be the result of random chance as argued by evolutionists.

Several years ago atheists were embarrassed when one of the world’s preeminent atheists, Oxford University professor Antony Flew, announced that his commitment to follow the scientific evidence wherever it led had compelled him to renounce his atheism and conclude that, as his 2008 book title stated, *There Is a God*.

What caused him to change his mind? In short, an objective look at the accumulating evidence from recent scientific discoveries. Regarding discoveries from microbiology, he wrote, “What I think the DNA material has done is that it has shown, by the almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements which are needed to produce (life), that *intelligence must have been involved in getting these extraordinarily diverse elements to work together*” (p. 75, emphasis added throughout).

Looking on a much larger scale, that of the cosmos, Flew concluded: “The laws of nature . . . and the existence of the universe—*can only be explained in the light of an Intelligence that explains both its own existence and that of the world. Such a discovery of the divine does not come through experiments and equations*” (p. 155).

It wasn’t just a matter of the obvious design he witnessed in these creations, but also the precise fine-tuning of the laws that governed them. “We still have to come to terms with the origin of the laws of nature,” he wrote. “*And the only viable explanation here is the divine Mind*” (p. 121).

In this issue we give you a look at some of the evidence for the existence of God that changed the mind of Antony Flew. When you’ve seen it, we hope you’ll agree with the words of Psalm 111: “Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them. Full of splendor and majesty is his work . . . The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding” (verses 2-3, 10, English Standard Version).

—Scott Ashley, Managing editor

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Table of Contents



4



8



14



28



20



40

Cover Feature

Planet Earth: Lucky Accident or Master Handiwork?

Is our world with its teeming variety of life the result of chance, a series of lucky accidents? Or is it, as more and more scientific discoveries are revealing, a perfect habitat finely tuned for life? What does the evidence show? 4

Do Science and the Bible Conflict?

Many believe that science and the Bible conflict and that they're mutually exclusive. The big question is, must we accept the view that the Bible and science can't both be true? 8

Prove There Is a God Even Without the Bible

There are logical reasons to accept the existence of a divine Creator apart from establishing the authenticity of Scripture. 14

Is Europe Going Under?

Europe's ongoing financial crisis raises questions about the continent's future. Bible prophecy shows unexpected change is coming. . . 18

Remembering the Titanic: Lessons for Our Day

April 15, 2012, marks the 100th anniversary of

the most famous peacetime maritime disaster in history—which was also one of the deadliest. The sinking of the British ocean liner *Titanic* continues to fascinate people today. And it still holds important lessons for tomorrow. 20

Why Was Jesus Christ Crucified?

When even some religious magazines ask people to reassess the most basic of Christian doctrines through an evolutionary lens, society is clearly drifting farther and farther from biblical truth. Can we—*will* we—continue to rely on sound Bible doctrine? 25

“Christ, Our Passover, Was Sacrificed for Us”

The apostle Paul compared Jesus Christ to the lamb slain at Passover. At His last Passover with His disciples, Jesus told His followers to continue to partake of the Passover symbols of unleavened bread and wine as representative of

His sacrifice. What are we to learn from these things? 28

What Does Easter Really Commemorate?

You might be surprised! Discover the truth of the surprising story behind one of the world's most popular religious holidays. 32

Christ, Deep Water and You

Jesus' disciples learned a lesson about having faith when the storms of life suddenly strike. Their lesson is just as important to each of us when we face our own storms. 38

Would Jesus Attend Your Church?

If Jesus walked the earth today, what church would He attend? What kind of people would make up the church Jesus would attend? Would He attend *your* church? 40

Regular Features

Current Events and Trends <i>An overview of conditions around the world.</i>	16
Mini-Study <i>How to Find Things in the Bible.</i>	36
Beyond Today <i>Television log.</i>	41
Letters From Our Readers <i>Readers of The Good News share their thoughts.</i>	44
Questions and Answers <i>Answers to your questions about the Bible and Christian living.</i>	45
Youth Focus From Vertical Thought <i>Prove Evolution Is False Even Without the Bible.</i>	46



Planet Earth: Lucky Accident or Master Handiwork?

Is our world with its teeming variety of life the result of chance, a series of lucky accidents? Or is it, as more and more scientific discoveries are revealing, a perfect habitat finely tuned for life? What does the evidence show? *by Noel Hornor*

December 24, 1968, witnessed a moment of triumph in man's attempt to reach into outer space. On that date the three astronauts on the Apollo 8 mission entered lunar orbit, becoming the first human beings to orbit the moon and gaze down on its far side.

Before retiring that evening, lunar module pilot William Anders, in a live television broadcast showing pictures of the earth and moon as seen from the astronauts' space capsule, took up a Bible and read the following: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1).

This was the first time in history that a man gave witness from outer space about the grand handiworks of the heavens. Yet the witness has been present on the earth in the Bible for thousands of years. In addition to what God inspired Moses to write in Genesis as quoted by astronaut Anders, King David later added his testimony in Psalm 19:1: "The heavens declare the glory of God."

From the beginning of man's existence, the creation we see all around us has stood as a clear witness to the existence of a great Creator God (Romans 1:20). As a result, ancient peoples, generally speaking, did not

question the existence of a supreme Deity or deities behind it all.

Moses and David knew God personally and believed that He stretched out the universe in all its glory; they stood in awe of it. Brilliant scientists of today would agree that the universe is wonderful, but many disagree with the Bible as to how it originated and who sustains it.

World-famous physicist, cosmologist and author Stephen Hawking does not believe in a personal God who created the universe. He believes that "the beginning of the universe was governed by the laws of science and doesn't need to be set in motion by some god" (Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow, *The Grand Design*, 2010, p. 135).

Hawking and Mlodinow present for consideration the "idea that the universe itself has no single history, not even an independent existence" (p. 6). These opinions, of

GOD, Science & the Bible

course, are contradictions to the statement in Genesis that the heavens had an origin and were established by God.

But what does an objective look at the evidence reveal? Let's consider some facets of the universe and the earth that point to a divine Creator—evidence that atheists and agnostics cannot explain, except to attribute them to chance or a series of lucky accidents.

Earth's orbit perfect for life

Even though they make no room for God,

figure resembles a circle, whereas an eccentricity near one means it is very flattened . . . The earth's orbit has an eccentricity of only about 2 percent, which means it is nearly circular. As it turns out, that is a stroke of very good fortune . . .

"In fact, if the eccentricity of the earth's orbit were near one, our oceans would boil when we reached our nearest point to the sun, and freeze over when we reached our farthest . . . Large orbital eccentricities are not conducive to life, so we are fortunate to

master strokes of a Creator God?

Psalm 102:25 addresses God this way: "Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands." Many features about our universe and the earth are so carefully designed that they reflect divine design rather than chance.

How high are the stakes? If things were minutely different regarding these aspects, *human life could not exist on earth*. This is further evidence of a Creator. Indeed, the more we discover, the more evidence of God we find!

Neither Moses nor David possessed telescopes nor other sophisticated instruments to observe the heavens and measure what we believe are the fingerprints of God. But modern science has bequeathed to us the ability to probe into space and discover these divine marks. And what is being revealed?

Astrophysicist Hugh Ross has catalogued the characteristics that demonstrate the touch of a Creator. "In the past few years, the pace of new discoveries demonstrating design in the universe and solar system has escalated dramatically . . . The most recent of these updates describes thirty-five characteristics for the universe and 122 for the solar system" (Norman Geisler and Paul Hoffman, *Why I Am a Christian*, 2006, p. 148).

For the remainder of this article, let's examine four "constants," what we might call finely tuned formulas or facts, that diligent scientists have discovered, without which our dwelling in the universe would not be possible. You can decide whether to attribute these (and scientists have discovered dozens more) to blind chance or the divine Creator as revealed in the testimony of the Bible.

Constant 1: Atmospheric oxygen level and form

Oxygen is the third most abundant element in our universe. Earth's atmosphere is 21 percent oxygen. "That precise figure is an anthropic constant [i.e., one permitting man's existence, seemingly by design] that makes life on earth possible. If oxygen were 25 percent, fires would erupt spontaneously; if it were 15 percent, human beings would suffocate" (Norman Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough*

When God said, "Let there be light," He had designed things so that the gaseous balance of the earth's atmosphere would enable all life, including mankind and plants, to live, reproduce and thrive.



authors like Hawking and Mlodinow are forced to acknowledge that planet Earth is carefully calibrated to facilitate human habitation. For example, a study of Earth's orbit around the sun reveals that it is not a perfect circle but is just slightly elliptical.

"The degree to which an ellipse is squashed is described by what is called its eccentricity, a number between zero and one. An eccentricity near zero means the

have a planet for which orbital eccentricity is near zero" (pp. 150-151).

Lucky accidents or master strokes?

All serious observers of the interactions between the earth and the sun would agree that the "laws of science" in play are magnificently manifest in structure. But can we attribute these features to just a series of lucky accidents? Or are they due to the

is earth's rotation 24 hours in length? It was specifically designed this way to accomplish God's intended purpose for earth to support human life and other life forms.

The earth's carefully calibrated circular path, tilted at just the right angle on its axis, is also influenced by the moon. "The moon affects the earth through its gravitational attraction . . . the [earth's] ocean tides pull on the moon . . . These tides also slow the earth's rotation" (Neil Comins, *What If the Moon Didn't Exist?* 1993, p. 4).

Another factor essential for the earth to

studied the evidence head-on: "Here is the cosmological proof of the existence of God . . . The fine tuning of the universe provides prima facie evidence of deistic design. Take your choice: blind chance that requires multitudes of universes [a seemingly infinite number to come up with one with all the right factors] or design that requires only one . . . Many scientists, when they admit their views, incline toward the teleological [goal-directed] or design argument" (Edward Harrison, *Masks*

The intricate relationships between the sun, earth and moon stand as powerful witness to the divine hand of the Creator God.



support human life is the constancy of the angle of the planet's spin on its axis. This angle of spin is called obliquity. "The obliquity . . . of three of the four 'terrestrial' planets of our solar system—Mercury, Venus, and Mars has varied chaotically. Earth is the exception, but only because it has a large moon . . . Earth's climactic stability is dependent to a large extent on the existence of the Moon" (Ward and Brownlee, p. 266).

The intricate relationships between the sun, earth and moon stand as powerful witness to the divine hand of the Creator God. Just as the spiritual law of God is perfect (Psalm 19:7), so are the numerous physical laws that govern our home in the universe.

Creation of the heavens by chance?

British astronomer Edward Harrison

of the Universe, 1985, p. 252, 263).

Hugh Ross wrote: "The community of believers has no reason to fear and every reason to anticipate the advance of scientific research into the origin and characteristics of the cosmos. The more we learn, the more evidence we accumulate for the existence of God and for his identity as the God revealed in the Bible" (Geisler and Hoffman, p. 157).

So we see that not all scientists believe that the state of our universe and earth are mere accidents. Furthermore, not all believe that man's existence on this orb is purposeless. Physicist, cosmologist and astrobiologist Paul Davies wrote: "I cannot believe that our existence in this universe is a mere quirk of fate, an accident of history, an incidental blip in

the great cosmic drama" (*The Mind of God*, 1992, p. 232).

We indeed are not a "mere quirk of fate." We are destined by God for a future of unimaginable glory.

The Bible poses a question over which man has mused for millennia and then follows with the astounding answer: "What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet" (Hebrews 2:6-8, quoting from Psalm 8:4-6).

This is a promise that will be fulfilled in the future. In Revelation 21:7, God gives essentially the same promise in different words: "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son."

The Bible tells us that we will someday receive as our heritage the vastness of the interminable universe. We can then explore its immensity and understand its mysteries. We will be able to know personally—face to face—the Father and the Son who created it all and share in Their glory forever (see our free booklet *What Is Your Destiny?* to learn more).

In 1 Corinthians 13:12, the apostle Paul described the present spiritual state of Christians, as well as that to which they can look forward (as paraphrased in the Message): "We don't yet see things clearly. We're squinting in a fog, peering through a mist. But it won't be long before the weather clears and the sun shines bright! We'll see it all then, see it all as clearly as God sees us, knowing him directly just as he knows us." **GN**

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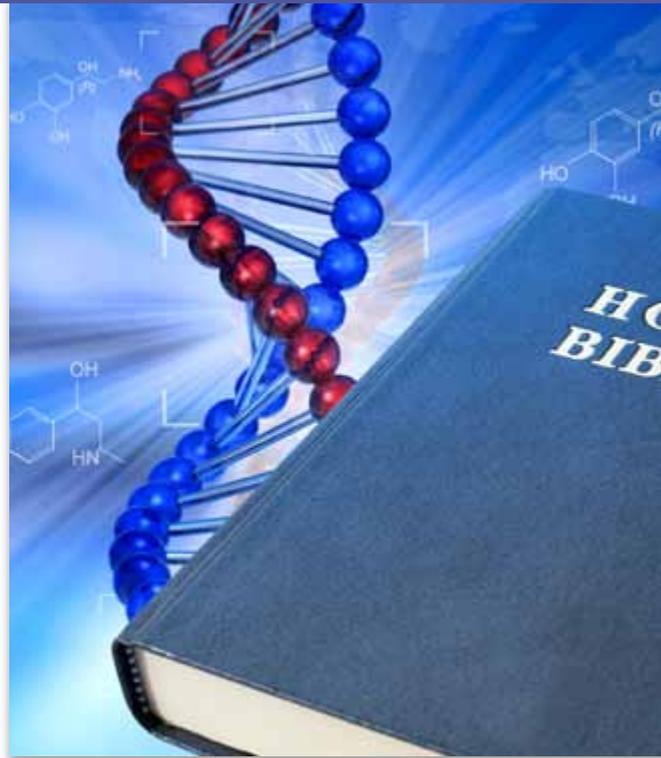
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Do. Science and the Bible Conflict?



Many believe that science and the Bible conflict and that they're mutually exclusive. The big question is, must we accept the view that the Bible and science can't both be true? *by Noel Hornor*

If we go back several centuries, students and teachers of science had no conflict with the Bible. In fact, scientists and others would state that the Creator revealed Himself in two books—the book of His words (the Bible) and the book of His works (the natural world around us).

Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1726), the brilliant English astronomer, physicist and mathematician most famous for the theory of universal gravitation, is an example. Modern-day physicist Gerald Schroeder notes that “Newton himself, though he was among the first to discern the universality of the laws of nature, found no conflict with his firm belief in the God of creation” (*The Hidden Face of God*, 2001, p. 16).

Many would be surprised to learn that Newton “wrote and published more works on interpretation of the Bible than on mathematics and physics” (Francis Collins, *The Language of God*, 2007, p. 162).

The fact of the matter is that true science and true religion as found in the Bible are entirely compatible!

The science-vs.-the-Bible war

It wasn't until the 19th century that the conflict between science and Bible advocates began to rage. Most of the aggression

was exhibited—or it seems most of the publicity was gained—by the scientists.

The publication of Charles Darwin's controversial book *On the Origin of Species* in 1859 was a scientific and philosophical watershed event. Yet Darwin himself was quiet by nature. His friend Thomas Huxley, though, was much more vociferous and outspoken. He became known as “Darwin's Bulldog” for his aggressive call to arms in presenting the case for evolution.

“The old Victorian Big Fight [was] first popularized by Thomas Huxley, with God in the Blue Corner and Science waiting in the Red Corner to punch His teeth out” (A.N. Wilson, *God's Funeral*, 1999, p. 224). It was Huxley who coined the term “agnostic.”

Not all scientists of that era rejected the Bible. A number who gave us notable scientific achievements were Bible believers. One of these was Joseph Lister, who discovered the role of germs in disease and pioneered in the field of sterile, antiseptic surgery. (Listerine mouthwash was named after him.) Another was Louis Pasteur, who invented the process of pasteurization of milk and wine to keep them from spoiling. He also pioneered vaccination for the prevention of disease.

From the late 20th century and into

the 21st, skirmishes persisted in the war between science and religion. Since the early 1990s, the intelligent design controversy has attracted the attention of many scientists and theologians.

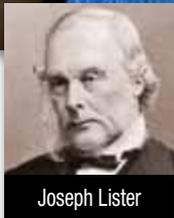
Retired Cambridge University mathematical physics professor and theologian John Polkinghorne states: “At the moment the biological world, particularly in its members who work with molecules rather than organisms, displays notable hostility to religion, at least in the writings offered to the general educated public” (*Belief in God in an Age of Science*, 1998, p. 78, emphasis added throughout).

One such person who has gained notoriety is Oxford University biologist Richard Dawkins, author of *The God Delusion*. In their response *The Dawkins Delusion?* Dr. Alister McGrath, a theologian who also studied chemistry and molecular biophysics at Oxford, and his wife Joanna, a psychologist, describe Dawkins' view this way: “Science and religion are locked into a battle to the death. Only one can emerge victorious—and it must be science” (2007, p. 46).

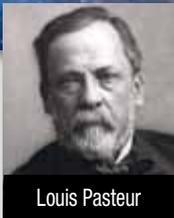
The McGraths see this war as unnecessary, stating: “One of the greatest disservices that Dawkins has done to the natural sciences is to portray them as relentlessly and inexorably atheistic. They are nothing of the sort” (p. 48). Many scientists would agree.

Taking God seriously

In recent years several scientists and



Joseph Lister



Louis Pasteur



Alister McGrath



John Polkinghorne



Francis Collins

The fact of the matter is that the Bible does not conflict with science. We can reap the benefits of a relationship with God through the Bible, as well as utilizing the good gifts that modern science has bequeathed to us.

philosophers have come forth and declared that God exists and that the Bible must be taken seriously.

Dr. Steven Meyer, who holds a doctorate in science philosophy from Cambridge University (his thesis concerned with interpreting origin-of-life research), commented: “I think of the wry smile that might be on the lips of God as in the last few years all sorts of evidence for the reliability of the Bible and for his creation of the universe and life have come to light” (quoted by Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator*, 2004, p. 91).

The human body provides a great deal of evidence. It’s a marvelous creation—the apex of God’s physical workmanship. An adult body comprises about 75 trillion cells, any one of which is complex almost beyond comprehension.

As Dr. Walter Bradley, longtime professor of mechanical engineering at Texas A&M University states, “Each cell in the human body contains more information than in all

thirty volumes of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*” (quoted by Lee Strobel, *The Case for Faith*, 2000, p. 110).

What is the likelihood that all of this somehow, somewhere came into existence by chance from non-living matter? Dr. Bradley observes, “It’s certainly reasonable to make the inference that this isn’t the random product of unguided nature, but [that] it’s the unmistakable sign of an Intelligent Designer” (ibid.).

The complexity of the human cell changed the thinking of British philosophy professor Antony Flew, long considered the world’s best-known atheist. In a symposium in New York in May 2004, he shocked everyone by stating that he had concluded God exists. He wrote, “To the surprise of all concerned, I announced at the start that I now accepted the existence of a God” (*There Is a God*, 2007, p. 74).

At the symposium he was asked if recent research into the origin of life pointed to

the involvement of a creative Intelligence. Dr. Flew responded: “Yes, I think it does. . . almost entirely because of the DNA investigations. What I think the DNA material has done is that it has shown, by the almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements which are needed to produce (life), that intelligence must have been involved in getting these extraordinarily diverse elements to work together.”

He continued, “This statement represented a major change of course for me, but it was nevertheless consistent with the principle I have embraced since the beginning of my philosophical life—of following the argument no matter where it leads” (p. 75).

From conflict to harmony

Polkinghorne, who again is a physicist and a theologian, believes there is harmony between science and religion. The two “are friends, not foes, in the common quest for knowledge,” he explains. “Some people may find this remark surprising, for there’s a feeling throughout our society that religious belief is outmoded, or downright impossible, in a scientific age.

“I don’t agree. In fact, I’d go so far as to say that if people in this so-called ‘scientific age’ knew a bit more about science than many of them actually do, they’d find it easier to share my view” (*Quarks, Chaos & Christianity*, 2005, p. 10).

Dr. Francis Collins, the head of the Human Genome Project, was an agnostic early in life, then gravitated later into atheism. But his thinking took a sharp turn at around age 30. As he writes, “I had reached the conclusion that faith in God was much more compelling than the atheism I had previously embraced, and I was beginning for the first time in my life to perceive some of the eternal truths of the Bible” (*The Language of God*, p. 198).

In June of 2000, when a working draft of the Human Genome Project was released, Dr. Collins stated, “It is humbling for me, and awe-inspiring, to realize that we have caught the first glimpse of our own instruction book, previously known only to God” (p. 3).

Knowing more but believing less

It’s ironic that as humanity has increased in complex knowledge of the creation, many have less faith today that God created us than did people in ages past who had comparatively little knowledge of the mysteries of the human body.

In the days of King David some 3,000 years ago, people had no way of knowing



precisely what was occurring in the womb of a pregnant woman. Yet David then wrote of God, “For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb” (Psalm 139:13, New Revised Standard Version).

David knew that the knitting together of a new young life inside its mother was the work of a great Creator. He added, “I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that

I know very well” (verse 14).

People of that era had not invented microscopes; they had no equipment with which to investigate the workings of a cell. Yet they had, in many cases, more faith than some today who are able to probe the workings of the tiny cells of which our bodies are composed.

Having a greater knowledge of the workings of God’s creation should actually *increase* our faith. As the apostle Paul wrote,

“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 men are without excuse” (Romans 1:20, New International Version). Paul referred to some of the philosophers of the Greco-Roman world who had rejected the knowledge of God, even though His creative works surrounded them everywhere they looked.

He said also, “Nevertheless, He did not

Why Charles Darwin Rejected the Bible

Charles Darwin, more than any other man, is responsible for the prevalent view in the Western world that science should be enthroned above God’s Word. At the Darwin centennial in Chicago in 1959, Sir Julian Huxley, perhaps the most influential evolutionist of the 20th century, made the following pronouncement:

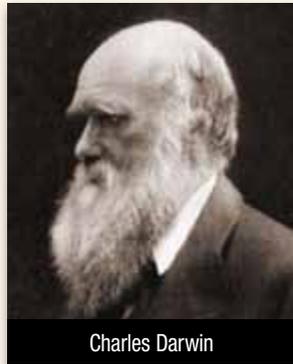
“Charles Darwin has rightly been described as the ‘Newton of biology’: he did more than any single

individual before or since to change man’s attitude to the phenomena of life and to provide a coherent scientific framework of ideas for biology, in place of an approach in large part compounded of hearsay, myth, and superstition. He rendered evolution inescapable as a fact, comprehensible as a process, all-embracing as a concept” (Julian Huxley, *Evolution After Darwin*, Vol. 1: *The Evolution of Life*, 1961, pp. 1-2).

Darwin was not an outright atheist; he referred to himself as an agnostic. However, he did not always have these views. “Charles hadn’t always thought about God or religion as a problem. In fact . . . both Charles and his father thought he was going to be a country parson” (Deborah Heiligman, *Charles and Emma: The Darwins’ Leap of Faith*, 2009, p. 23).

Darwin attended Cambridge University to prepare for life in the clergy. “While at university, Charles read theology, not just on assignment but also for pleasure. He especially enjoyed the works of William Paley. He read Paley’s *A View of the Evidences of Christianity* . . . Paley wrote about natural history, arguing that if you examined specimens carefully, you could see how beautifully they were created, how perfect they were in their adaptations.

“This to Paley was evidence of the existence of God and proof that God was the creator of all species. Charles thought these arguments were well-written, coherent, and logical. He did not, at that point, ques-



Charles Darwin

tion Paley’s premises about God’s role in creation” (ibid.).

Darwin was also an avid student of natural history. After graduating from Cambridge, he had opportunity to serve as naturalist on the HMS *Beagle*—a trip that would last five years, ending in 1836. “While he traveled. . . Charles did go to church quite regularly, both to the services that his captain led and on shore whenever he got the

chance. Some of the crew made fun of him for how religious he seemed. . . But natural history became his true passion and now, after the voyage, in 1838, Charles was having serious doubts about God and Jesus, about the Revelation, about heaven and hell. . . he had begun to reject God’s role in creation” (ibid., p. 26).

A number of issues contributed to Darwin’s doubt. “Many points were being argued about at the time. Three main elements of Holy Scripture were in question—the Genesis account of the creation of the world and the Fall of Man, the wrathful character of the God of the Old Testament, and the New Testament Revelation with Christ’s promise of eternal life. . . “After rejecting a literal reading of the Genesis account of the Creation as he learnt about the vastness of geological time, Charles questioned other historical parts of the Hebrew Bible, and found that he could not accept the God of the Old Testament because he was described as a vengeful tyrant” (Randal Keynes, *Darwin, His Daughter and Human Evolution*, 2001, pp 47-48).

Darwin’s doubts about religion are understandable in retrospect, at least for those who understand what the Bible really teaches. The fact is that some doctrines that caused him to doubt are *not* in the Bible. For example, he was particularly troubled about the doctrine of everlasting torment in hell.

Years later, he would write in his autobiography: “I can indeed hardly see how anyone ought to wish Christianity to be true; for if so the plain language of the text seems to show that the men who do not believe, and this would include my Father, Brother and almost all my best friends will be everlastingly punished. And this is a damnable doctrine” (quoted by Heiligman, p. 231).

In April 1851, Annie, the beloved daughter of Charles and Emma, died at 10 years of age after an extended illness. Charles decided not to attend her funeral because he believed he would gain no comfort from a Christian service. This event apparently slammed the door on any remaining faith Charles may have had. “After Annie’s death, Charles set the Christian faith firmly behind him. He did not attend church services with the family; he walked with them to the church door but left them to enter on their own” (Keynes, p. 243).

Had Charles Darwin understood what the Bible states about heaven, hell, the resurrection of the dead and eternal life, he may well have never doubted God, Jesus Christ and the Bible in favor of evolution.

Someone else probably would have fashioned the theory of evolution, as the general idea was floating around in England at that time. But it might not have originated with Darwin. He admitted his idea was a theory, and he knew it contained gaps. Still he had faith in his theory that was greater than the faith necessary for him to believe in the God of the Bible as he conceived of Him.

In 1881, near the end of his life, he received a letter from a school teacher that stated, “If we deny the derivation of life from inorganic matter . . . the most probable alternative is the idea of an eternal or ever-living being filling all immensity with his presence, and breathing into the first animal the breath of life” (quoted by Keynes, pp. 316-317).

Darwin wrote back: “I hardly know what to say. Though no evidence worth anything has as yet, in my opinion, been advanced in favour of a living being developed from inorganic matter, yet I cannot avoid believing the possibility of this will be proved some day in accordance with the law of continuity. . . Whether the existence of a conscious God can be proved from the existence of the so-called laws of nature. . . is a perplexing subject, on which I have often thought, but cannot see my way clearly” (ibid.).

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Having a greater knowledge of the workings of God's creation should actually *increase* our faith.

leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and goodness" (Acts 14:17).

The Bible tells us that it is God who gives rain. The circulation of waters in our earthly environment, which includes rainfall, is called the hydrological cycle. We find several references to this cycle in the Bible (Job 36:27-28; Ecclesiastes 1:7). With our modern-day understanding of this science, we can understand it better and realize how remarkable it is even more than those of ancient times could. Nevertheless, godly people of old looked at evidence in nature and knew it was proof of God's existence.

The fact is, despite their technological limitations, those who served God at that time had more of the most important type of intelligence than many scientists of today have. They knew that God existed and that His Word was superior to all other knowledge.

Science depends on law

Through the mental abilities God has given man, we are able to experiment and arrive at many conclusions about the physical creation. The last few centuries have produced an explosion of new knowledge that has enabled us to come to predictable conclusions regarding the world as well as outer space.

We have progressed through the industrial



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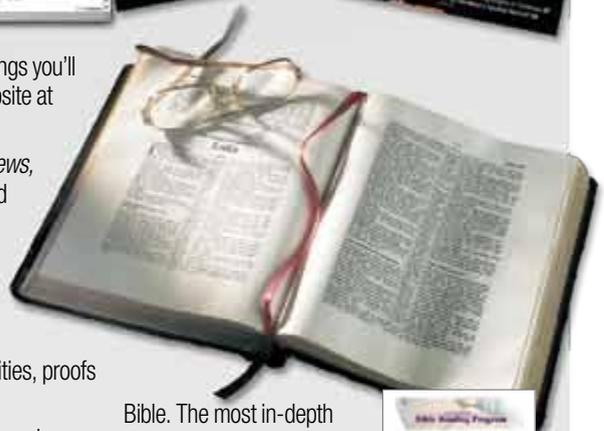


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age and the space age—and now we're in what some call the information age. It's no coincidence that the Bible foretold a rapid acceleration of innovation and knowledge in our time (Daniel 12:4).

For man even to exist, let alone make the amazing technological strides of today, requires a stable world of laws and predictable phenomena. The same applies to the whole universe. Increasingly, scientists talk about the "anthropic principle." This refers to the conditions of our planet and universe being remarkably well suited to human habitation.

The oxygen level in the earth's atmosphere (21 percent) is only one example. "If oxygen levels were 25 percent, fires would erupt spontaneously; if it were 15 percent, human beings would suffocate" (Norman Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, 2004, p. 98).

Another anthropic factor enabling the earth to support life is the strength of the pull of gravity. Newton wrote of this universal attraction, but he didn't realize the critical balance in which it exists in creation. The gravitational attraction of the sun on the earth and of the earth on the moon is just right to keep our planet in a position to support life.

"The extent of the universe's fine-tuning makes the Anthropic Principle perhaps the most powerful argument for the existence of God . . . There are more than 100 very narrowly defined constants that strongly point to an intelligent Designer" (ibid., p. 105).

What about miracles?

Of course, there are some who accept the existence of an Intelligent Designer who assume that the Bible is false in its claim to be the revelation of that Designer.

One dynamic that produces doubt in the minds of some is how the Bible can be scientifically accurate when it relates accounts of miracles. Miracles seem to go against laws of science. For example, when God divided the sea for the Israelites when they fled from Egypt (Exodus 14:16-22), this went against the normal behavior of the elements involved. If we are going to accept the Bible as the Word of God, we have to accept that the accounts of miracles it contains are factual.

What are miracles? David Hume, the 18th-century Scottish philosopher and historian, believed that miracles are violations of nature. But Dr. William Craig describes miracles differently.

In reference to a person catching an apple



God gave man the ability to think and reason and inquire into the purpose for our existence.

that falls from a tree before it hits the ground, he stated: "It's merely the intervention of a person with free will who overrides the natural causes operative in that particular circumstance. And that, essentially, is what God does when he causes a miracle to occur" (quoted by Strobel, *The Case for Faith*, p. 63).

If God designed the creation and natural law, He has the power to intervene and perform miracles whenever and however He chooses. In other words, "God may command natural things such as water, wind, or trees to behave according to their natures or against them. In both cases their action and end depend on Him" (*God and Nature*, edited by David Lindberg and Ronald Numbers, 1986, p. 177).

God's dominance in this way is illustrated in the Bible: "Who shut in the sea with doors, when it burst forth and issued from the womb . . . When I said, 'This far you may come, but no farther, and here your proud waves must stop!'" (Job 38:8, 11).

We should consider: If a God exists who could create and sustain our marvelous universe—a vast miracle in itself—does He not have the power to perform smaller-scale miracles here on earth? And would He not also have the power to inspire the Holy Scriptures to provide us guidance in all facets of our lives?

What will you believe?

The fact of the matter is that the Bible is

God's Word, and it does not conflict with science. We can reap the benefits of a relationship with God through the Bible, as well as utilizing the good gifts that modern science has bequeathed to us. It is a blessing to have both.

God gave man the ability to think and reason and inquire into the purpose for our existence. Satan corrupted that ability, exploiting man's intelligence to rationalize around the abundant clear evidence of our Creator's existence.

We need to hold fast to the true values, understanding that the Bible is God's Word and that it has no real conflict with the laws of science. We can profit from the study of both, but we should especially treasure the Bible—because, unlike science, it reveals why we are here and contains the keys to eternal life. **GN**

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Prove There Is a God Even Without the Bible

There are logical reasons to accept the existence of a divine Creator apart from relying on the authenticity of Scripture. *by Mario Seiglie*

Proving the existence of God is the beginning of having faith in God, so it is one of the most important goals to establish in our lives. It answers whether we are alone or not as a human race and whether or not our existence has purpose.

Can we logically prove the existence of God without going to the Bible? If by “God” we mean a Creator of the universe, then the answer is certainly yes. (Specifically identifying this Creator as the God of the Bible, however, does require proving and accepting the Bible to be true—a topic for another time.)

By considering certain aspects of the natural world around us, we can arrive at the commonsense conclusion that there is a powerful, all-wise Creator who made it all.

Let’s explore five key proofs of God’s existence with clear illustrations to back them up. To make it easier to remember, we’ll use the acronym GODLY.

G for Genetics

The molecular information of genes instructs cells in how to function and reproduce. The study of genetics has revolutionized our understanding of living things and how they operate.

Key illustration: DNA. Containing the 3-billion-letter code inside our cells (of four recurring letters, or chemicals actually, the names of which start with these letters), it’s a virtual library of instruction manuals for assembling and operating all the cells of the body.



A few years ago, one of the world’s most famous atheists, Professor Anthony Flew, came to the conclusion that God exists based on DNA evidence.

“What I think the DNA material has done,” he wrote, “is that it has shown, by the almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements which are needed to produce [life], that intelligence must have been involved in getting these extraordinarily diverse elements to work together.

“It’s the enormous complexity of the number of elements and the enormous subtlety of the ways they work together. The meeting of these two parts at the right time by chance is simply minute. It is all a matter of the enormous complexity by which the results were achieved, which looked to me like the work of intelligence” (*There Is a God*, 2007, p. 75).

In his book *The Case for a Creator*, former atheist Lee Strobel writes: “The six-feet of DNA coiled inside every one of our body’s one-hundred trillion cells contains

a four-letter chemical alphabet that spells out precise assembly instructions for all the proteins from which our bodies are made. Cambridge-educated Stephen Meyer demonstrated that no hypothesis has come close to explaining how information got into biological matter by naturalistic [evolutionary] means” (2004, p. 282).

So there is no logical explanation as to how this incredibly extensive, exquisite code inside the cell could exist without a supremely intelligent Being having designed it. Microsoft founder Bill Gates noted, “DNA is like a software program, only much more complex than anything we’ve ever devised” (*The Road Ahead*, 1996, p. 228).

It is absurd to think that nobody designed such a complex code—that it is simply a result of time, chance and mutation.

O for Origin

If things have an origin, they first needed an *originator*. The greatest question in philosophy is: Why does *something* exist instead of *nothing*? Philosophers don’t really have an adequate answer. But there is a principle in nature that points to the answer—everything with a beginning has a cause, and there are no known exceptions to this rule.

Key illustration: the universe. Physics and astronomy have established that the universe had a beginning. For instance, it can be shown that the universe is presently expanding outward from an initial point. So if everything with a beginning has a cause, and if the universe has a beginning, then it



must also have a cause that created it—the First Cause.

Moreover, everything that is caused to exist is brought about by something superior to itself. Therefore, something greater than the universe must have brought it into existence. This is a strong proof that a Creator exists.

D for Design

Everything that has a specific and complex design has a *designer*. For instance, a building is designed by an architect. No amount of time, chance and unthinking natural processes can produce a building. In a similar way, we see the exquisite designs of things around us.

On Mt. Rushmore in the Black Hills of South Dakota, we see the complex and specific design of the faces of four American presidents carved into the rock. Wind and erosion can produce predictable designs on some mountains, but not obvious, well-known human faces.

History tells us that Gutzon Borglum carved the faces on Mt. Rushmore, but even if there were no record of these being sculpted, we would still know that *someone* designed them and made them. Likewise, the natural realm itself shows evidence of design.



Key illustration: the earth. The fact that so many of the planet's features had to be just right for complex life to exist indicates that a designer was at work. The combination and interworking of such features are far too complex for them to be the product of mere chance.

For instance, for the earth to have life, it had to be just the right size—8,000 miles in diameter. If it were 9,500 miles in diameter, scientists have concluded it would *double* the weight of the air. Then there would be so much oxygen turning into water that it would cover the entire earth. None of the continents would have appeared, so there would be no land-based life—including us.

The earth is just the right distance from the sun—93 million miles. If it were just 5 percent farther out from the sun, the earth would be too cold and mostly covered with ice. But if it were just a bit closer to the sun, it would be unbearably hot and the polar ice caps would melt, flooding the coasts.

The earth also needs the right rotational

speed. If it were just a little faster, the earth would not be warmed enough, freezing much of the surface. But if it were slower, the heat would be oppressive.

It also needs just the right atmosphere—78 percent nitrogen and 21 percent oxygen, the precise amounts to sustain complex life. The earth also has the correct tilt—23.5 degrees—allowing us to have the four seasons and twice as much arable soil as a different tilt angle would provide.

Even the moon is precisely the right size and distance from the earth for the tides to move the oceans around, keeping them clean and aerated. (To find more examples, read the 2004 book *The Privileged Planet* by Guillermo Gonzalez and Jay Richards.)

L for Laws

Where did the laws of the universe come from? They're not matter or energy, but they govern how both operate. There is no intrinsic reason for the laws of nature to exist. In fact, these laws had to be created and in place when matter and energy appeared, or there would be total chaos. The laws of the universe require that a lawgiver calibrated them and set them into effect.

Key illustration: gravity. Without this force that causes mass to attract other objects, life could not exist. And the intensity of all the forces must be in precise ratios to one another.

The famous physicist Stephen Hawking stated: "The universe and the laws of physics seem to have been specifically designed for us. If any of about 40 physical qualities had more than slightly different values, life



as we know it could not exist: Either atoms would not be stable, or they wouldn't combine into molecules, or the stars wouldn't form the heavier elements, or the universe would collapse before life could develop, and so on" (*Austin American-Statesman*, October 19, 1997).

Who caused mass to affect its surround-

ings as it does to the degree that it does? Who made the other laws that must have been exquisitely designed and calibrated to work in total harmony? The logical answer: It must be an utterly supreme and all-powerful Intelligence.

Y for Yield

What does believing in God yield? Answer: positive results, especially in the long run!

An article titled, "Take Ten Commandments and Call Me in the Morning," states: "Using both anecdotal and research data, [Dr. Harold Koenig] demonstrates that there is ample evidence to show that people who regularly attend church, pray, read, and put into practice what the Bible or their faith teaches are overall healthier.

"Just for starters, they have significantly lower blood pressure, are hospitalized less, recover from surgery faster, have stronger



immune systems, and are likely to live longer. Emotional health also benefits: family life is better and depression is lower in those with faith" (*Christianity Today*, Nov. 11, 1999).

Key illustration: answered prayer. If there were no God, then prayers for supernatural intervention would never be answered. Yet there are so many examples of answered prayer all around us—of miraculous interventions that defy physical explanation. There are simply vast numbers of witnesses of this phenomenon, including this author. This should strengthen our faith in the fact that God exists and that He cares about what happens to us.

Thus, proving that God exists is not a matter of *blind* faith—but of *well-reasoned* faith justified by hard evidence. For the evidence that there is a God is overwhelming!

Remember these five key "GODLY" concepts and accompanying five illustrations to prove God's existence *even without* the use of the Bible! **GN**



Current Events & Trends

by John Ross Schroeder and Jerold Aust

Where is America headed?

Not so long ago liberal commentators in the United States spoke of the European economic success in glowing terms—indicating that social democracy works. They praised the European dream of collective responsibility and worldwide consciousness—leading to a better tomorrow for mankind. They also intoned about the European guide to better capitalism—really as much socialism as the market could bear. One or two liberal observers were even asking Americans if they were born on the wrong continent.

Yet recent events have shown these views to be somewhat embarrassing. Gideon Rachman wrote in the *Financial Times*: “The normal processes of democracy in Italy and Greece had been unequal to the economic crisis. The European Union’s repeated failure to find a solution to the debt crisis—and so secure the future of the euro—illustrated that pan-European politics were working no better than the national variety”

(“Our Age of Mounting Indignation,” Dec. 30, 2011).

Historically the Europeans who immigrated to the new world for a better life have since established their own methods in the political and economic fields. The American way of life has a brand all its own, including its take on capitalism. Though far from reaching the ideal, overall it has proved more economically successful than the more planned and regulated economies of other nations.

Yet there can be little doubt that the present American administration favors the European social model. So will the European model then become the dominant force in the United States?

Certainly President Obama has challenged traditional U.S. economic strategy and tactics—seeking to “spread the wealth” by taxing the rich, increasing government spending and initiating costly social programs such as his new, much more pervasive health-

care legislation, and his recent rejection of the proposed oil pipeline between Canada and Texas (which would have added tens of thousands more jobs). A *Wall Street Journal* editorial stated: “Obama has done nearly everything he wanted. That’s the problem” (“The State of His Policies,” Jan. 26, 2012).

This November’s national elections may decide just how much farther Americans are willing to travel down the road in quest of European-model socialism. Will the outcome of these U.S. elections turn out to be a referendum on whether or not the United States should become an honorary member of the European Union?

To fully understand America’s role in the world from God’s point of view, download or request our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. It will give you the essential historical and biblical background to understanding the severe challenges facing America and the British Commonwealth of English-speaking nations. (Sources: *Financial Times* [London], *The Wall Street Journal*.)

American isolation: Will history repeat itself?

All who are familiar with U.S. history in the 1930s and early 40s know that prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, many members of Congress tended to be isolationist in their approach to foreign wars, particularly the conflict in Europe. However, President Franklin Roosevelt certainly helped Britain, as much as the political climate at the time would permit him.

But is America now beginning to enter another

“Just about every international body or agreement that America seeks to join is poisonous to her republic.”

isolationist phase? Gideon Rachman reported in the *Financial Times*: “The death of the leader of al-Qaeda allowed Barack Obama in effect to call an end to the ‘War on Terror’ as the organising principle of US foreign policy. The withdrawal of American troops from Iraq at the end of the year sent the same message and set the stage for a similar pull-out from Afghanistan over the next three years” (“Our Age of Mounting Indignation,” Dec. 30, 2011).

Wary of knotty problems and troublesome conflicts on a global scale, could America eventually decide to go it alone? Philip Stephens, also a columnist for the *Financial Times*, stated: “For its part the US is retrenching. It has grown tired of wars and has been piling up deficits and debts. Barack Obama has announced big cuts in the Pentagon’s budget. America will be more sparing in its deployment of military might. Europe will have to look after itself and much of the greater Middle East will be left to itself” (“How a Self-Sufficient America Could Go It Alone,” Jan. 13, 2012).

One of the reasons some observers and citizens in the United States may contemplate a more isolationist

approach is Washington’s track record in its association with international bodies.

The American Spectator’s review of *The New Road to Serfdom* by Daniel Hannan, a Conservative Member of the European Parliament for Southeast England, stated: “In his chapter on America’s position in the world, Hannan points out how just about every international body or agreement that America seeks to join is poisonous to her republic. International judges seek to undermine the Constitution, while the ‘human rights’ establishment celebrates anti-American dictators. In every area, these global institutions eschew the American ideal of actually doing something about a problem in favor of the bad European habit of confusing declamation with action—except when it comes to actions that undermine American sovereignty” (“Two Roads Diverged,” December 2010-January 2011).

Columnist Stephens tells why America is probably the only viable candidate for a more isolationist approach to the world’s problems. “It [America] is the most secure . . . It is rich in natural resources. New technology in oil and gas extraction has transformed the energy industry. The US is headed for self-sufficiency in energy, and by some accounts could become a significant net exporter” (ibid.).

Although the United States’ economy is increasingly becoming more integrated into the global economic framework, its potentially isolationist tendencies are not that far from the surface, and there are now some signs of their possible emergence out of the woodwork. After all, America’s first president, George Washington, did warn the country to stay clear of foreign and especially European entanglements.

Still, as Philip Stephens concludes: “A world of everyone for themselves would leave everyone poorer.” We look forward to a coming true utopian age promised in the Bible—ending our troubled relationships first with God and then with one another. To learn more, request our free booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. (Sources: *Financial Times* [London], *The American Spectator*.)

How high could gas prices rise?

The head of Iran’s state oil company said Sunday that the price of crude will reach \$120 to \$150 per barrel, as officials in Tehran prepare to discuss a ban on crude sales to European Union countries in retaliation for an EU embargo . . . [Iran] says the embargo will hurt the West more than Iran, in part by causing a spike in prices” (“Iran Oil Official Says Crude Could Reach \$120 to \$150 Per Barrel, Downplays EU Embargo,” *The Washington Post*, Jan. 29, 2012).

Currently, the lowest price of gas in the United States is around \$3.00 per gallon, far lower than in most of the rest of the world. Could \$4.00 a gallon—or even higher—become the new U.S. norm?

Nations can and do use oil as a weapon. If oil sold for \$150 a barrel, the price of gas would jump to about \$4.30 per gallon. How many can afford to fill their tanks at that price? And how would this affect the price of everything else—including essential foods and basic needs—that must be transported by vehicles also burning higher-priced fuel?

Much of the world is already skirting the edge of the abyss financially. More economic disruption could lead to increasing international conflicts and the rise of dictatorships not unlike what preceded World War II.



Could Greece wreck Europe and America?

The Associated Press reports that “a disorderly and potentially devastating Greek debt default is looking much less likely. Greece and investors who own its bonds have reached a tentative deal to significantly reduce the country’s debt and pave the way for it to receive a much-needed . . . 130 billion [euro] bailout.

“Negotiators for the investors . . . said it [the deal] could become final next week. If the agreement works as planned, it will help Greece remain solvent and help Europe avoid a blow to its already weak financial system, even though banks and other bond investors will have to accept multibillion-dollar losses . . .

“If no debt-exchange deal is reached with private creditors and Greece is forced to default, it would very likely spook Europe’s—and possibly the world’s—financial markets” (Demetris Nelias, “Private Investors Near Deal on Greek Debt,” Jan. 28, 2012).

The bigger picture here involves two things—how this might affect the emergence of a biblically foretold European-centered superpower and how what’s happening in Europe will contribute to America’s diminishing power in the world.

If Greece is successfully propped up by other governments and investors, then America and Europe could retain the power they presently enjoy for a while longer. But it’s all tenuous, and in one wrong slip it could all come falling down like dominoes. The results of this scenario are in the hands of the one true God who sets up and takes down nations (Daniel 4:25; 5:21).

Will Britain defend the Falklands yet again?

What goes around comes around. Scottish independence returns to the front burner of politics in Britain. And so do Argentine intentions to possess the Falkland Islands (they call them *Las Malvinas*). Recall that Britain under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher successfully defended the Falklands from an attempted Argentine invasion and attempted takeover in 1982.

The Sunday Times titled its full-page article: “Can We Still Defend the Falklands?” (Jan. 22, 2012). Certainly defending these islands remains current Prime



Minister David Cameron’s stated intention, saying that Britain will support the island’s population, still very loyal to the United Kingdom. Recently he has restated his support more than once. What this dilemma has done is to focus attention on Britain’s ability to protect its distant territories.

Some 3,500 years ago God promised the descendants of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph that they would possess the “gates” of

their enemies (Genesis 22:17; 24:60)—the critical chokepoints controlling commercial and military routes. Certainly the Falkland Islands are but one of those gates, many of which have already been lost because of national and individual disobedience to God’s spiritual laws. Hong Kong has already passed on to China, and Spain still covets Gibraltar. Even Jamaica has decided to remove Britain’s monarch from being its head of state.

Should Argentina invade the Falklands, the task to protect them may be even more difficult than in 1982. At that time Thatcher had two aircraft carriers that Cameron doesn’t have. Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay have already decided to ban any Falklands-flagged vessels from their respective ports—in effect threatening to intimidate and isolate the island population. Still, the British have a history of great courage in battle even when the odds are heavily stacked against them.

Argentina is very aware that Prince William is slated to be posted to the Falklands this year. He has already been warned that he will be flying into a potential war zone, but he remains more than willing. He’s a helicopter pilot as was his uncle Prince Andrew, who participated in the 1982 conflict.

Valuable natural resources around the Falklands add to the tensions. It is likely that the surrounding seas are “home to some of the world’s last great undiscovered oil reserves” (“Drilling for Oil off Falklands Digs Up Dark Memories,” *Financial Times*, Dec. 23, 2011). Argentina already has its own economic problems, making the Falkland Islands an even greater prize.

For help in understanding the underlying biblical significance of these events in the South Atlantic, request our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. (Sources: *The Times*, *The Sunday Times*, *Daily Express*, *Financial Times* [all London].)

Sexual abuse, rape widespread in America

USA Today reported these shocking statistics at the end of last year: “Sexual violence is a widespread problem in the USA that strikes the majority of its victims early in life, according to a major government study released Wednesday. Nearly 1 in 5 women . . . report being raped in their lifetime,” according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Janice Lloyd, “Study: Sexual Violence ‘Widespread,’” Dec. 16, 2011).

In 2009 there were just over 155 million females in the United States, and probably somewhere near 160 million presently. Some 32 million women residing in America (ideally the land of the free and the

home of the brave) have been raped at least once in their lifetime. These numbers are horrendous beyond words—and our sexually obsessed media culture bears a heavy responsibility.

“The study is the first to examine the prevalence of rape, sexual violence other than rape, stalking and intimate partner violence, and to report the damaging health consequences that last a lifetime,” the article continued.

What callous and unfeeling men do to very young women and girls can only be called horrific and unconscionable. “Among female victims, 30% report being first raped when they were between 11 and 17 years old; 12% were 10 or younger.” Clearly child abuse, especially of teenagers and very young girls, is a staggering problem in the United States.

Further, “nearly 1 in 2 women (44.6%) and 1 in 5

men (22.2%) experienced sexual violence other than rape at some point in their lives.” How far from the true sexual intimacy men and women were divinely intended to experience in godly marriage! The master deceiver, Satan the devil, has turned what was meant by God to be the most pleasurable of human experiences between a husband and a wife into a living nightmare for the victims while inciting the brutality of callous perpetrators (see Revelation 12:9; 2 Timothy 3:1-4).

If you have been a victim of any type of sexual abuse, your life can be turned around by a genuine encounter with the living God. Ask for or download our free booklets *Who Is God?* and *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension* plus the reprint article “Dealing with Abuse.” Request all three today. (Source: *USA Today*.)

How can you make sense of the news?

So much is happening in the world, and so quickly. Where are today’s dramatic and dangerous trends taking us? What does Bible prophecy reveal about our future? You’re probably very concerned with the direction the world is heading. *So are we*. That’s one reason we produce the *Beyond Today* daily TV commentaries—to help you understand the news in the light of Bible prophecy. This eye-opening program offers you a perspective so badly needed in our confused world—the perspective of God’s Word. Visit us at ucg.org/beyond-today/daily!





Is Europe Going Under?

Continual financial crisis in Europe naturally raises the question, “Is Europe falling apart?” Bible prophecy shows that sudden and unexpected change is coming to the continent. *by Melvin Rhodes*

Downton Abbey is a British television series currently showing on PBS in its *Masterpiece Classic* time slot. It’s been the biggest success the non-commercial arts, news, history and culture channel has had in years.

The series is set in an English stately home, or manor house, on the eve of and during World War I.

In fact, the first season, which aired a year ago, began with the sinking of the *Titanic* 100 years ago in April 1912. The heir of the fictional Lord Grantham went down with the ship and was succeeded by his heir, a distant cousin and commoner who is now a main character in the series. The first season ended with the outbreak of World War I in 1914.

The episode of Jan. 22 was preceded by a special one-hour documentary titled “Secrets of the Manor House.” During the program, at least one historian commented on how the sinking of the *Titanic* was a metaphor for the sinking of the old order that soon followed as a consequence of the First World War.

As if to emphasize the point, the second episode of the second season brought us up to the fall of the Romanov dynasty in Russia. A European order that had continued for more than a thousand years was crumbling, dying in the battlefields and carnage of the “war to end all wars.”

The producers of the documentary could not have foreseen another passenger ship disaster which may herald a similar European upheaval. The *Costa Concordia*, an Italian cruise ship, hit a reef and capsized on Jan. 13, with up to several dozen passengers and crew members drowned or missing.

Writing in *The Wall Street Journal*, Bret Stephens highlighted this as another “Titanic-type event, right on the eve of the 100th anniversary of the first one,” and asked if it was “a way of prefiguring some great European disaster?” (“What Is Europe Sinking About?” Jan. 17, 2012).

His article came just after the Italian cruise ship disaster off the Italian coast. The death toll was minor compared to the *Titanic*, but the “tragic-ridiculous shipwreck” seemed an apt metaphor “for a continent in which nine countries had their credit ratings downgraded earlier that same day. Even the biggest ship can founder in calm waters if the captain is negligent. Even a rescue operation 50 feet from shore can turn into a fiasco if nobody has conducted a drill and the crew [members] have no idea how to steer a lifeboat” (*ibid.*).

It certainly seems an apt metaphor for Europe—a continent that appears to be in danger of sinking! But a new Europe is destined to ultimately emerge.

Will Europe be left to its own security?

In a defense review announced by U.S. President Barack Obama in Washington, Europe got decidedly downgraded in terms of the need for U.S. protection. The Jan. 14, 2012, issue of *The Economist* stated: “Perhaps the least remarked upon part of the new strategy is the seemingly bleak future for American forces in Europe. It glibly refers to ‘most European countries’ now being ‘producers of security rather than consumers of it’ and talks about a ‘strategic opportunity to rebalance the US military investment in Europe’ following the drawdown in Iraq and Afghanistan.”

“The American military presence in Europe, it hints, is an expensive relic of the cold war and it suggests there are no significant threats to Europe’s security other than Iran developing a nuclear-capable ballistic missile, which supposedly will be countered by the new missile-defence system American is starting to deploy” (“The Downgrading of Europe”).

The article carried the drophead: “Barack Obama’s new defense plans neglect Europe at their peril.” The point being made in the magazine is that “nearly 80% of the countries

contributing troops to the NATO-led coalition in Afghanistan have come from the European region.” If America turns its back on Europe, it risks isolating itself and limiting its ability to act internationally.

And there are other factors here for Americans (and Europeans) to consider—history and the Bible.

Lessons from history, warnings from prophecy

It’s been almost 70 years since the end of World War II. Following the war, the victorious allies kept hundreds of thousands of their troops in Europe. This included the United States. At the time it was often said the troops were there “to keep the Russians out, the Americans in and the Germans down”! After two world wars started by Germany, nobody wanted to see another.

Through the four decades of the Cold War, the West’s focus was on keeping the Russians out, for which there was a need to keep the Americans in. West Germany was quickly turned into a democratic ally. In the two decades since the fall of communism, the Western allies have even lost sight of the need to keep the Russians out—and thus the justification to keep the Americans in.

Through the recent financial upheavals in the European Union (EU), Germany has emerged as its clear and dominant leader. As the EU is the world’s biggest single market and most powerful trading system, this makes Germany an economic superpower.

In the past, Germany was willing to take a back seat, due to its infamous past, but no longer. Today the Germans will not let the British or the French dictate to them. At the same time, history shows that a nation that is economically dominant will eventually dominate politically and militarily.

Bible prophecy shows us that another superpower lies ahead—a European-centered union of 10 “kings” (or nations) that are led by a figure the Bible calls “the Beast,” a European dictator of whom Adolf Hitler and other tyrants of the past were but forerunners.

This final revival of the Roman Empire will be an even greater threat to world peace than the Third Reich because it will not be tied down through conquest in suppressing

other European nations. Instead it will be a voluntary union of European nations, likely led by Germany. This final union of European nations will turn on Jesus Christ to fight Him at His return.

You can read about this in Revelation 17: “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 period of time in the context of human history] 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 [Jesus Christ], and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord

rearmed significantly enough to defy the League of Nations and send troops into the Rhineland. By 1938 the whole of Europe was fearful of the Nazis, including Great Britain, whose Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain went to Munich to meet with Hitler and came back promising “peace in our time.” One year later the nations were at war, leading to tens of millions of dead.

Germany in the driver's seat

Of course, things are different today. Germany is a prosperous, Western democracy that plays a leading role in Europe and other parts of the world. Any visitor to

in December, every single European Union member except the United Kingdom supported them—even Denmark, which has historically always been supportive of the British, who liberated them from Nazi rule at the end of World War II. Denmark and Britain joined the EU together in 1973.

“For the Danes, life in the EU has often required finding a balance between Germany, their neighbor and biggest trading partner, and Britain, their soul mate and historic market for butter and bacon. Few were more dismayed than Denmark by Britain’s bust-up with its EU partners in December . . . The split was ‘the worst-case scenario for Denmark’, says Bo Lidegaard, editor of *Politiken*, a daily. ‘It’s not in our interest to have our close friend and our biggest market drift apart’” (“To Opt In or Not to Opt In,” *The Economist*, Jan. 14, 2012).

Troubling signs in Europe

Germany has emerged as Europe’s leader and is flexing its financial muscles. But the last quarter of 2011 showed that even Germany is slowing down at a time when Europe seems headed for a more serious recession. Could this lead to a repeat of the 1930s?

A whiff of the 1930s is certainly in the air. The current financial wind affecting European nations could easily become a hurricane, heralding the return of an economic climate more reminiscent of the 1930s.

Ironically, after writing this article, I saw this sobering article on Jan. 23 in the London *Daily Telegraph*: “Market Crash ‘Could Hit Within Weeks,’ Warn Bankers” (Harry Wilson and Philip Aldrick). Insurance on the debt of several European banks has now hit historic highs.

“The problem is a shortage of liquidity—that is what is causing the problems with the banks. It feels exactly as it felt in 2008,” said one senior London-based bank executive. “I think we are heading for a market shock in September or October that will match anything we have ever seen before,” said a senior credit banker at a major European bank” (ibid.).

Not many things in life are sure. But Bible prophecy is sure. The prophesied resurrection of the Roman Empire is not likely to come about merely through an evolutionary process from the European Union. It seems more likely to be formed out of the floating debris of today’s EU following a financial shipwreck and a return to the dramatic changes of the 1930s—changes that transformed the continent and ultimately the entire world. **GN**



Some have compared Europe's economic crisis to the sinking of the Italian cruise ship *Costa Concordia*.

of lords and King of kings” (Revelation 17:12-14).

Parallels with conditions before World War II

It seems strange to talk of a revived Roman Empire in Europe at a time when the European Union, founded by the 1957 Treaty of Rome, seems to be falling apart.

This is where some knowledge of European history is helpful.

In 1930 Europe was falling apart. Less than 10 years later, Germany, Austria, Italy and some other lesser allies were able to conquer most of the continent and pose a serious threat to the peace and prosperity of the rest of the world. In alliance with Japan, the Axis powers inflicted a six-year conflict on most of the world.

What brought this about? Economic problems brought on by the 1929 Wall Street Crash, trade wars and the Great Depression, which resulted in one third of Germans being unemployed.

In turn, this led to the rise of extremist parties, including the National Socialist (Nazi) Party. The Nazis came to power in January 1933. By 1936 the country had

Germany is struck by the country’s apparent prosperity, its culture, its cleanliness and its sense of order. Germany today, with a population of almost 82 million, exports more goods to other nations than any other country, including the United States with 320 million people. That’s how good German products are.

Because of the sobering lessons of hyperinflation in 1923, the Depression of the 1930s and the collapse of the economy immediately after World War II, Germans have a reputation for fiscal discipline second to none. Whereas the United States continues to buy its way out of recession by printing more money, Germany follows a tight fiscal policy, refusing to inflate the economy with heavy borrowing or the printing of more euros.

This has had a bad effect on some other members of the eurozone who want to be able to spend more, but it’s also had the effect of putting Germany in the driver’s seat—the Germans have the funds to bail out the other nations, thereby giving them more clout than anybody else.

When the Germans and the French issued an ultimatum to other European countries



Remembering the **Titanic**:

Looking Back and Looking Ahead

April 15, 2012, marks the 100th anniversary of the most famous peacetime maritime disaster in history—which was also one of the deadliest. The sinking of the British ocean liner *Titanic* continues to fascinate people today. And it still holds important lessons for tomorrow.

by Tom Robinson and Scott Ashley

T*itanic*. The name has conjured up powerful images and emotions since the ship's fateful voyage. Dozens of books and several major films have recounted her tragic story. The 1997 blockbuster *Titanic*, already one of the top-grossing films of all time, is getting a theater re-release.

Although April 15 marks a century since the sinking of the *Titanic*, we are still fascinated by her story. The magnitude of the disaster seems unthinkable: More than 1,500 passengers and crew lost their lives in the icy North Atlantic while only just over 700, mostly women and children, were saved.

Many of us have heard the “what if” questions: What if the ship's lookouts had seen the iceberg in time to turn and avoid it? What if *Titanic* had struck the iceberg at a different angle? (Had she hit head on, the ocean liner would have been severely damaged, but likely would have survived.) What if her crew had heeded the warnings of ice in the

area and slowed down rather than continuing her course near top speed? What if she had carried enough lifeboats for all the passengers and crew? What if the SS *Californian*, only 10 miles from the dying *Titanic*, had heard her frantic distress calls?

Perhaps part of our grim fascination with the doomed ocean liner is the profound sense of unease it creates in us. After all, *Titanic* had everything going for her. She was likened to a luxurious floating palace, one equipped with the most advanced engineering and safety features of her day. Her captain was one of the most respected and experienced men in the White Star fleet, making one last voyage before his planned honorable retirement.

It's been reported that an employee of the White Star Line remarked at *Titanic*'s launch from its Northern Ireland shipyard on May 31, 1911, “Not even God himself could sink this ship.” Others have attributed

a similar statement to a *Titanic* crew member at the start of her maiden voyage nearly a year later. It may be a myth fabricated after the disaster, but the word “unsinkable” had been associated with the vessel, the White Star brochure stating that “as far as it is possible to do so,” she was “designed to be unsinkable.” No guarantees in that, but those behind her construction were certainly brimming with confidence.

The White Star Line's managing director even made it a point to join her on her maiden voyage. Some of the wealthiest men in the world chose her to travel from Europe to the United States. Several hundred less-wealthy passengers in the third-class section looked forward to building a new life in a new country. But it was not to be.

What should we learn from this disaster?

History shows that a series of small errors and miscalculations compounded to create catastrophe. Everything that could go wrong did. The best of human intentions, engineering skills and construction methods proved powerless to avert disaster. Man and woman, rich and poor, young and old alike, met a common fate.

It's fitting at this anniversary to recount *Titanic*'s tragic tale. But we should also ask an urgent question: What lessons should we



face of all the earth” (verses 34-35, NASB).

Let us, then, look again at what happened to the *Titanic* and consider some important lessons this terrible disaster provides. Most especially, let us not be like the ship’s ill-fated crew and passengers, racing forward in the darkness while ignoring the signs of danger gathering around us.

No cause for alarm?

On April 10, 1912, the 882-foot-long British luxury liner, the largest passenger steamship of her day, set out on her maiden voyage from Southampton in southern England, bound for New York City. But she would never reach her destination. For on the cold, clear night of April 14, about 400 miles off the coast of Newfoundland, disaster struck. And by early the next morning, the great ship *Titanic* would be lost to the deep—with

still maintained near maximum speed, as was common practice at the time. He did adjust course slightly to the south, though, and as night came the crew maintained a careful lookout.

By conventional thinking, collisions with icebergs could do serious damage but were not typically disastrous. In fact, five years earlier Smith in an interview had stated that he couldn’t “imagine any condition which would cause a ship to founder. Modern ship-building has gone beyond that.” Of course, the night’s events would prove that thinking sorely mistaken.

Sitting stationary for the night about 10 miles away, the SS *Californian* radioed a last warning at around 11:30 p.m. of more ice in the area. But *Titanic*’s radio operator Jack Phillips was in the middle of his job of relaying personal messages from the

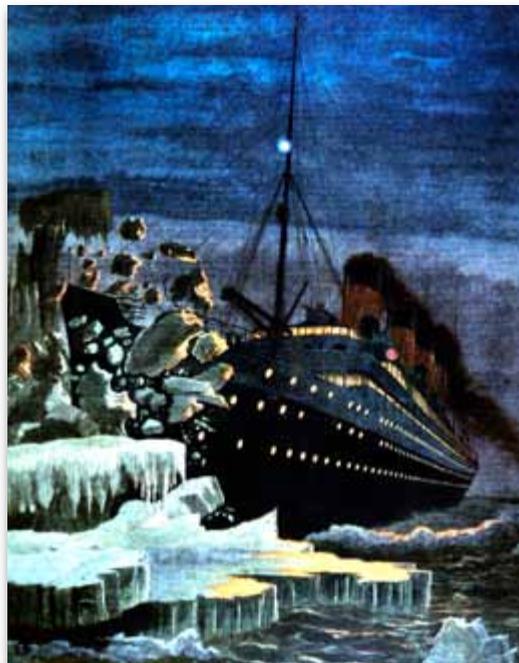
History shows that a series of small errors and miscalculations compounded to create catastrophe. Everything that could go wrong did. What lessons should we learn from this catastrophe?

learn from this catastrophe?

With a measure of apocalyptic fervor surrounding the year 2012, there is rising interest in what the future holds for planet Earth—as well there should be regardless. Although the Bible makes no connection between the year 2012 and Christ’s return, its prophecies have much to say about the end of this age of man and the dawn of a new age to come.

The Bible makes it clear that although we cannot know the exact time of events that are prophesied to happen, we nonetheless have a distinct spiritual obligation and responsibility. In Luke 21:36, after describing the earth-shaking events that would precede His return, Jesus Christ warns His followers: “But *keep on the alert at all times*, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man” (New American Standard Bible, emphasis added throughout).

He tells us to be vigilant in getting and keeping our spiritual house in order that we might be prepared for that time: “*Be on guard*, that your hearts may not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and *that day* [of Christ’s return] *come on you suddenly like a trap*; for *it will come upon all those who dwell on the*



less than a third of those who’d been on board surviving.

Earlier on the fateful day, as passengers enjoyed a relaxed party atmosphere, radio messages were received from a number of ships in the vicinity warning of icebergs. *Titanic*’s captain Edward J. Smith—highly experienced and now on his final voyage before retiring after 38 years of service—

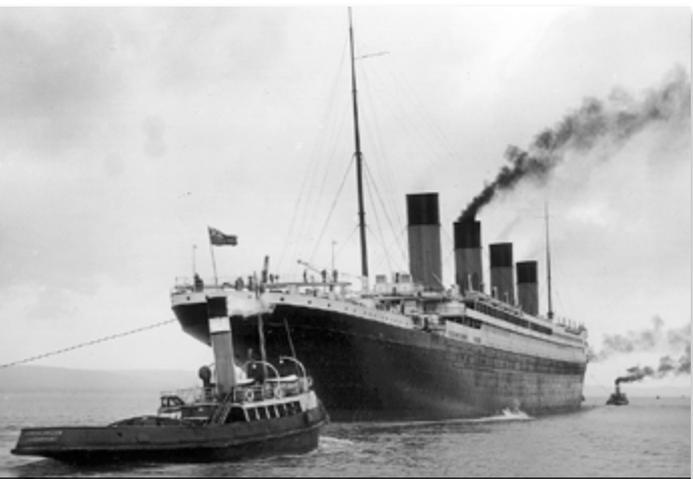
passengers to the relay station at Cape Race in Newfoundland. “Shut up! Shut up! I’m working Cape Race,” he sharply told the *Californian*, stating he already knew of the ice. In reality, he didn’t understand the gravity of the situation and failed to pass the warning on to the captain.

In the calm, moonless night, there was no ocean swell to help the lookouts atop the ship spot nearby icebergs. So danger wouldn’t likely be seen until just before encountering it—especially traveling at high speed.

At 11:40 the lookouts spotted an ominous mass just ahead and telephoned the bridge to report that a collision was imminent. The ship’s course was immediately altered, but avoiding the iceberg was impossible with impact only seconds away.

And then it happened. Passengers felt a faint shudder or jarring but there was no major jolt—no apparent cause for concern. Most passengers concluded it must not have been important.

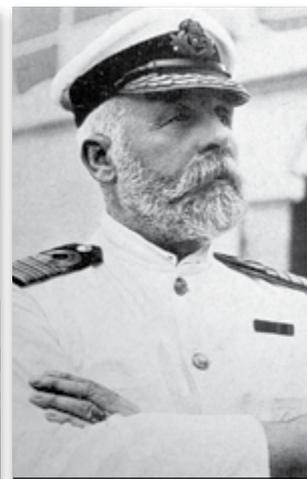
Soon afterward, though, the ship’s engines stopped. This was noticeable, and a number of passengers walked out to see what had happened. Stewards told them there was nothing to worry about—that they’d struck



The *Titanic* leaving the Belfast shipyards for her sea trials



The *Titanic* berthed at Southampton docks



Captain Edward Smith

a little ice but all was well.

Facing reality

On the ship's bridge, however, the full horror of what had happened began to sink in. Capt. Smith, Bruce Ismay, head of the White Star Line, and Thomas Andrews, the ship's builder, were in disbelief.

The iceberg had scraped the ocean liner's hull on the right side beneath the water line, buckling steel plates in places and popping out rivets for a length of nearly 300 feet. The ship was designed to withstand a certain amount of flooding. With its double-bottomed hull divided into 16 watertight compartments, it could remain afloat if as many as four of these were completely flooded. But the iceberg had opened the first six compartments to the sea. What this meant was that the ship was going to sink. As stated in the movie *Titanic*, it was "a mathematical certainty." An estimate was given of one or two hours.

At 12:05 a.m., now April 15, the order was given to uncover the lifeboats. There had been no prior lifeboat drills, warnings or preparation. And tragically, as all aboard would soon learn, there were not nearly enough lifeboats for everyone to be rescued.

In directing passengers to safety, there were no bells or alarms. First-class stewards went cabin to cabin asking first-class passengers to go up on deck and put on life belts. At first there was some joking, the passengers being completely unaware of the seriousness of their situation. People from second and third class came later, with less chance of making it onto a lifeboat.

Yet those with the least chance of rescue were men—even those of first class. This was particularly true on the port or left side of the ship. An order had been given to board women and children first. The person in

charge of launching lifeboats on the starboard or right side, First Officer William Murdoch, took this order to mean that for each boat women and children were to be seated first—and if no more women and children were present yet, men could then fill up the vacancies and the boat would launch. But Second Officer Charles Lightoller, in charge of loading lifeboats on the port side, took the order to mean that no men could board lifeboats at all, except for pilots, until all women and children on the ship made it into lifeboats.

Titanic's band began to play on deck to help calm the passengers, who now faced anguish, fear and sorrow as the loading of lifeboats continued. There were tearful goodbyes as husbands, fathers and brothers were left behind. And some wives decided to stay with their husbands.

Help would not come in time

On the bridge, continual attempts were made to signal for help. A few ships did respond. The *Carpathia*, 58 miles away, promised at 12:25 to get there as fast as she could. Even the *Olympic*, *Titanic's* sister ship 500 miles away, responded. Yet no ships could make it there in the short time *Titanic* had left.

The only vessel within range was the *Californian*. Yet its radio operator, rudely cut off earlier by *Titanic's* radio operator, had called it a night and was sound asleep. Starting at 12:45 and for the next hour, *Titanic's* crew fired distress rockets into the air. Crew members on the *Californian*, seeing the rockets, took them to be ongoing festivities on *Titanic's* celebrated maiden voyage. It never dawned on them that the great ship was sinking and that what they were actually seeing were desperate pleas for rescue. So they didn't wake up the radio operator to find out what was going on.

By 1:55 the last lifeboat was lowered to safety, these craft carrying just over 700 of the more than 2,200 people who had been on the ship. More than 1,500 people were left aboard with nowhere to go.

The deck had been tilting more and more as the front part of the ship filled with water. Soon the stern of the ship would be lifted completely out of the water. Some people jumped overboard and swam toward the lifeboats. But most never made it.

Finally there was a great roar as the ship was torn asunder, and at 2:20 a.m., 2 hours and 40 minutes after colliding with the iceberg, the great ship *Titanic* sank into the ocean depths.

Many who had jumped from the ship were still alive in the icy water until they quickly succumbed to hypothermia and exhaustion (although one lifeboat did go back and rescued three people from the water).

The *Carpathia*, steaming at full speed, arrived at 4 a.m. Her crew picked up the survivors from the lifeboats. But the mighty *Titanic* was gone, with more than 1,500 of her more than 2,200 passengers and crew dead.

It didn't have to happen

One of the most tragic aspects of the *Titanic* saga is that *it did not have to happen*. False assumptions were made about the invincibility of the ship's engineering and technology. Warning signs en route went unheeded—and there was a glaring lack of proper provision and preparation for such a scenario. When the accident happened, most had no idea what was going on. And even as they learned of their predicament, people were slow to accept the reality of the situation. All of this, of course, presents important spiritual lessons for us today.

As outfitted as she was with technologi-



The iceberg the *Titanic* apparently struck on April 14, 1912



The last lifeboat successfully launched from the *Titanic*

Clearly, in hindsight, there was in all of this a lack of foresight and proper planning—as well as misplaced confidence and refusal to accept reality until it was too late.



deemed a useless manpower increase since they probably wouldn't be needed. And it was also felt that, should major calamity strike, getting more than 16 lifeboats away would be difficult enough anyway.

This faulty reasoning, and a desire to cut corners, ultimately cost a huge number of lives. By the lifeboat capacity, no more than half the people on the ship would be able to survive in the event

of unforeseen disaster.

Even then, many of the lifeboats themselves ended up well short of capacity—especially early on. Only a little over 700 people escaped to these craft, when they could have carried nearly 470 more. Why?

One factor was the delay in launching the lifeboats. After hitting the iceberg, it took an hour to assess the damage, recognize that sinking was inevitable, start informing passengers and then start lowering lifeboats. This left less time for lifeboats to be loaded and sent off.

Another contributing factor was the reluctance of passengers to board the lifeboats initially. Things still looked safe on the ship—more so than floating away in little boats on the icy Atlantic at night. And the “women and children first” protocol required married couples and families to split up—the men perhaps being left to perish—adding to the reluctance.

cal advances and remarkable amenities for passengers to enjoy, she was not outfitted for what she truly needed—the survival of all on board in the event of dire emergency.

While *Titanic* could hold more than 3,500 passengers and crew, her lifeboat capacity was only 1,178. That's because out of the 64 wooden lifeboats she was built to carry, she carried only 16 (the minimum required by law based on outdated standards, and perhaps *above* the minimum by certain legal exceptions). With four additional collapsible lifeboats, *Titanic* carried 20 in all.

Planners assumed it to be unlikely that lifeboats would ever need to hold everyone from the ship at once—since what seemed more plausible was a breakdown of the ship with lifeboats ferrying a few passengers at a time to waiting rescue vessels in the busy North Atlantic sea lanes. A full complement of lifeboats would also require more experienced sailors on board to pilot them—

Furthermore, while first- and then second-class passengers came on deck relatively soon, it took much longer for those in third class to hear about what was going on. Many had no idea how to even get to where the lifeboats were, having to be led there by crew—and many never made it there at all.

Clearly, in hindsight, there was in all of this a lack of foresight and proper planning—as well as misplaced confidence and refusal to accept reality until it was too late.

Lessons for our day

We can draw clear comparisons with modern society. Ours is a technologically advanced age filled with more luxuries and conveniences than any time before. And we have faced serious challenges before, always managing to come through them with little lasting impact. We're quite sure of our ability to meet any difficulty, surmount any obstacle.

Yet we are speeding headlong into the darkness, oblivious to the growing danger—with most people unaware of the very real possibility of complete catastrophe from several directions, any of which could send civilization plunging into the abyss.

Make no mistake. The Bible says it's *going* to happen. Human society, despite its marvels, will founder and plunge into collapse because it's built on the wrong foundation. It rejects God and His laws—following the way that seems right but really leads to death (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25).

Jesus Christ was asked by His disciples in Matthew 24 about the end of the age and the signs that would lead up to it. In His outline of coming events, He spoke of a time of great trouble so bad that nothing like it has ever happened—and explained that if that period were allowed to run its course without divine intervention, *no one would survive*.



But, He went on to say, for the sake of the elect—God’s chosen people—that time will be cut short (verses 21-22).

As with the *Titanic*, some will be spared from the coming disaster that will engulf the entire world.

In Revelation 3:10-11, Jesus says that He will protect faithful servants “from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world.” Earlier, during His physical ministry on earth, He made the same promise (Luke 21:34-36). We find similar promises concerning the end of this age in Isaiah 26:20 and Zephaniah 2:3.

But far greater than the promise of safe-keeping through coming travail is God’s promise of eternal salvation—granting the gift of eternal life in His Kingdom to those who follow Christ and submit their lives to His rule now. This will not be a matter of physical wealth, looks or societal connections, but who you are on the inside. The selection applies to those called by God who respond

destiny and goes under, God will provide a way of escape for those whom He chooses. Yet sadly, many will be unaware that anything is really wrong until it’s too late.

God won’t turn a blind eye forever to the rising corruption encircling the globe. Nor will He forsake those who perpetually cry out to Him against the evils of society. A day of reckoning is coming—a time when



We don’t have to be those who fail to heed the warnings. We know the ship is going to sink. The hull’s integrity is compromised. And the water is about to come flooding in.

in the right way and continue to do so—remaining faithful to God and His way of life.

An earlier ship and earlier catastrophe

The book of Genesis records the story of another great ship—yet this one did not sink but was itself a quite literal lifeboat when human civilization then sank beneath the waves of the Flood.

The patriarch Noah, “a preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5), lived in stark contrast to the world around him. At that time, people lived life spans of centuries cut off from God, becoming more and more corrupt and evil. Indeed, things were so bad that God determined to destroy mankind altogether, except for Noah and his family, to give the human race a fresh start.

Many scoffed at Noah as he followed God’s command to build the massive ark. But when the rain came and the waters began to rise there was no more laughter. Like the people who remained on the *Titanic*, the people of that day were trapped with nowhere to go—and they all drowned.

Jesus went on in Matthew 24 to point out that before this age comes to an end at His return, conditions will strikingly parallel the time of Noah (verses 36-42). And when the wayward ship of human society collides with

society will be judged and those who follow God will be delivered.

If God brought judgment on the wicked and spared the righteous in the days of Noah and at other times, we can trust that now also “the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment” (verses 9-10). Just as God delivered Noah, so will He do the same for the righteous of this end time—those who resist the sinful ways of this world.

A world caught unaware

In Luke 17 Jesus warned, “And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be in the days of the Son of Man [the time of Christ’s return]: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all!” (verses 26-27).

So the end of the age will catch most people unaware—they will be going about their lives as normal, oblivious to reality—just as those aboard the *Titanic* did not immediately realize when calamity struck that their time was up. This passage shows the tendency of people to assume that the longer something has been so, the longer it will stay that way. The Word of God, though,

labels this a faulty assumption. The people of the prophet Ezekiel’s day made the same mistake. One notion put forward was: “The days are prolonged, and every vision fails” (Ezekiel 12:22). Another stated, “The vision that he sees is for many days from now, and he prophesies of times far off” (verse 27).

It was apparently this way in Noah’s day too, with some thinking the judgment wouldn’t happen and others thinking it wouldn’t happen for a long time—that is, “until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came . . .”

The people needed to take God’s warnings seriously—as people need to take His warnings seriously today. God’s justice is sure. It *will* come. And there are many signs to let us know that the time for its coming is near—that we are now in the last days of this evil age.

Furthermore, we must not place undue confidence in man and human civilization (Jeremiah 17:5). Cracks are evident throughout society. And we must not ignore them thinking they mean nothing. For like a bulge in a wall that’s come to be ignored because it’s been there so long, its “breaking comes suddenly, in an instant” (Isaiah 30:13).

We don’t have to be those who fail to heed the warnings. We know the ship is going to sink. The signs are everywhere. The hull’s integrity is compromised. And the water is about to come flooding in.

Society at large will go on ignoring the evidence, thinking civilization unsinkable—until it sinks. But we don’t have to go down with the ship. For God will provide a way of escape and ultimate salvation to those who will fear and obey Him through Jesus Christ.

So whenever you look around at the wondrous advances and amenities of modern civilization—and of the seeming stability of your own nation and the world order—just remember the mighty *Titanic* 100 years ago. The great ship seemed unsinkable. But all was not as it seemed. **GN**

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Why Was Jesus Christ Crucified?

When even some religious magazines ask people to reassess the most basic of Christian doctrines through an evolutionary lens, society is clearly drifting farther and farther from biblical truth. Can we—will we—continue to rely on sound Bible doctrine? *by John Ross Schroeder*



“What sort of God requires that His beloved Son die to remedy an act of disobedience by someone who may have existed, but probably didn’t. If God was that bothered, why couldn’t He just pardon Adam and Eve and be done with it?”

All modern education is fundamentally based on accepting evolutionary theory as fact. The exaggeration is only a slight one. Yet even established churches are deeply affected by this false view.

Columnist Clifford Longley, writing recently in the Roman Catholic weekly magazine *The Tablet*, stated: “The Catholic Church accepts Darwin’s theory of evolution at least as probably true; and has rejected the historical accuracy of the creation account given in Genesis, including the story of Adam and Eve and the apple”

(“Christian Doctrine Needs to Evolve,” Nov. 26, 2011).

This declaration certainly doesn’t apply to all church members, but it is seriously disturbing that it was published in an official religious magazine!

Even the most basic Christian doctrines are not spared by this *Tablet* article. It continues: “What sort of God requires that His beloved Son die to remedy an act of disobedience by someone who may have existed, but probably didn’t. If God was that bothered, why couldn’t He just pardon Adam and Eve and be done with it?”

Anyone who has truly experienced the relief a genuine Christian has after being forgiven would never even have such a question. King David of Israel committed two capital crimes and sins against God and man. After his repentance, can you imagine the relief he felt when the prophet Nathan told him in 2 Samuel 12:13, “The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die”?

From the beginning of creation, God has strongly condemned sin. Scripture says, “But the thing that David had done was evil in the eyes of the LORD” (2 Samuel 11:27, New American Standard Bible).

Our Creator hates all types of sin because of its toxic effects on His human children, made in His own image (Genesis 1:26-27). For instance, God hates divorce because of the disruption it causes family life, especially the children (see Malachi 2:14-16).

This remains a moral universe. God wove cause and effect into the very fabric of His creation. Therefore, sin results in its own negative consequences. And ultimately sin requires the ultimate punishment of death—lest it appear that sin is not really so bad.

Of course, while God hates sin, He loves the sinner and desires to spare him or her. And this is where Christ’s sacrifice comes in. Our Creator’s love was totally triumphant when He gave us His only begotten Son Jesus Christ so that we would not perish, but instead inherit everlasting life in His family Kingdom (see John 3:16-17).

Christians must never be ashamed of the sacrifice of Christ. Instead, it must be recognized that in God’s great plan of salvation, Jesus died to help all of mankind come to realize both the terrible graveness of sin as well as the immeasurable depth of God’s love and mercy for us. Indeed, His sacrifice sets us free.

God’s justice and mercy

Many do not grasp that the love of God embraces both justice and mercy. He is a God of justice as well as abundant mercy.



It's because of the divine attribute of justice that the penalty for our sins—our transgressions of God's law (see 1 John 3:4)—had to be paid.

And it is through His divine mercy that Jesus Christ died for our sins. Since the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), the sinless Christ willingly suffered a cruel death in our place so that the God of justice could also show His great mercy—thereby freely forgiving our sins so that we could be reconciled to Him and receive everlasting life (see 2 Corinthians 5:17-21).

Cheap grace has never been part of the Father's plan and is absolutely contrary to His divine character. So reconciliation to God the Father is made possible only by the steepest price imaginable—the shed blood of His Son Jesus Christ. As the apostle Peter expressed it, “You were not redeemed with corruptible things like silver or gold from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, *but with*

the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18-19, emphasis added throughout).

When Jesus returns to the earth, He will bring to the whole world the utopian order that mankind has sought in vain throughout time. He will “establish it with judgment and justice” (Isaiah 9:7). Also notice that “with righteousness He will judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth” (Isaiah 11:4).

We should never overlook God's justice, which is generously tempered by His great mercy. The apostle James wrote that “mercy triumphs over judgment” (James 2:13). And the apostle Paul praised God, stating, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort*” (2 Corinthians 1:3).

But the necessity of God giving His Son as a sacrifice for our sins offends some who nominally embrace Christianity as well as

many unbelievers, as the New Testament explains.

The cross offensive, but not to true Christians

Paul plainly wrote of “the offense of the cross” (Galatians 5:11). It tends to offend those who misunderstand its true meaning. Certainly the coming crucifixion was deeply offensive to Peter *before* he understood its purpose as the means for God the Father to demonstrate His justice regarding sin and His mercy in forgiving us (see Mark 8:31-33). Further, Paul tells us that “the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing” (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Yet Paul clearly associated the power of God with the cross of Christ (figuratively meaning the atonement for our sins). The apostle explains: “For though He [Christ] was crucified in weakness, yet He [was resurrected and now] lives by the power of God. For we are also weak in Him, but we

Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?

Many modern theologians and nominal Christians seriously question whether our first parents, Adam and Eve, really lived. Certainly atheists and agnostics do. Many respected intellectuals and opinion makers in the media find themselves in the grip of evolutionary belief. They think they know better than God.

For instance, a recent headline in one of Britain's Sunday papers, *The Observer*, reads: “Dawkins and Attenborough Hail Victory Over Creationists.” The drophead states, “Fund-



ing to be removed from free schools that teach ‘intelligent design.’” The first paragraph of the text says, “Leading scientists and naturalists, including Professor Richard Dawkins and Sir David Attenborough, are claiming victory over the creationist movement after the [British] government last week ratified measures that will bar anti-evolution groups from teaching creationism in science classes” (Jan. 15, 2012).

But the Bible clearly teaches the existence of Adam and Eve—and not just in Genesis. The genealogy of Jesus Christ in Luke 3:23-38 goes all the way back to Adam. Adam's parent is desig-

nated as God in verse 38 since He was the one who created this first man.

Indeed the apostle Paul says that human beings are the offspring of God (Acts 17:28). He specifically names Adam as *the first man* (1 Corinthians 15:45, 47). Paul declared to Timothy that “Adam was formed first, then Eve” (1 Timothy 2:13). Earlier he had mentioned that “the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness” (2

Corinthians 11:3). Jude tells us that Enoch was the seventh patriarch from Adam (Jude 14), as the genealogical account in Genesis 5 clearly shows.

Describing horrendous conditions during the time of the end, Jesus Christ plainly stated: “For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation, *which God created* until this time, nor ever shall be” (Mark 13:19). Earlier, while upholding the marriage institution, Christ said, “From the beginning of the creation [of human beings], *God ‘made them male and female’*” (Mark 10:6).

Christ based His teaching on marriage on the

creation of Adam and Eve. Having made the first two human beings male and female, He continued: “For this reason a man shall leave His father and mother and be joined to his wife, ‘and the two shall become one flesh’ [quoting from Genesis]; so that they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Mark 10:7-9).

The apostle Paul referred to Adam in stating that it was “through one man [that] sin entered the world [human society], and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). Yet Paul further explained that Adam was, in respects, a forerunner or type of Jesus Christ (verse 14). Summing up the *rescue* of the human race through this second Adam, Paul continued: “For if by one man's [Adam's] offense death reigned through the one, much more those who received abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ” (verse 17).

Paul restates his teaching on the atonement in different ways. For instance, “For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's [Christ's] obedience many will be made righteous” (verse 19).

It should be clear from all these scriptures that we cannot rationally separate the account in Genesis of Adam and Eve's creation by God from basic New Testament doctrine. The latter is deeply dependent on the former.

Both depend on our willingness to first prove and then accept the authenticity and authority of the Holy Scriptures—both the Old and New Testaments. To learn more, request or download our free booklet *Is the Bible True?*

Helps in Dealing With Evolutionary Teaching

To help our readers cope with the avalanche of evolutionary doctrines brainwashing our present world, the publishers of *The Good News* have produced two booklets that directly confront the theory of evolution.

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In addition, many related articles in *The Good News* have been conveniently archived for you on our website. For instance, "Creation or Evolution: Which Is More Believable?" (published in the November-December 2009 issue), "The Debate Over Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?" (published in the July-August 2007 edition), and "Can You Believe Both the Bible and Evolution?" (published in the July-August 2006 issue), can be found there, along with many more. Please check our website at www.GNmagazine.org.

that, "having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). The apostle also tells how: "And by Him [Christ] to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, *having made peace through the blood of His cross*" (Colossians 1:20).

Only the shed blood of God's Son can satisfy the just demands of God's holy spiritual law. Only the sacrifice of Christ can meet the Father's terms and conditions. God will not compromise with His spiritual law. We have to repent of our sins and strive to obey Him (John 15:14; 1 John 5:2-3). Jesus Christ kept His Father's commandments, setting us an example for all time (John 15:10).

Still, God takes our fragile physical human frame into consideration (Psalm 78:37-39). When through weakness we commit sins and then repent, "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

Yet humanly we simply cannot fully and effectively keep God's law until we know that we have been completely forgiven for all of our sins, our transgressions of His holy spiritual law. Clearly people

The apostle John expressed deep appreciation for Christ's sacrifice: "To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Revelation 1:5). At the time of Paul's miraculous conversion, Ananias asked him: "And now why are you waiting? *Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins*, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). The salvation process encompasses both the shed blood of Christ and the waters of baptism.

Christ's sacrifice leads to everlasting life

Jesus explained to Nicodemus: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness [a special sign fashioned for people bitten during a plague of serpents to look on and be healed], even so must the Son of Man be lifted up [by being crucified], that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:14-16).

John recorded the very words of Christ: "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him [the Father] who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, *but has passed from death into life*" (John 5:24). That's why real conversion is so important (Acts 3:19). Finally: "And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. *He who has the Son has life*" (1 John 5:11-12).

Truly, Jesus did die to reconcile us to God—paying the death penalty for sin in our place and presenting to us the pathway to eternal salvation. Let us never allow ourselves to be corrupted by society's false worldview into erasing or diminishing from our minds this wonderful good news for which we should be forever thankful! **GN**

tormented by guilt find obedience to God a difficult task. But there is a way to get rid of guilt.

Our guilty consciences cleansed

The ordinances, gifts and sacrifices of ancient Israel could not make people perfect who performed the required services "in regard to the conscience" (Hebrews 9:9). But Christ's atonement can! "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, *cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*" (verse 14).

After we have been fully forgiven and washed clean from our sins, firstly by Christ's blood and secondly symbolically in the baptismal waters, we are told to "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, *having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience* [by Jesus' shed blood] and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:22).

Reconciliation to God the Father is made possible only by the steepest price imaginable—the shed blood of His Son Jesus Christ.

shall live with Him by the power of God toward you" (2 Corinthians 13:4).

So the symbolism of Christ's cross remains an integral part of the true gospel message. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16).

Paul expounded this principle in personal terms: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me [through the power of the Holy Spirit]: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20, King James Version).

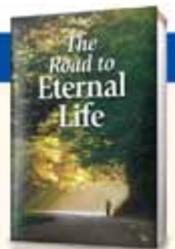
No wonder he later stated, "But God forbid that I should boast *except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Galatians 6:14). Of course, the original physical cross no longer exists, having long since crumbled into dust.

The cross of Christ—an instrument of peace

Paul explained to Christians at Rome

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“Christ, Our Passover, Was Sacrificed for Us”



The apostle Paul compared Jesus Christ to the lamb slain at Passover. At His last Passover with His disciples, Jesus told His followers to continue to partake of the Passover symbols of unleavened bread and wine as representative of His sacrifice. What are we to learn from these things? *by Jerold Aust*

Jerusalem shone golden in the afternoon sun as 12 men and their leader made their way from the Mount of Olives to a house in the city.

Earlier in the day, Jesus of Nazareth had instructed two of His disciples, Peter and John, to go into Jerusalem and prepare for the Passover (Luke 22:7-13), a holy sacrificial meal among the Jewish people as commanded in the Old Testament. (It involved the sacrifice of a lamb, as explained in Exodus 12 and other passages.)

Jesus had told them they would encounter a man carrying water, who would show them his guest room where they could keep the Passover. And after finding the man, Peter and John had made the necessary preparations.

Jesus probably said little as they entered the room and surveyed the preparations. To Peter and John, no doubt Jesus appeared introspective. But beyond this their teacher seemed composed and calm. They all began to relax at the table and eat, following the lead of their master.

It was then that Jesus began to speak to His disciples, explaining that He had waited for this special time so He could eat this Passover with them. “With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God,” He told them (Luke 22:15-16).

It was a shocking statement. Jesus spoke of suffering? The apostles found it difficult to believe that He, the Messiah or Christ who was prophesied to reign over Israel and all nations, would have to suffer physical torment, let alone die this early in His life. Even more so because this was the same man who had turned water into wine, fed 5,000 hungry people on five loaves and two fish and had food left over, and walked on the water of a tempestuous, stormy sea.

Jesus went on to offer His disciples unleavened bread and wine—elements that were part of the customary Passover meal but now revealed to be representative of His sacrifice as the Lamb of God under the New Covenant.

The bread He gave His closest followers symbolized His body. The apostle Peter later defined what this meant, writing that we, as Christians, should follow in the steps of our Savior, who “bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes [we] were healed” (1 Peter 2:24).

Christ would pay the penalty for humanity’s sins “by the sacrifice of Himself” (Hebrews 9:26). The wine, offered next, represented His shed blood, which would wash away the sins of mankind (Luke 22:17-20).

Earlier in the evening, the disciples were taken aback when Jesus deliberately knelt and washed their feet. Jesus told them to follow His example, explaining that this action was symbolic of renewed spiritual cleansing and the humble and unconditional attitude of service they had to have toward each other (John 13:1-17).

The unleavened bread and wine Christ offered His disciples had deep meaning for them and us. During the evening, He explained that He was about to offer Himself for the sins of mankind (John 13:31-33). His followers would soon see the meaning of the Passover symbols dramatically demonstrated to them.

Jesus’ sacrifice prophesied

Old Testament prophecies of a coming Savior’s sacrifice abound. The earliest can

be found in Genesis after Adam and Eve sinned. Speaking to Satan, the serpent, God said: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel” (Genesis 3:15).

This verse, referring to the serpent and the Seed, speaks symbolically of Satan and Jesus Christ. Satan would “bruise the heel” of Jesus by influencing His crucifixion, with nails driven through His feet. But Christ, on His return to earth, will bruise Satan’s head by imprisoning him for a millennium and ultimately taking him out of the picture for good (Revelation 20:1-3, 10). The prophecy in Genesis 3 is the earliest reference to Jesus’ crucifixion and death.

The prophet Isaiah foretold Jesus’ ultimate sacrifice: He was “wounded for *our* transgressions, He was bruised for *our* iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5, emphasis added).

The Eternal God, Isaiah further prophesied, “has laid on Him the iniquity [the lawlessness or sin] of us all” (verse 6). The

“He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter.”

Messiah was to be “oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter” (verse 7). “He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken” (verse 8).

The agony of the crucifixion

King David, writing some 1,000 years before Christ’s death, also foretold this sobering occasion. God inspired David to describe the humiliation and unbearable pain Jesus Christ would suffer during His crucifixion. In Psalm 22, David wrote as if Christ were crying out in the first person: “I am [despised as] a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people. All those who see Me ridicule Me” (Psalm 22:6-7).

The prophecy continues in verses 14-17: “I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it has melted within Me. . . You have brought Me to the dust of death. . . They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me.”

The writers of the Bible recorded many prophecies about this most momentous and

critical time, when our holy Savior would pour out His life for you, me and all of humanity. That time came as foretold, in accordance with God’s design: “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6). Jesus Christ’s sacrificial offering of Himself had long been planned.

The life and death of Jesus

To better grasp the significance of Christ’s sacrifice, we should review some of the events of Jesus’ physical life.

When Jesus was born, Satan set out to destroy the Son of God. In Matthew we read: “Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men” (Matthew 2:16).

Later, immediately before the start of Jesus’ ministry, God’s Spirit led Him into the wilderness to fast for 40 days and nights.

At this pivotal point, Satan came to Jesus. Matthew 4 describes the temptations the devil used to test Jesus.

First Satan attempted to goad Jesus into employing His divine power to turn stones into bread to satisfy his excruciating hunger (verse 3). Next he tried to appeal to the vanity and pride he mistakenly assumed Jesus had (verses 5-6).

Then Satan addressed the base human desires of greed and power by offering Jesus the kingdoms of the world (verses 8-9). Jesus didn’t dispute that the world truly is in the hands of Satan for now, for Satan is the god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:4, King James Version).

In this crucial testing, Jesus experienced temptation but he never sinned (Hebrews 4:15)—either in action or in entertaining sinful thoughts. Although physically starving, Jesus was at His peak of spiritual strength, having fasted and communed with His Father for 40 days and nights.

So it was throughout the rest of His life and ministry. Jesus never once sinned or allowed His mind to indulge thoughts of breaking God’s law. He never broke the letter or spirit of the laws of God.

Jesus knew what it was like to endure and master the anxieties and passions common to all of mankind: “In the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, [He] was heard because of His godly fear . . . He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him” (Hebrews 5:7-9).

Jesus Christ lived a perfect life. He “committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth” (1 Peter 2:22). Had He broken God’s law, He would have suffered the death penalty, like the rest of mankind, with no hope of a resurrection. But, since He remained sinless, and the very Son of God in the flesh, His death paid the penalty for our sins, making Him the Savior of mankind (Hebrews 10:12; 1 John 4:14).

Jesus Christ, our Passover

In 1 Corinthians 5:7, Paul wrote that “Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.” This statement holds profound meaning for Christians.

Paul wrote these words to the Corinthian church, which was allowing one of its members to continue in a sexual sin. This was no ordinary sin, even for the profligate Corinthian society of the time. A man was involved in an immoral relationship with his stepmother (1 Corinthians 5:1).

Paul reprimanded the whole congregation and told the Corinthians to expel the offender, lest the sin spread and contaminate them just as yeast inundates and puffs up bread dough—this picture being important to the meaning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which followed the Passover (1 Corinthians 5:2-6).

In supporting his reasons for removing the sinner, Paul directly mentioned Jesus as the fulfillment of the Passover sacrifice: “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (verse 7).

What did Paul mean by that? He meant that Jesus’ sacrifice was not made in vain. He meant that the Corinthians should not take lightly Christ’s painful death. (To see more of what Paul was referring to, read “Why Is Jesus Christ Called ‘Our Passover’?” on page 30.)

Our lives should reflect Christ’s sacrifice

Up to that point the Corinthians had not comprehended the magnitude of Christ’s sacrifice. They didn’t fully understand that once their sins were repented of and covered



Why Is Jesus Christ Called “Our Passover”?

In 1 Corinthians 5:7 we learn that “Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.” What is the specific connection between the Passover and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ? For that matter, what is the Passover?

Events in ancient Egypt

We find the Passover instituted in Exodus 12. The nation of Israel was enslaved in Egypt, and events were building rapidly to the horrifying devastation that would finally force Pharaoh to free the Israelites from slavery.

Through Moses and Aaron, God commanded Israel to set aside a lamb for each household in the nation. Before nightfall, the Israelites were to kill the lambs and put some of the lambs’ blood on the sides and top of the door frame of each house. Each lamb was to be eaten that evening by the members of the Israelite household that offered it (verses 1-10).

A profoundly significant event was to take place outside the homes while the Israelites were inside eating this Passover meal: “For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt” (verses 12-13, emphasis added throughout).

This terrifying event occurred just as God said. “And it came to pass at midnight that the LORD struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of livestock. So Pharaoh rose in the night, he, all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead” (verses 29-30).

The dead likely numbered in the hundreds of thousands. Pharaoh, having ignored earlier serious warnings and plagues, learned the hard way that the God of the Israelites was not a God to be trifled with. The Israelites were set free.

Important lessons for us

There are vital lessons for all of humanity in these events. God called the sacrificial lamb “the LORD’s Passover” and “the Passover sacrifice

of the LORD” (verses 11, 27). It was so named because God promised, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you” (verse 13).

Some 1,500 years later, the apostle Paul used this same term to describe Jesus Christ. Why?

In the setting of the original Passover, the sacrifice of the lambs signified that those partaking of



Just as the sacrifice of the Passover lambs at the time of the Exodus spared the obedient Israelites, Jesus Christ’s sacrifice has removed the death penalty from us.

that sacrifice would be spared from God’s judgment. If the Israelites ignored or disobeyed God’s warning, they would suffer the death of their firstborn along with the Egyptians. This sacrifice was required to spare them from death and great sorrow.

Paul and the other New Testament writers understood that the Passover lambs slain at the time of the Exodus foreshadowed the later sacrifice of Jesus Christ. “Walk in love as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma,” wrote Paul (Ephesians 5:2).

The book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus Christ “has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” and “offered one sacrifice for sins forever” (Hebrews 9:26; 10:12).

Like the ancient Israelites and Egyptians, all humanity has had sin’s penalty of misery and

death hanging over it. We have earned it because of our sins (Romans 3:23; 6:23). But, just as the sacrifice of the Passover lambs at the time of the Exodus spared the obedient Israelites, Jesus Christ’s sacrifice has removed that death penalty from us (Romans 5:9; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14).

John the Baptist, when Christ came to him to be baptized, exclaimed: “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). Thanks to Jesus Christ, we are able to be freed from sin’s penalty.

Passover lamb symbolic

The Passover lamb also foreshadowed Christ in other ways. It was to be “without blemish,” or

with no deformities (Exodus 12:5). This was symbolic of the spiritual purity of Jesus Christ, “who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth” (1 Peter 2:22).

The apostle Peter pointed out that we have been redeemed, or bought back, by God—not with material wealth, “but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19).

Even some aspects of how the Passover lambs were to be killed were symbolic of Jesus’ death. The Israelites were told not to break any of the lambs’ bones (Exodus 12:46). Although a common practice in crucifixions was to break the legs of the suffer-

ing criminals to hasten death, Jesus Christ was already dead when the Roman soldiers came to break His legs, so His body was spared further desecration. “For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, ‘Not one of His bones shall be broken’” (John 19:36).

The prophet Isaiah, describing the coming Messiah’s sacrificial death, wrote, “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth” (Isaiah 53:7). This, too, was a prophecy fulfilled in Jesus Christ’s death (Acts 8:32-35).

These and many other scriptures help us understand the wonderful truth that, as the Lamb of God, “Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.”

—Scott Ashley

by Jesus' shed blood, their lives had to reflect a new commitment. They were no longer to give in to their former sinful habits.

Paul made this very clear to them: "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Writing to the Romans on the same subject, Paul asked: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:1-4).

Christ's sacrifice must not be taken lightly

Paul made it plain to the Corinthians that they must not take Christ's sacrifice lightly. Accepting that sacrifice must result in a changed life, with a new outlook and approach that will not tolerate sin. "But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner . . . Therefore 'put away from yourselves the evil person'" (1 Corinthians 5:11-13).

Since the Corinthian members apparently didn't fully understand the implications of Jesus Christ's sacrifice and the enormous pain and suffering He endured, is it possible that *we* could make the same error? Do we fully grasp what He went through to become a sacrifice for us?

None of us were there to witness the Roman soldiers brutally scourge, beat and mock Jesus Christ. But we do have the written Word of God that tells us it happened. The prophet Isaiah, King David in the Psalms and the Gospel writers all bear witness to the cruel punishment inflicted on Jesus Christ. From these biblical accounts, plus contemporary descriptions of such punishments, we can understand, as much as human beings *can* understand, the extent of the suffering our Savior endured for us.

When the authorities led Jesus before

the high priest Caiaphas and in front of the scribes and elders, He was falsely declared guilty of blasphemy. The religious authorities spat in His face, slapping and pounding Him with their fists while they ridiculed Him (Matthew 26:67-68). When they turned Jesus over to the Romans for scourging (Matthew 27:26), He was understandably disoriented, His face cut, bruised and battered.

"The halfway death"

The scourging by the Romans of our Savior was barbaric. They called this type of punishment "the halfway death" because it stopped just short of killing its victim. A trained man, called a *lictor*, used a wooden grip to which several strips of leather had been attached. At the end of each strip, fragments of bone or iron had been sewn in. This was called a *flagellum*. There was no specific number of stripes to be administered, and the lictor could whip the prisoner on any part of his body.

Typically, guards tied a condemned criminal to a stone or wooden pillar, facing the pillar with one arm on each side. To further humiliate the prisoner, he was stripped of all clothing, affording him no protection from the cruel instrument.

Then the brutal procedure began. The prisoner suffered blow after blow, leaving his flesh lacerated and his bloody skin hanging like thin strips of cloth. An officer supervised the operation to see that the captive wasn't inadvertently beaten to death; the Romans knew from experience that a fragile man so beaten could die quickly.

When the scourging was over, the guards untied the prisoner, who would slump to the ground in shock. They would pour cold water on him to clean off some of the blood, torn flesh and filth. The rough scrubbing of the victim's battered body would often shock him back to gasping consciousness.

In Jesus' case, some of the soldiers gathered thorns and plaited them into a crown, which they jammed onto His head. They wrapped a robe around Him, placed a reed scepter in His hand and mockingly paid homage to Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" (Matthew 27:29).

"Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified" (verses 30-31).

What His sacrifice means for us

This is only a cursory portrayal of the

agony our Savior had to suffer in our place so that sin's penalty of suffering and death could ultimately be removed from you and me. Without Jesus' sacrifice, we would automatically be consigned to everlasting death. The only life we could live would be the physical existence we are struggling through now with the accompanying misery caused by sin.

We would have no hope of reconciliation to God our Father. We would have no prospects of His accepting our lives through the life of Jesus Christ, now at the right hand of God. We would have no basis for being healed of pain and suffering. And we would have no reason to hope to receive the Holy Spirit, understand the truth of God, and serve Christ as His followers on earth.

We would not understand the mystery of the ages, the plan of God for mankind to become the sons of God. And we would not enjoy the privilege of fellowshiping with others of like mind, sharing the joy God blesses us with in His Church.

No wonder Paul used the words he did to bring the Corinthians back to spiritual reality. Either they didn't realize the depth of meaning in Jesus' sacrifice, or they once comprehended it but had grown careless of it. Whatever the situation, they needed to be reminded of the pain and agony their Savior went through for them. They needed to repent of their shortsightedness and acknowledge the great extent of that remarkable sacrifice.

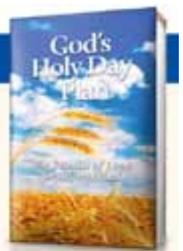
Here is a question we might ask ourselves in this Passover season: Do *we* truly appreciate Christ's ultimate sacrifice?

Let's hope that we do.

The Passover season is upon us. We should feel the conviction of the apostle Paul, whom God inspired to remind us: "For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us." That sacrifice was real, and it should affect our lives every day. **GN**

Learn More

Most people aren't even aware that the Bible teaches us to observe seven annual festivals revealed within its pages. Yet these festivals like the Passover are in reality all about Jesus Christ! What do the other biblical festivals teach us? Read our free booklet *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*. Download or request your free copy today!



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What Does Easter Really Commemorate?

You might be surprised! Discover the truth of the surprising story behind one of the world's most popular religious holidays.

by Wilbur Berg

As a boy attending a mainstream church with my family, I was always surprised to see people at services on Easter Sunday who did not come at any other time of the year, not even at Christmas.

Embarrassed and somewhat fearful, a few of them told us they hoped that God would forgive their sins and absences because they made the special effort to come to church on Easter Sunday, which to them was the most sacred time of the year.

Others felt that a special measure of sanctification, purification and holiness was imparted to them by their attendance at Easter services.

But they were wrong, failing to realize that their faith practice was based on falsehood. None of them knew or even wondered about Easter's origins. They would have been shocked to know the truth of the matter!

Easter's pre-Christian origins and symbols

Many people are amazed to find that the Bible does not mention Easter as part of Christian worship. Neither Jesus nor the apostles ever directed that it should be observed. The word *Easter* appears only once in the Bible, in Acts 12:4 in the King James Version where it is an incorrect translation of the Greek word *pascha*—which refers to *Passover*, not Easter. This mistake has been corrected in more recent translations of the New Testament.

Also not generally known is that Easter did not originate with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Encyclopedias and dictionaries trace the term Easter variously back to *Eostre*, the name of the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring, to *Eostur*, the Norse word for the spring season, or to *Ishtar*, the ancient spring goddess of Near Eastern countries, also known as Astarte or, in the Bible, Ashtoreth.

All are connected to the spring season



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and springtime fertility festivals which represented rejuvenation, reproduction and the life-enriching qualities of the sun. Customs and symbols associated today with Easter observance can be directly traced back to Easter's pre-Christian origins.

The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th edition, in its article on Easter, describes these customs and symbols as having been “handed down from the ancient ceremonial and symbolism of European and Middle Eastern pagan spring festivals.” One symbol, the Easter rabbit, is called the modern replacement for “the hare, the symbol of fertility in ancient Egypt.”

Another source reveals the origin of two Easter customs: “Also popular among Europeans and Americans on Easter is ham, because the pig was considered a symbol of luck in pre-Christian European culture”

(*The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 1987, “Easter”).

“In traditional folk religion the egg is a powerful symbol of fertility, purity, and rebirth. It is used in magical rituals to promote fertility and restore virility; to look into the future; to bring good weather; to encourage the growth of crops and protect both cattle and children against misfortune, especially the dreaded evil eye.

“All over the world it represents life and creation, fertility and resurrection . . . Later [customs concerning eggs] were linked with Easter. The [Roman Catholic] church did not oppose this, though many egg customs were pre-Christian in origin, because the egg provided a fresh and powerful symbol of the Resurrection and the transformation of death into life” (article “Egg”).

Ancient pagan resurrection celebrations led to Easter

Celebrating the resurrection of a deceased deity in a springtime festival also long predates Christianity. Chief among

such celebrations were those in honor of Tammuz, the Babylonian “god of pasture and flocks . . . and of vegetation. He was husband and brother of Ishtar (Asherah), goddess of fertility.

“Babylonian epics preserve the saga of the annual dying of Tammuz in the autumn when vegetation withered; his departure to the underworld; his recovery by the mourning Ishtar; and his springtime return to the fertilized upper world” (*Harper's Bible Dictionary*, 1961, “Tammuz”).

The Babylonians taught that Tammuz was mystically revived from death in the spring by the anguish and crying of Ishtar, who was the same as the pagan goddess Ashtoreth referred to in the Bible in Judges 2:13. This ancient custom of mourning for the return of a dead god is mentioned in Ezekiel 8:14, where we read of women who



Rabbits, pagan dieties (like Ishtar pictured in the center) and eggs are all fertility symbols connected with pre-Christian pagan fertility festivities.

are “weeping for Tammuz.” His supposed resurrection marked the end of winter and the beginning of spring, with its new life and vegetation.

Ishtar, wife of Tammuz, was also worshipped as the “Queen of Heaven” (*Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, “Asherah”). The Bible shows that idolatry and sun worship connected with Ishtar and Tammuz became so widespread and influential that they were practiced even by people who had once known the true God but had fallen into idolatrous worship (Ezekiel 8:12-18; Jeremiah 7:18; 44:17-23).

Worshipped in other areas under the name Adonis, Tammuz was honored with an annual celebration by a cult that “mourned his death and rejoiced at his resurrection. The cult worked its way into the folkways of Christian peasants, who wept over the lost Adonis and participated in lewd festivities” (*Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, “Tammuz”).

Subtle changes introduced

But how did such strange customs and practices become associated with biblically recorded true events such as the Passover and Jesus Christ’s resurrection?

From the start, the Roman government regarded the early Christian Church as a branch of the Jewish religion, because the earliest Christians staunchly observed the same laws and religious celebrations the Jews did. Later, as persecution against Jews increased following Jewish rebel-

lion against Roman rule, many groups of professing Christians chose to dissociate themselves from any appearance of Jewish religious practices.

During the reign of Emperor Hadrian (A.D. 117-135), Jews were harshly persecuted and practices of Judaism forbidden. These oppressive measures apparently influenced many early Christians in Rome to abandon the biblical Sabbath and festivals and turn to Sunday, historically observed by the Romans as a day of veneration of the Sun. Hence, the first day of the week (Sunday) took the place of the seventh-day Sabbath (Friday sunset to Saturday sunset), and “some of the old heathen feasts became church festivals with change of name and of worship” (Jesse Lyman Hurlbut, *The Story of the Christian Church*, 1954, pp. 43, 45, 77, 79).

In other words, the Sabbath and festivals of God, outlined in Leviticus 23 and practiced by both Judaism and the early Church (Acts 13:14, 42, 44; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4, 21; 20:6, 16; 27:9), were supplanted by unbiblical traditions and practices. As time passed, the truth and purity of the early Church of God were corrupted.

Controversy over worship

Accompanying this transformation was early confusion over the timing and focus of Christian observance. “In Rome Easter was celebrated on the Sunday following the full moon after the spring equinox, and was a memorial of the resurrection” (*The*

Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity, 1990, p. 36).

Note that carefully. What was instituted by Jesus to annually commemorate His death was subtly changed to a celebration of His resurrection. Although Christ’s resurrection itself is an important part of God’s plan (see 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Peter 1:3), there is no command in the Bible, by Jesus or His apostles, for Jesus’ followers to have a particular ceremony or service to celebrate His resurrection.

Instead, in terms of an instituted special service, Jesus highlighted what was to be accomplished by His death by directing us to partake of the symbols of the New Covenant meaning of the Passover (Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:17-20). He was the Lamb of God who would offer Himself as the true Paschal sacrifice for the sins of the world (John 1:29), and His death fulfilled what had been foreshadowed by the slaying of the Passover lambs.

The New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1967 edition, in the article “Easter and its cycle,” adds: “Originally both observances [Passover and Easter] were allowed, but gradually it was felt incongruous that Christians should celebrate Easter on a Jewish feast, and unity in celebrating the principal Christian feast was called for.”

The Passover ceremony, observed by Jesus Christ and commanded by Him for His followers (1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Luke 22:19; John 13:15), was supplanted by Easter, a day neither He nor the early



New Testament Church approved.

Inconsistent and incorrect dating

The date of Easter, as part of the mixing of the ancient fertility and resurrection celebrations with the death and resurrection of Jesus, was heatedly debated during the 2nd century after Christ, especially by a group in Asia Minor known as the Quartodecimans (from the Latin word for 14). They insisted on observing Passover on the 14th of Nisan on the Hebrew calendar.

“In the mid-second century, however, some Gentile Christians began to celebrate it on the Sunday after 14 Nisan, with the preceding Friday observed as the day of Christ’s crucifixion, regardless of the date on which it fell. The resulting controversy over the correct time for observing the Easter festival reached a head in A.D. 197, when Victor of Rome excommunicated those Christians who insisted on celebrating Easter [actually Passover] on 14 Nisan.

“The dispute continued until the early fourth century, when the Quarto-decimans . . . were required by Emperor Constantine to conform to the empire-wide practice of observing Easter on the Sunday following 14 Nisan, rather than on the date itself [of the actual Passover].

“Currently celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the vernal equinox [as fixed by the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325], Easter falls differently for [Eastern] Orthodox Christianity which, unlike Western Christianity, did not accept the Gregorian calendar reform in 1582” (*Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, 1985, “Easter”).

Putting all this together, we see that the world’s observance of Easter is a curious mixture of ancient mythological practices and arbitrary dating, which actually obscures and discredits the proof of Jesus Christ’s messiahship and resurrection. The Passover He observed and commanded was discarded and replaced with a very different celebration—Easter.

This gives some of the background on how Friday came to be observed as the time of Jesus’ crucifixion, and the following Sunday as the date or anniversary of His resurrection. However, another problem with all this is that these Friday and Sunday observances are actually contradicted by the details of the biblical record!

Jesus’ sign that He was the Messiah

In Matthew 12:38 we find some of the scribes and Pharisees asking Jesus for a sign to prove He was the Messiah. But



This statuette depicts the fertility goddess Astarte sitting on a throne flanked by a pair of sphinxes.

Putting it all together, we see that the world’s observance of Easter is a curious mixture of ancient mythological practices and arbitrary dating, which actually obscures and discredits the proof of Jesus Christ’s messiahship and resurrection.

Jesus told them that the only sign He would give was that of the prophet Jonah: “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (verse 40).

Many people justify their belief in a Friday crucifixion and Sunday resurrection by arguing that this segment of time does not require a span of 72 hours. They reason that a part of a day can be reckoned as a whole day. Hence, since Jesus died around 3 p.m. (Matthew 27:46), they feel the remainder of Friday constituted the first day, Saturday the second and part of Sunday the third.

What they fail to take into consideration is that *only two* nights—not three—are accounted for in this explanation and that Jesus had *already* risen before the daylight portion of Sunday (John 20:1).

Something is obviously incorrect about this commonly accepted assumption!

Jonah 1:17, to which Jesus referred, states specifically that “Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.” There is no reason to think that these days and nights were fractional. Nor is there any basis for thinking that Jesus meant only two nights and one day, plus parts of two days,

when He described the length of time He would be in the grave. Such rationalization undermines the integrity of Jesus’ own words.

Was Christ’s sign fulfilled?

If Jesus were in the grave only from late Friday afternoon to sometime very early Sunday morning, then the only sign He gave that He was the prophesied Messiah *was not fulfilled*. The claim of His messiahship rests on the fulfillment of His words. It’s that serious a matter! Either He meant what He said, or He didn’t!

Let’s carefully examine the details of those fateful days. Each of the Gospel writers gives an account of the events, but each presents different aspects that need to be correctly synchronized and harmonized to produce a clear sequence and understanding of

what happened (see accompanying chart on the facing page). The Bible does not contradict itself (Psalm 119:160), and we will see that not one of the Gospel accounts contradicts what the other Gospels teach.

For instance, John 19:31 preserves a crucial point that provides insight into the other narratives. The preparation day on which Jesus was crucified is described as the day before the Sabbath. But John clarifies it by stating that this approaching Sabbath “was a high day.” This term does not refer to the weekly Sabbath (Friday evening to Saturday evening) but to the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is one of God’s annual “high”—or holy—days (Exodus 12:16; Leviticus 23:6-7), which could fall on any day of the week.

Some try to get around this by arguing that this high day fell that year on the seventh day of the week, making it a double Sabbath, with the preparation day being on Friday. But Luke’s account shows that this was not the case. Notice the sequence of events outlined in chapter 23. Jesus’ moment of death, as well as His hasty burial because of the oncoming Sabbath, is narrated in verses 46-53. Verse 54 then states, “That day was the Preparation,

The Chronology of the Crucifixion and Resurrection

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Jesus Christ ate an evening Passover meal with His disciples and instituted the New Covenant symbols (Matthew 26:26-28). Jesus was then betrayed by Judas, arrested and during the night brought before the high priest.	Jesus died around 3 p.m. (Matthew 27:46-50). This was the preparation day for the annual, not weekly, Sabbath, which began at sunset (Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:31). Jesus' body was placed in the tomb just before sunset (Matthew 27:57-60).	Sunset Wednesday to sunset Thursday was the high-day Sabbath, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (John 19:31; Leviticus 23:4-7). It is described as the day after the "Day of Preparation" (Matthew 27:62). Thursday just before sunset marked the first full night and day Jesus was in the tomb.	The high-day Sabbath now past as of sunset Thursday, the women bought and prepared spices for anointing Jesus' body before resting on the weekly Sabbath day, which began at Friday sunset (Mark 16:1; Luke 23:56). Friday just before sunset marked the second full night and day Jesus was in the tomb.	The women rested on the weekly Sabbath, according to the Fourth Commandment (Luke 23:56; Exodus 20:8-11). Jesus rose near sunset, exactly three days and three nights after His burial, fulfilling the sign of Jonah and authenticating the sign He gave of His messiahship.	The women brought the spices early in the morning while it was still dark (Luke 24:1; John 20:1), finding that Jesus had <i>already</i> risen (Matthew 28:1-6; Mark 16:2-6; Luke 24:2-3; John 20:1). He did not rise on Sunday morning, but near sunset the day before.

and the Sabbath drew near.”

Two different Sabbath days described

Many have assumed that it is the weekly Sabbath mentioned here. But this is not the case. Instead, it was a Sabbath that occurred on Thursday, since verse 56 shows that the women, after seeing Christ's body having been laid in the tomb, “returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils” for the final preparation of the body.

In this sequence, such work could have been done only on Friday, since it would have been considered a violation of the Sabbath if it was done on that day, and that would not have been allowed. This is further verified by Mark's account, which states, “Now when the Sabbath was *past*, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices [which would not have been purchased on a Sabbath] that they might come and anoint Him” (Mark 16:1, emphasis added).

This conclusively proves that the Sabbath mentioned here and in the other narratives was the first Holy Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which in that particular year fell on a Thursday. The women had to wait until this first Sabbath was over before they could buy and prepare the spices, on Friday, to be used for anointing Jesus' body. Then, after these activities, “they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment,” which would have been the regular weekly seventh day Sabbath (Luke 23:56).

The sign of the Messiah fulfilled!

After this rest, the women then went to Jesus' tomb early on the first day of the week (Sunday), while it was still dark (John 20:1), and found that He had *already* been

resurrected (Matthew 28:1-6; Mark 16:2-6; Luke 24:1-3; John 20:1). Therefore, if we allow the Scriptures to interpret themselves, an accurate harmonization of all four Gospel accounts confirms the validity of Jesus' statements.

Further proof of the accuracy of this sequence and explanation is found in Matthew 28:1. Most translations render “Now after the Sabbath” as if the word *Sabbath* were singular. This is not correct. *Sabbath* here is *sabbaton* in the Greek text, which is genitive plural.

Some Bible versions, including Alfred Marshall's Parallel New Testament in Greek and English and Ferrar Fenton's translation, translate it properly as “after the *Sabbaths*,” which again demonstrates that there was more than one Sabbath that week.

The wording of Mark 16:1-2 is also confusing to some because it seems to suggest that the spices were purchased after the weekly Sabbath rather than before it, on Friday. However, this is explained by Luke 23:56, which clearly shows that the women bought the spices *before*, and not *after*, the weekly Sabbath, “and they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.” Mark did not mention this weekly Sabbath rest in his account, but Luke, who wrote later, did.

Some also stumble over Mark 16:9, not taking into account that there is no punctuation indicated in the original Greek. Therefore, to be in harmony with the material presented in the other Gospels, a better translation would be: “Now having risen, early the first day of the week He [Jesus] appeared first to Mary Magdalene . . .” These verses are not saying that Jesus *rose* early on Sunday morning, but that He *appeared* on Sunday morning to Mary

Magdalene, having risen some time earlier.

Three days and three nights in the tomb

Be assured that the precise fulfillment of Jonah's sign of three days and three nights, which Jesus gave as verification of His authenticity and messiahship, *did happen*. Jesus rose late Saturday afternoon around sunset—not Sunday at sunrise—which was precisely three days and three nights after He was placed in the tomb just before sunset on Wednesday. He had already risen hours before the women came to the tomb, while it was still dark, Sunday morning.

We should be grateful that God has preserved the genuine, incontrovertible proof of Jesus' resurrection so we can have the confidence and certainty that He is indeed the prophesied Messiah and Savior of the world, who has paid the full penalty of human sin by His sacrifice and death, and that He rose from the dead and lives in heaven as our Helper, High Priest and Intercessor! **GN**

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Most people are shocked to discover that our major religious holidays are not found in the Bible. They're also surprised to learn that the Bible teaches us to observe seven annual festivals revealed within its pages. What are the real origins of our major holidays? And what do the God-given festivals of the Bible teach us? You need to read our free booklet *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Observe?* Download or request your free copy today!



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How to Find Things in the Bible

Why do we need to study the Bible? And how should we go about it?

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A book that changes lives

A Christian in Arizona shared this story of how she came to be interested in the Bible:

“When I was 13 years old, I picked up my Bible and decided that I wanted to read it all the way through. My parents had always taken us to church when we were young, but by that time in my life church attendance was sporadic. We also never read much from the Old Testament, so I was curious what it had to say.

“As I painfully read through the older English used in the King James Version, I began to realize that the Old Testament had a lot to say about what should be done in life and also what was supposed to come in the future. I read about things that would last for all generations and also about God’s plan for an unknown time in the future. It made little sense to me at the time, but the seeds were planted. Why had I not been taught these things, and why was this part of the Bible so often ignored?

“This reading brought up more questions than answers at the time, but I continued to learn bits and pieces as I read more, and in my mid-20s I was more able to comprehend what I had read. I finally began to understand the depth and meaning of what I was reading, and it changed my life forever.”

Between the two covers of your Bible lies a matchless treasure trove of practical advice and straightforward instructions for living the best possible life you can now, while preparing for a wonderful life forever.

Why study Scripture?

Let’s begin with a look at a few passages that talk about why it’s important to study the Bible in the first place.

► Does God appreciate those who search the Scriptures daily?

“These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

The Bereans, who lived in northern Greece, were commended for their diligent searching of the Scriptures until they found the truth of the matter. Reading the Bible through and studying the context are still excellent tools for gaining familiarity with this priceless book. A program of reading the Bible through (such as with *The Good News* online Bible Commentary at bible.ucg.org/bible-commentary) is foundational in gaining an overview of God’s revelation to us and will help make it easier to find specific things later.

► What can we gain from studying the Bible?

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

God inspired the writing and compilation of the Bible to give us the spiritual instruction and correction we need to change and become more like He is. He does this for our good because He truly loves us!

► What is the ultimate benefit of Bible study?

“From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15).

Salvation means being saved from the sinful way that leads to misery and ultimately death, and being given access to God’s way that leads to true happiness and eternal life.

Navigating the Bible

Sometimes it’s good to read through the books of the Bible in order, but sometimes you need to find answers to specific questions.

Yet to a new student of the Bible, it can seem to be a daunting, mammoth collection of print. So how can you effectively find your way through this sea of words to study a specific topic or find a particular verse?

Unlike ancient times—when, long before the invention of the printing press, owning a copy of even one of the books of the Bible was rare—today inexpensive and even free Bibles are readily available. And a great many resources—commonly known as “Bible helps”—are available to assist you in pinpointing exactly what you’re searching for. We’ll help you get started in learning what to use and when.

How to use concordances and other references

Let’s consider some tools you can use to make your searches of Scripture faster and more effective.

► I’m looking for a verse, but I don’t remember where it is and can only remember a small phrase from it. What can I do?

A concordance is a good tool for this situation. It lists, in alphabetical order, the English words used in the Bible along with the verses they appear in. If you can remember a specific word from a verse you’re trying to find, look up that word in a concordance, and you’ll see a list of verses that contain the word.

If you’re still having trouble finding the verse you’re looking for, look up another word from the verse instead. Also keep in mind that a concordance typically lists the words found in only one specific translation of the Bible, and you may be thinking of the verse as it appears in a different translation.

Also, try to get a concordance that is not too abbreviated, since condensed concordances list fewer words. The best concordances are called “exhaustive” or “complete” concordances. *Strong’s* and *Young’s* are popular and helpful concordances.

► I’m trying to study a specific topic in the Bible but don’t

have any verses in mind. How can I start?

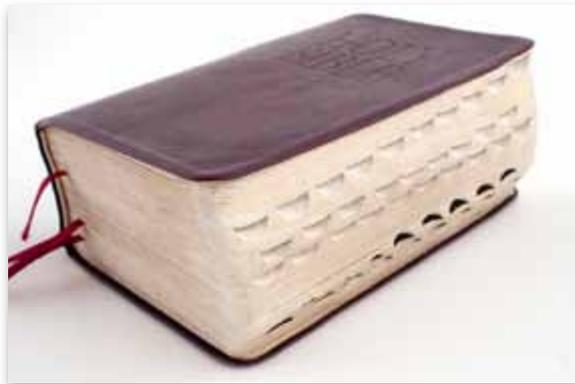
One good way to do this is to look up related keywords in a concordance (see previous comments).

You can also find verses related to many topics with a topical Bible (sometimes called a topical concordance or topical index). Such a reference work contains an alphabetical list of topics (such as “Armageddon,” “Melchizedek,” “resurrection,” etc.) and collections of verses that relate to them.

For example, if you were trying to find out what the Bible has to say about love, you’d simply turn to the section on “Love” and check out the verses that relate to love, even ones that don’t include the word “love.”

Many Bibles also list related scriptures in their side or center margins. It’s good to remember that both topical Bibles and marginal references are selectively chosen by whoever published them, so they may have some doctrinal biases.

Nave’s Topical Bible and *Torrey’s New Topical Textbook* are popular choices in this type of resource. Another helpful resource is *Where to Find It in the Bible?* by Ken



To a new student of the Bible, it can seem to be a daunting, mammoth collection of print. So how can you effectively find your way through this sea of words to study a specific topic or find a particular verse?

Anderson. (Computer searches are discussed later.)

► I’m looking at a scripture, but I’m having a lot of trouble figuring out what it means. What can I do?

First, each time you read the Bible, *pray* for God’s help to have spiritual understanding—the kind of comprehension Jesus gave His disciples after His resurrection (see Luke 24:45).

A critical key in Bible study is to let the Bible interpret the Bible. Studying the context of the verse and looking at other verses that talk about the same subject are the best places to start. Looking at how the verse is translated in other Bible versions can also be helpful.

You might also find it helpful to do a search about the subject or the verse on our website at www.GNmagazine.org. You’ll find many articles and booklets containing a lot of background information and many related scriptures on a wide variety of subjects. Also check our Frequently Asked Bible Questions at www.ucg.org/bible-faq and our Bible study guides at www.freebiblestudyguides.org.

Our *Good News* online Bible Commentary, mentioned earlier, also has explanations and background information on much of the Bible (currently, most of the Old Testament). The ministers on our Personal Correspondence team are also happy to answer Bible questions sent to info@ucg.org.

Bible reference books can also be useful. Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias can explain a given subject or what a word meant in Bible times. A commentary is a volume or series of volumes in which authors explain their interpretations of many scriptures.

It’s important to remember that, while these references are written by well-educated people, they reflect the doctrinal and

denominational biases of the authors and that various commentaries will often disagree with each other. Don’t rely on a commentary as a final authority on any issue; rather, commentaries best serve as a starting point for finding possible explanations of a verse. From there you must be sure to carefully check that explanation against what the Bible itself says.

► Some of these methods require reference books I don’t have. Is there a quicker and less expensive way?

The Internet provides many resources that are free. Sites like BibleGateway.com and BlueLetterBible.org provide an easily accessible Bible in a huge variety of translations and languages, as well as the option to search for any word or even phrase within the selected version.

BlueLetterBible.org also features the ability to view the corresponding Greek or Hebrew words for each word in the site’s online King James Version (click on “Show Strong’s”). Biblegateway.com also includes online versions of *Nave’s Topical Bible* and *Torrey’s New Topical Textbook*.

Other options include free-to-use Bible programs such as e-Sword and Online Bible. Downloadable from www.e-sword.net, e-Sword allows Windows users to easily choose from and customize their personal copy of the program with a huge variety of Bible translations, commentaries, dictionaries, maps and various extras like Josephus’ *Antiquities of the Jews*. (Many of these add-ons are free, though some must be purchased).

Windows and Mac users can download the free Online Bible software at OnlineBible.net. It also offers dozens of free downloadable public domain Bible versions and helps.

Many more software and online resources are listed in our free booklet *How to Understand the Bible* in the section on “Bible Study Software and Online Resources.”

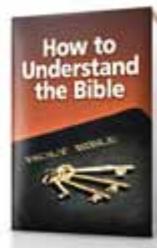
Apply what you’ve learned now

With these resources at your fingertips, you now have the ability to find just about anything you need in the Bible. You are also well on your way to having effective Bible studies about whatever topics you’d like to delve into.

As an exercise for practicing what you just learned in this lesson, do a Bible study on how to please God. Using your Bible, concordance, topical index or Internet resources (such as doing a search on our website), dig up at least five scriptures on the subject. Then try to come up with five specific things you can do to please God.

Learn more about studying the Bible

How can you better understand the Bible? How can you get the most out of your Bible study? The publishers of *The Good News* have put together a helpful guide, *How to Understand the Bible*, packed with practical, useful tips on how you can develop a deeper understanding of God’s Word. Request or download your free copy today at www.GNmagazine.org/booklets! GN





Christ, Deep Water and You

Jesus' disciples learned a lesson about having faith when the storms of life suddenly strike. Their lesson is just as important to each of us when we face our own storms. *by Robin Webber*

Some of the most calming passages of Scripture are the well-known words of the 23rd Psalm. Here phrases such as “He makes me to lie down in green pastures” or “He leads me in the paths of righteousness” can grant sublime confidence of being in the care of the Great Shepherd of the Sheep, Jesus Christ.

Add to this the serene words of “He leads me beside the still waters,” and we might easily be able to echo this psalm’s opening sentiment of “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.”

But what happens when the “waters of life” are not still, but churn or run deep?

Remember as a child how happy you were playing in the shallow end of a pool? It’s there that your feet could touch bottom and

deep water in relation to God’s presence and purposes. He is crafting and molding us into spiritual completeness not found in the shallow and still moments of life.

When we find ourselves in deep water, we need to be reminded that “the LORD is great, and our Lord is above all gods. Whatever the LORD pleases He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deep places” (Psalm 135:5-6).

Indeed, God created both the still waters and deep waters to serve His purposes. It’s in these settings of proverbial deep water—like you may be floundering in right now, unable to touch bottom—that disciples of Jesus Christ come to experience some of His most sensitive and delicate work to enable them to follow Him. Intellectually we may all know this, but it’s when our toes

windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling.” Talk about a sinking feeling! They weren’t only bailing water, but their faith was being tossed overboard!

Have you ever noticed that life is what’s happening that you haven’t planned for? And that sometimes it comes in bucketfuls all at once and not on our time schedule?

Some scoff at the New Testament’s record of such a powerful storm occurring on the Sea of Galilee—a lake 13 miles long, eight miles wide and 150 feet deep—that is, until they personally experience it. What makes it so susceptible to storms is that it lies at 700 feet below sea level. Thus, when cold winds come blowing in from the desert and Golan Heights to the east and are channeled through the canyons onto the lake, it creates unexpected, furious storms that can produce 20-foot waves.

Just imagine the suddenness and violence of such an event. And imagine that you’re in the boat!

Hold your peace!

Where was Jesus as the tempest raged? He was sleeping soundly in the rear of the boat (verse 38). He may have been asleep due to physical exhaustion from speaking all day, or perhaps He had willed Himself to sleep for a far grander spiritual purpose.

His frightened followers—who had only recently heeded the call to “Follow Me” on that same lake’s shores—now frantically shouted, “Don’t you even care that we are all about to drown?” (The Living Bible).

The disciples were panicking even though they had already seen this same Jesus perform many miracles. But now it was about *them!* The “still waters” of instant miracles and wondrous teachings were forgotten for the moment.

Hastily awakened from His sleep, Jesus arose. Now would come an ageless teaching moment for all who would follow Him for all time. He issued a sudden command to the roaring wind and sea: “Peace, be still!”

The Greek word used here *siapao*, literally means “hold your peace.” Stop roaring! “And the wind ceased and there was a great calm” (verse 39).

The Christian pilgrimage in heeding the call of “Follow Me” was never meant to be storm-free, but was designed to transform the storms of doubt in our hearts.

you could slowly move into deeper water as you bounced up and down, remaining secure as long as your toes could feel something under them. You could even scoot around the edges of the pool to avoid the deep, staying safely in your comfort zone.

But that’s when we were kids. And now, as grownups, some of us may be experiencing an anxious sinking feeling because we can’t touch bottom due to life’s circumstances. Perhaps we’ve been jettisoned out of the comfort zone we planned for ourselves. We might be asking or even demanding in prayer, “Whatever happened to that God of ‘still waters’?”

The deep waters of life serve God’s purpose

Interestingly, the Bible speaks not only of “still waters,” but many times it addresses

don’t touch bottom, figuratively speaking, that we begin to panic.

When personal comfort zones dissolve

Such was the case at times with the original disciples of Jesus Christ on the Sea of Galilee. They had just experienced a whole day of Him expounding parables about His Kingdom (Mark 4:1-34). Little did they realize they were about to have to practice what was preached. Their personal comfort zones were about to dissolve! Sound familiar?

After speaking, Jesus expressed a desire to cross the sea. He knew that the real class was just beginning. They compliantly followed, probably looking for those “still waters,” especially after a long day of serving those who listened to the Master.

But then, as verse 37 mentions, “a great



The storm on the Sea of Galilee as painted by Rembrandt.

He then chided His followers by asking, “Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?” (verse 40). The immediate story concludes in verse 41 by describing how they pondered what they had witnessed. They asked each other, “Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!”

What’s the lesson for them and for us?

They could never have asked these questions—or come to know the answers—by always staying in the shallow water. And neither can we!

Today we, too, experience powerful “storms” of life that can rush in on us and dramatically challenge our comfort zones—whether it be losing a job, the loss of our homes or savings accounts, the death of a loved one, a betrayal by a friend, our husband or wife walking out on us or the stunning disappointment that comes from a rebellious child. At such times, we reach down and we just can’t seem to touch bottom and get our footing. It’s deep-water time! Life was so much simpler in the shallow end.

On top of this, we live in a world of technological gizmos and information centers that promise immediate answers at the touch of a key. You can google all day long on your computer about faith, but ultimately real and living faith is supplied from a completely different venue.

Stand still!

When it comes to heeding Christ’s call of “Follow Me,” one of the most humanly daring steps in our walk with Him is simply to stop, be still, and hear and have faith in what God is saying rather than listen to what our trembling hearts are screaming.

Israel of old learned this when they had their backs up against the deep waters of the Red Sea. Here, the armored might of the Egyptian Empire was about to swoop down on them as much as the Galilean winds that impacted the disciples.

Moses’ reassurance to a frightened people was this: “Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see no more forever. The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your

peace” (Exodus 14:13-14).

God then told them to march forward into the sea where He miraculously provided a dry pathway as the waters stood like a wall on either side. No doubt they, like the disciples 15 centuries later, were concerned about drowning as they learned an important lesson about faith.

To be frank, exercising this kind of faith is one of the toughest marching orders for a Christian to handle and achieve!

Consider this for a moment as we return to the boat with Christ and the disciples. Jesus had no difficulty in bringing the stormy elements to a grinding halt. After all, He is the Lord of creation and could produce such an outcome at the snap of His fingers. But rather than always instantly calming the storms of life, God tells us to be calm, commanding, “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10).

God’s focus is not in training and molding the wind and sea. Much more than that, the Great Shepherd of the sheep wants His ultimate creation, you and me, to voluntarily surrender our past, present and future to Him—not by a snap of His fingers but through the surrender of our preconceived comfort zones.

It’s only then that He can make up the distance between what we know about Him in our heads and learn about Him when we can’t touch bottom with our toes.

Peace within the storm

Wherever Jesus went in the course of His earthly ministry, be it roadside, passing another boat on the Sea of Galilee or greeting the masses in an open field, I would

suggest that He would greet one and all with the common greeting of His people—*Shalom*, which means “peace.” He even told His disciples to say this when entering people’s homes (Luke 10:5).

But when the people of His day uttered these words, it was not simply a “kosher Hello,” but a blessing and recognition of God’s purposes beyond the moment. *Shalom* does not convey a conflict-free life without trouble, but a life that involves a God who provides and who will give us what we need to move through those moments of storms in our lives.

Jesus was more than familiar with the 23rd Psalm. He would not only know its beginning phrases, but would also remember what follows: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death [those deep-water moments in which our toes don’t touch the bottom], I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and staff, they comfort me” (verse 4).

When a shepherd guided his flock to pasture through hills broken by steep and dangerous ravines, he was at his best in delicately leading his sheep due to the lack of unsure footing. Can the Great Shepherd of the sheep, your life’s personal guide, be any less?

The Christian pilgrimage in heeding the call of “Follow Me” was never meant to be storm-free, but was designed to transform the storms of doubt in our hearts. It’s been said that all the water in the world can’t sink the smallest boat unless it gets inside. That can happen through a hole. And doubt is a hole. That’s why the Gospels record this story regarding Jesus Christ, deep water and you.

We, too, have a passenger on board our life’s vessel—the very same Great Shepherd who declares, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” And He says to us who follow, “Be still, and know that I am God!” **GN**

Learn More

What does it mean to have faith? And what is faith, really? The Bible tells us that we are to *live* by faith, but what does that mean? How did the many figures of the Bible live by faith? Discover the answers in our free booklet *You Can Have Living Faith*. Request or download your free copy today!



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Would Jesus Attend Your Church?

If Jesus walked the earth today, what church would He attend? One that opens its doors to people of all religions? A politically active church trying to influence who's elected to public office? What kind of people would make up the church Jesus would attend? Would He attend *your* church? *by Beyond Today host Gary Petty*

We're witnessing a growing movement in the United States among conservative Christians to achieve political power as a way to stop the decay of biblical family values, immoral entertainment, abortion and the teaching of evolution in schools.

One of the diverse factors in this movement is "dominion theology." The agenda of dominion theology is for Christians to achieve dominion, or control, of the civil government, educational system, entertainment industry and wealthy corporations. Proponents believe that when Christians gain political and economic influence, the United States will return to being a Christian nation. Some adherents think that Christian ascendancy will effectively establish God's Kingdom on earth.

This idea of the Kingdom of God being established through human government isn't a new one. In the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church exercised enormous political power throughout Europe. During that time in European history a monarch's right to rule was considered to derive from papal authority. And the mailed fist of a nation's army could be used to enforce church teachings.

Writing around A.D. 1300, Pope Boniface VIII claimed that the church wielded two swords, one spiritual and the other physical. He wrote: "Both are in the power of the Church, the spiritual sword and the material. But the latter is to be used *for* the Church; the former *by* her; the former by the priest, the latter [the sword of military might] by kings and captains but at the will and by the permission of the priest" (quoted



Around A.D. 1300, Pope Boniface VIII claimed that the church wielded two swords, one spiritual and the other physical—the latter to be used *for* the Church, the former *by* her.

in *Documents of the Christian Church*, Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, editors, 2011, p. 121, emphasis added).

The Protestant Reformation diffused papal power, but the history of Christianity since the Middle Ages has seen various religious movements trying to prepare the way

for Christ's return through human efforts to create God's Kingdom here on earth.

In other Christian communities, the polar opposite of dominion theology is popular. It is a New Age concept that essentially says, "Jesus accepts everyone as long as they have love in their hearts."

In this interpretation of Jesus' teachings, "love" is defined by subjective human emotions. Good and evil is based more on personal feelings than universal standards. There is little concept of God's dominion or divine law.

The New Age Jesus makes no demands on how God is to be worshipped; instead, human beings create personal interpretations of God based in human tradition. The definition of sin is ambiguous, because divine law is made obsolete through "love." Is this the kind of church Jesus would attend?

Let's take a deeper look at these two contradictory teachings about God's dominion and Kingdom in the light of what Jesus actually taught. Is either the kind of theology you would find in the church Jesus would attend? Or would He attend a church with a different focus?

Is the Church to take dominion over the world?

First, let's explore the idea that Christians are to use human government to establish dominion and hasten Christ's return. When we survey the life of Jesus as presented in the Gospels, we find a different approach. Jesus never involved Himself in trying to control the Jewish or Roman governments. When dragged before the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here" (John 18:36).

Jesus told His disciples to be prepared to be persecuted by "governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles [the nations]" (Matthew 10:5-42).



They were instructed to “preach the gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15, New International Version), not *enforce* the gospel on all creation.

Should Christian churches struggle to gain political and economic dominion to promote the Kingdom of God on earth? The answer to this question is found in understanding what the Kingdom of God is and how you can submit to God’s rule in your life.

To appreciate what God wants to do in your life, you must have both a vision of His future Kingdom and a life-encompassing mission to follow the Creator’s direction in your daily life. These are the kind of disciples Jesus wants filling the seats in the meetings of the church He would attend. What about you?

In parable after parable Jesus told His disciples about a bridegroom, or a wealthy merchant, who would leave his servants and return to them delivering rewards or punishment. Jesus’ lengthy prophecy on the Mount of Olives shortly before His death was delivered in response to the question, “What will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3).

On the night before His death Jesus told His disciples: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” (John 14:1-3, NIV).

Jesus regularly taught that at this present time the Kingdom of God wasn’t ruling over humanity. He encouraged His disciples with a vision of a time when He would establish God’s sovereignty over all nations and peoples. He never instructed His followers to try to gain political control and use human governments to establish God’s Kingdom.

The importance of vision

Vision is critical—as the story of Florence Chadwick’s attempt to swim the Catalina Channel illustrates.

For me, making the 21-mile boat ride to Catalina Island off the California coast left me with an unforgettable image—of the many sharks following our wake. I had no desire to get into the water. This makes

Chadwick’s attempt even more amazing.

On July 4, 1952, at age 34, Chadwick had already conquered the English Channel and was in great condition. The day she faced the Catalina Channel was extremely foggy. In addition, the water was icy cold, and soon Chadwick was suffering from numbness. Several times her crew, accompanying her by boat, had to drive off sharks with gunfire. She strained to see the coast, but the fog made it impossible.

After nearly 16 hours, struggling with the feeling that the distance was too great, she gave up and climbed into the boat. It was heartbreaking for her to discover that the shoreline was only a half-mile away.

Chadwick told reporters it was the fog that caused her to become disheartened. She could handle the fatigue, the cold and the threat of sharks, but not being able to see her destination was overwhelming. Two months later Chadwick set out again to swim the Catalina Channel. She confronted all the same conditions, including the fog, but she visualized her goal and completed the swim, beating the men’s record by two hours.

Many times it isn’t the troubles of life that defeat us. It’s the fog. The ability to visualize beyond the uncertainty of life’s fog is called mental vision. To experience God’s dominion in your life now, you must have a spiritual vision of the future He’s promised.

Jesus gave these instructions to His disciples: “Do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you” (Luke 12:29-31).

Our vision of the Kingdom of God must spring from the teachings of Jesus Christ and the descriptions given by the Old Testament prophets. This vision will determine how much we submit to God’s direction in our life now, and even which church we attend.

Is the Church to tolerate all religious and moral concepts?

The second idea, permeating liberal Christianity, is based in a conviction that Jesus taught a non-judgmental acceptance of all religious beliefs.

This interpretation doesn’t come from the teachings of Jesus, but from a mishmash

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New Ulm	ch. 3, 14, Sun 10:30 a.m.; Thu 9 a.m.; Fri 8 p.m.
	ch. 14, Sun 10:30 a.m.; Thu 9 a.m.; Fri 8 p.m.
New York	
Binghamton	ch. 4, Thu 5:30 p.m.
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Durham	ch. 18, Wed 7:30 a.m.
Oregon	
Eugene	ch. 29, Tue 2 p.m.
Medford	ch. 15, 95, Sun 5 p.m.
Portland	ch. 22a, 33, Sun 7:30 p.m.
Texas	
El Paso	ch. 15, Mon, Fri, Sat 1 p.m.
Wisconsin	
Kenosha	ch. 14, Sun & Mon 7:30 p.m.
Milwaukee	ch. 96, Mon 2 p.m.; Tue 7 p.m.; Wed 2 p.m.
West Allis	ch. 14, times vary

CANADA

NATIONWIDE CABLE TV

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Grace TV	Sun 10:30 a.m. EST, 9:30 a.m. CST, 8:30 a.m. MST, 7:30 a.m. PST, 11:30 a.m. AST, noon N-L

See local listing for the channel in your area.

of secularism, multiculturalism and Far Eastern religion mixed with a few biblical concepts. It creates a multicultural Jesus who accepts the equality of all religions and moral ideas—one who is more like a 1968 hippie seeking “the Age of Aquarius” than the historical Jesus who lived in Judea under the rule of the Roman Empire 2,000 years ago.

Ultimately, the New Age Jesus isn't concerned with solving the horrible consequences of breaking God's law and defining God's dominion or Kingdom, but in allowing each person the moral freedom to decide for himself or herself between right and wrong, good and evil.

A story in Matthew's Gospel helps us understand the teachings of the real Jesus. A young man came to Him asking, “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” (Matthew 19:16).

Jesus responded, “If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments” (verse 17). The real Jesus was very concerned with God's dominion and rule of law, a teaching foreign to the New Age conception of Jesus.

The young man pressed Him about *which* commandments, and Jesus answered, “‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (verses 18-19).

The man instantly recognized these as being from the Ten Commandments—the final command to “love your neighbor as yourself” being a summary from Leviticus 19:18. He told Jesus, “All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?” (Matthew 19:20). He had grown up in a strict Jewish community that highly regarded God's commandments.

Yet Jesus then presented the young man with a challenge that showed he did not really understand the full commitment required by the commandments, stating, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have



The ability to visualize beyond the uncertainty of life's fog is called mental vision. To experience God's dominion in your life now, you must have a spiritual vision of the future He's promised.

treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

The young man turned and walked away from the Son of God because he was wealthy and could not envision a life of sacrifice for God and neighbor (Matthew 19:16-22). He couldn't accept that Jesus didn't seem concerned with what he thought would give him a sense of self-fulfillment, but was concerned foremost with *God's* dominion and the fulfillment of *God's* desires in the lives of His followers.

The four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John give us snapshots of Jesus' life. We know He interacted with Jewish society by observing the Ten Commandments and many other laws found in the Hebrew Scriptures. He also made a claim that either makes Him a madman or the greatest human being to ever walk the

earth. Jesus, the carpenter from Nazareth, declared that *He was the prophesied Messiah who is the Son of God.*

Jesus taught that His mission was to save humanity and, just as the Hebrew prophets foretold, to rule the earth. He told His disciples that He was going to return to heaven and later come back to set up the Kingdom of God on earth. And it will be *God's* Kingdom. Jesus isn't returning to simply receive an already-established earthly kingdom based on a humanly designed political system. He is returning to establish a *radically new government* where, on behalf of His Father, He is the ruling monarch, the King of Kings.

When Jesus returns, His mission isn't to promote the New Age concept that “everyone just get along by not judging

one another.” Jesus told His disciples that when He sets up God's Kingdom on earth, “The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 13:41-42).

These are the very words of Jesus Christ. He is not returning to build a Kingdom with the message “I'm okay, you're okay,” because the truth is, we're *not* okay. He's coming to teach all humanity a new way of life. As a matter of fact, you don't have to wait until then to learn to live it. You can have Christ teach you that way of life right now!

God's dominion in your life

Jesus taught that His followers shouldn't

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just hide and wait for His return to establish God's Kingdom, but that they should seek and anticipate its reality. When you seek and anticipate God's Kingdom, you will experience major changes in how you live as a Christian.

What are some of those changes?

1. *You will begin to seek God's desires and goals in your life.* All too often we approach God as if we have dominion over Him. We view Him as our "errand boy" who is supposed to fulfill all of our desires and goals. If you really want your life to change, every morning ask God to fulfill His desires and goals in your life. When you seek the future He has for you, you in turn accept His *direction* to that future.

This may be the most difficult thing for human beings to do. All of us want to be masters of our own fate. We want to control our immediate environment and everyone else around us to feel secure and happy. The foundation of faith, though, is to give up control of your life to God as a loving Father. You can give up the need to control only if you trust in God's promised future and His involvement in your life now.

2. *You begin to change your priorities.* How do you spend your time? Time is the great gift God has given to each of us. When we allow God to set our priorities, the drive for money and things is replaced with a drive to produce Christlike spiritual character.

The need for status is replaced with the need to love others. The search for self-determination is replaced with seeking God's determination for your life. The desire for constant entertainment and immediate gratification is replaced with a peaceful understanding of what is really valuable in life—family, how we treat others and worshipping God in a way that is pleasing to Him.

3. *You begin to have a change in how you spend your mental and emotional energy.* We waste so much of our lives in resentment, selfishness, envy and other destructive thoughts and emotions. God wants to produce something different in your life—"love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). This can only happen when you acknowledge that you need God's rule in your life and accept your inability to satisfy your spiritual hunger by your own means.

4. *You begin to want to obey God's commandments.* You must accept the right of the Creator of life to have dominion over His creation. Just as there are physical laws like gravity that govern the universe, there are divine spiritual laws that govern your relationship with God and your relationships with others.

Isaiah, one of the most eloquent of the Old Testament prophets, was inspired to write many prophecies about the future Kingdom to be ruled by the Messiah or Christ. In one passage he describes the rule of the Messiah this way: "He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of LORD from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3).

Jesus Christ isn't coming to create anarchy by doing away with all law. His Kingdom will be *founded* on the law of God. Are you accepting God's dominion in your life by obeying His commandments?

Where would Jesus attend church?

What does God want from you? He wants you to give up selfish control and allow Him to have dominion over every thought and action.

This is God's challenge to you. Would Jesus attend the meetings of a church where the seats are filled with people whose lives have the same desires, the same envy, the same greed, the same selfish priorities as secular society?

Would He attend where praises are sung to God, but He has little real influence in their daily choices? Where Jesus is seen as Savior, but not as Master? Where God's dominion and laws are replaced with the acceptance that every person determines right and wrong for his or her own life?

Or would Jesus be looking for a church where people are striving to submit to God's dominion in their daily lives and seeking His Kingdom?

Of course, the real question isn't: Would Jesus attend my church? But, rather, am I attending *Jesus' Church*? **GN**



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

And those people 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 observe what 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 *The Good News*, various booklets (also free) and our *Beyond Today* TV program, 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 and plan for us as taught by Jesus Christ.

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 in your area, contact us at the appropriate address on page 2. Visitors are always welcome.

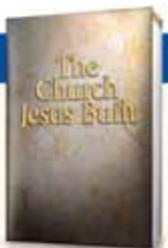


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Jesus Christ promised to build His Church. But what exactly is that Church? How can you identify it among today's hundreds of denominations? What is its mission and purpose? What will it be doing? How does the Bible describe those who are a part of it? You need to understand the answers right from the pages of your Bible! Request or download your free copy of *The Church Jesus Built*. A free copy is waiting for you!



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Letters From Our Readers

The Good News' new format

I've just finished the latest edition of *The Good News* magazine and just have to say that I love the new format. I now download all your publications, which helps save on postage. I enjoy each and every one of them. Keep up the good work.

From the Internet

The new *Good News* magazine is wonderful! I love the focus on Christian living and the mini-Bible study section. It is even more loaded with priceless good news for all people. Thanks and keep up the good work!

Reader from Ohio

"Islam Vs. the West"

I have just finished reading your latest edition, "Islam Vs. the West," and I was very impressed. This is the most succinct and well-written package of articles that I have seen that deals with a very important issue facing Christians. I was so impressed that I would like the leaders of my church to read this issue. Thank you.

D.L., Ontario, Canada

Is there any chance you will publish the articles in the latest issue of *The Good News* magazine as a booklet? For years I have enjoyed reading your magazine, even though I don't always agree theologically (and biblically) with everything. But I thought this last issue's coverage of Islam one of the best, most succinct coverages I've ever read.

J.S., Hazelwood, MO

Thank you for the suggestion, and we will consider it.

A local radio station here has an Islam broadcast each Saturday morning preaching the "love and goodness" of Islam. I find from your publications and other materials that they are not broadcasting the truth. I have forwarded constant objections to their broadcast but they never respond. I have suggested that if they are not pleased with America and our predominant Christian attitude that they exercise their freedom to leave and go preach their misgivings somewhere else.

G.C., Ontario, California

The Good News

Thank God for *The Good News*. It has opened my eyes about the pagan holidays the world celebrates. Although I as a father am called Scrooge, we as a family must be doing something right.

T.E.C., Pierceton, Indiana

I hand out my copy of *The Good News* (after I have read it) to every single person in the entire village that I live in. I just love sharing it and they all enjoy it so much. The magazine gives me so much hope, pleasure and peace just by reading it. Thank you so much for sending it to me.

Reader from The Basin, Victoria, Australia

Beyond Today TV program

Thanks to your *Beyond Today* presenters for all your diligence in preaching

the gospel. We watch your programs faithfully and feel they are a refreshing change from what we were used to. Our hats are off to you.

T.C. and M.C., Clearwater, Florida

Thank you for the booklets and your *Beyond Today* TV program. It is fantastic and since I don't get out too much, I love to watch it on my computer at home.

P.M., Internet

Christians hungry for truth

I am relatively new to becoming a Christian, so I am searching for more information on God, faith and everything of a religious nature. I would like to have a greater understanding, but need to have explanations in simple, plain English. Please feel free to send me anything that you feel may be of use to me. I realize I have a lot to learn, but am not sure of the best place to find information that I can understand.

F.S., Ayr, Scotland

Our office in the British Isles has mailed you the booklets You Can Have Living Faith, The Road to Eternal Life and Who Is God? These will give you a start on some basics of biblical teachings. If you have need of further help, please let us know.

After reading through your website, I felt compelled to write and thank you for stirring up my spirit that has been sleeping over the last few years. Because of my distrust in people and of our world, I have kept away from church until now. However, having read your *Fundamental Beliefs of the United Church of God* page, and believed exactly what God, Jesus and yourselves believe, I now understand what the Bible states. God's true Church is small and will be kept small until His prophecies come to pass. I have often asked God to guide me to His true Church—not a building, but a body of people.

M.M., the Midlands, England

You will find our free booklet The Church Jesus Built a big help.

Anxious to attend church services

I would like to know where I can attend your church services. I have been looking for so long with many questions that no one could answer. This is so exciting for me as I feel my search has finally paid off. Thank you so much for the booklet and please let me know where I can attend this weekend. I can't wait.

Reader from South Africa

Thank you for your enthusiastic letter. It has been passed on to an elder or representative who will be able to assist you. You may also wish to request our free booklet This Is the United Church of God.

Bible Study Course

Please find a small donation enclosed. Your free publications are excellent in every way, well worth reading. Also I am finding the *Bible Study Course* lessons very interesting. And the main thing is I am slowly losing my scepticism.

G.B., Honiton, England

Thank you for the *Bible Study Course*. It has really opened my mind toward the things of God. The Bible has come alive since I started getting lessons from your church. May God bless your organization for your immense help in transforming the lives of many people.

A.Y.A., Accra, Ghana

Readers appreciate our booklets

I have just received my first *Good News* magazine and I am absolutely astounded at what I have read. I also received your booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*, and I read it three times through before giving it to my wife to read as well. The things that have been revealed to me while reading this booklet are wonderful, and I am very interested in reading more.

Reader from Cherrybrook, New South Wales, Australia

I recently completed your booklet *Why Does God Allow Suffering?* I sincerely believe that the author was inspired by the Holy Spirit when he compiled this writing. I enjoyed this study immensely and anticipate my next study, your booklet *The Ten Commandments*. Even though I have been a Christian for quite

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I really enjoy *The Good News* 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., Good News magazine Facebook fan



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Questions & Answers

Answers to your questions about the Bible and Christian living

Q: Can one be a Christian and still suffer depression?

D.P.C., Littlehampton, England

A: Clinical depression is a serious illness, with various physical, mental and social symptoms, which can incapacitate people. The levels of certain chemicals in the brain can contribute to the problem. Those suffering from severe or chronic depression should seek specialized counseling and medical guidance in addition to applying the biblical tools mentioned in this response.

Depression, in more everyday terminology, usually refers to periods of unusual sadness, of prolonged fear or worry, or of feeling overwhelmed by stress or distress. The immediate response is often to forget past successes, to feel hopeless, vulnerable and to want to quit. *No Christian is immune.*

On occasion even some of the great men in the Bible suffered from depression. After a string of miracles and a long, close relationship with God, the prophet Elijah became prey to depression when Queen Jezebel threatened to kill him.

Elijah was tired following a long period of stress, and this probably exacerbated his sense of discouragement and hopelessness. Nonetheless, God did not want him to remain in this condition. In a quiet, compassionate way, God explained to Elijah what he could not see in his irrational state—that he was not alone and that God would continue to support him in the work he had to do. Read about Elijah's recovery in 1 Kings 19:1-18.

The book of Proverbs has much to say on depression and worry and offers useful guidance (see Proverbs 12:25; 13:12; 15:13; 18:14). In Luke 12:22-31, Jesus Christ explained the futility of worry, a trait that often leads to depression. In verse 28 He highlighted one aspect of the problem when He referred to His disciples as “you of little faith.”

For a Christian, depression (again, the more typical variety, not the physiological malady) sometimes may be an outgrowth of lack of faith in God. It would be easier for Christians if, following water baptism and the laying on of hands for the receipt of the Holy Spirit, we could all be immediately filled with faith, love and patience. But it doesn't happen that way. Instead, God expects us to develop these characteristics through experiences and even trials, just as we learn obedience to His law.

Christians should not remain in a depressive state. As God dealt with Elijah in the Old Testament, so He deals with Christians today through Jesus Christ. By His own suffering while here on earth, Jesus learned compassion for His people (Hebrews 4:14-16). He knows that we are weak and prone to fears, doubts and worry that can lead to depression. But He is always there to help when we are overburdened and promises to give us rest (Matthew 11:28-30).

In practical terms, is there anything we can do when anxiety, worry or depression threaten to engulf us? There is, but it takes mental effort and it often means noticing potential problems before they take hold.

The apostle Paul instructs us to be “bringing every thought into captivity

to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). When a fearful thought or a worry first enters your head, pray to God and ask Him for His help to dispel it. Do not give it either time or space to implant itself in your mind. This may be easier said than done at first, but with God's help, it does begin to work.

Prayer is a vital way of drawing close to God—as is the study of Scripture. Indeed, the Bible and its promises will help us to build faith. Paul pointed out that faith comes through hearing God's Word (Romans 10:17).

Paul also admonishes us, “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

As Christians, we should be familiar with the promises God has made to us. Remember the great love the Father and Jesus Christ have shown us by providing a way by which we can be rescued from our sins. Meditating on these things can bring us comfort in times of sorrow. Read scriptures such as John 3:16-17, Luke 12:32, Romans 8:18-39 and Revelation 21:1-7.

Try actively imagining what the coming 1,000-year reign of Christ will be like, or the New Jerusalem in the eternal age beyond. Scriptures such as Isaiah 11:6-9, 35:1-10 and Revelation 21-22 may help here. You could even imagine yourself being there. However, we should never lose sight of present reality.

Always ask God the Father and Jesus Christ for their help. But also tap into the support of other Christians. Having someone whom you can phone, e-mail or text can be a valuable help. Maybe a friend could contact you from time to time, just to let you know you are not alone.

If you have Sabbath services in your area, go along and meet people. Get involved in something that does not add further stress or anxiety, but that improves your life. Physical activities such as jogging, walking, ballroom dancing, swimming and team sports can all help. Another huge help is to get involved in helping others. Doing so can help get our minds off of our own problems as we focus on serving others.

Do not become discouraged if you cannot overcome depression or worry all at once. As the apostle Peter wrote, “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

Climbing out of depression can be likened to trying to climb out of a slippery pit. We can set off with good intentions and then slide back in. It's a long journey, but we must keep at it with God's help. Christians are those growing to be like Christ, and we all still have much to learn.

You'll find a number of useful Bible study guides relating to stress, worry and depression on our website at www.freebiblestudyguides.org. Also request our free booklet *You Can Have Living Faith* and the two free reprint articles “Depression: Ways to Win the Battle” and “The Bible's Keys to Mental Health.” You can download or request them at www.GNmagazine.org/ booklets and www.GNmagazine.org/reprints.

some time, I still want to request the *Transforming Your Life* booklet. I thank our Almighty God for the United Church of God.

B.P., Elyria, Ohio

I have been getting *The Good News* magazine in the mail and have ordered and received several booklets. I want you to know that I have never understood more clearly than I do with reading your information. The Bible has always been difficult for me to understand completely. You make it easier to understand, and you focus on very important matters, always following with Bible verses. I want

to say “Thank You.” I feel as though I can understand and become even closer to God now. Thank you so much for everything that you do. You are appreciated!

From the Internet

Published letters may be edited for clarity and space. Address your letters to *The Good News*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A., or e-mail gninfo@ucg.org (please be sure to include your full name, city, state or province, and country).

Prove Evolution Is False Even Without The Bible

There are logical reasons apart from Scripture's direct testimony to reject the theory of evolution and accept creation and a Creator.

by Mario Seiglie

Can we prove that evolution is false without using the Bible? Certainly we can! Evolution is a scientific theory that stands or falls on the physical evidence. In fact, one can be an atheist, a person who doesn't believe in God, and still not believe in evolution!

Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, as taught at school, is a biological explanation of how creatures have supposedly "evolved" or developed progressively through natural selection and variation (now known as mutation) over eons of time from the tiny cell to the largest creatures on earth today. What is taught in classrooms is not mere *microevolution*—small changes within a species—but *macroevolution*, the change from one type of creature to another quite distinct life form.

What many evolutionists are trying to convince you of is that there is no need for a Creator since, as they say, evolution can substitute as the mechanism for creating and transforming life. They teach that life arose from non-life and evolved from simpler creatures to more complex life forms. In other words, the tiny cell eventually became an amoeba, then a lizard, then a monkey, and finally—you!

In order to remember key points that disprove Darwinian evolution—the “molecules to man” theory—we'll use the acronym FALSE. (A few of these points also disprove the compromise of theistic evolution—the notion that God employed macroevolution over eons in forming the creatures we see on earth today.)



F for Fossils

A fossil is the preserved remains of a living thing. The fossil record around the

earth extends an average of one mile deep. Below this level we come up with a blank slate as far as living, complex creatures are concerned.

I collect fossils of what are deemed the earliest type of complex creatures with hard bodies—trilobites. No previous ancestors of these arthropods have been found. Similar to some marine “bugs” we see today on the seashore that disappear into the sand when the waves retreat, trilobites had hard shells, all the basic organs, and complex eyes like those of flies, with hundreds of sophisticated lenses connected to the optic nerve going to the brain. Trilobite fossils are found around the earth, and in all cases the level of rock beneath them does not reveal other creatures with similar features.

As one source states: “The dominant life form was the now-extinct sea creature known as a trilobite, up to a foot long, with a distinctive head and tail, a body made up of several parts, and a complex respiratory system. But although there are many places on earth where 5,000 feet of sedimentary rock stretch unbroken and uniformly beneath the Cambrian [layer], not a single indisputable multi-celled fossil has been found there. It is ‘the enigma of paleontological [fossil studies] enigmas,’ according to Stephen Gould. Darwin himself said he could give ‘no satisfactory answer’ to why no fossils had been discovered. Today’s scientists are none the wiser” (Francis Hitching, *The Neck of the Giraffe*, 1982, pp. 26-27).

Question: If, after almost two centuries of digging beneath all the world’s continents, no previous ancestor of this first hard-bodied creature has been found, how then did the ubiquitous trilobite evolve? There should be some previous ancestor if evolution were true.

It’s like finding an exquisite watch on the seashore and yet never finding any previous primitive models of the watch on earth. If you reasoned as an evolutionist, you would deny there was a need for a watchmaker at all, maintaining that time, water, sand, minerals and actions of the elements are sufficient to producing a fully functional watch that runs. This is part of the reason it takes more faith to believe in evolution than in a Creator!

Further important evidence from the fossil record is the absence of transitional forms between species. Darwin was concerned that the thousands of intermediate stages between creatures needed to prove his theory were not in evidence, but he expected they would eventually be found. Yet those thousands of missing transitional forms are still missing!

Another reference explains: “If throughout past ages life was actually drifting over in one continual stream from one form to another, it is to be expected that as many samples of the intermediate stages between species should be discovered in fossil condition as of the species themselves . . .

“All should be in a state of flux. *But these missing links are wanting.* There are *no fossils of creatures whose scales were changing into feathers or whose feet were changing into wings, no fossils of fish getting legs or of reptiles getting hair.* The real task of the geological evolutionist is not to find ‘the’ missing link, as if there were only one. The task is to find those *thousands upon thousands* of missing links that connect the many fossil species with one another” (Byron Nelson, *After Its Kind*, 1970, pp. 60-62, emphasis added).

The absence of transitional forms is an insurmountable hurdle for theistic evolutionists as well. It also fits with our next point.

A for Assumption

When there is no real evidence, evolutionary scientists simply make assumptions.



If evolution were true, then where is the evidence of different types of animals now “evolving” into other types?

Where is the evidence of cats, dogs and horses gradually turning into something else? We do see limited changes within species, but we

do not see any changes into other species. And, as mentioned, we see no evidence of gradual change in the fossil record either. Yet evolutionists continue to assume that transitional forms must have existed.

In Darwin's landmark book *On the Origin of Species* there are some 800 subjective clauses, with uncertainty repeatedly admitted instead of proof. Words such as "could," "perhaps" and "possibly" plague the entire book.

Evolution is still called a theory—a possible explanation or assumption—because it is not testable according to the scientific method, as this would require thousands or millions of years. Evolutionists will counter that a theory is not a mere hypothesis but is a widely affirmed intellectual construct that generally appears to fit all the facts. Yet evolution in no way fits all the facts available. Evidence does not support it—and in many respects *runs counter to it*.

L for Life

The law of biogenesis as taught in biology class states that only life can produce life.



You've probably heard the famous question: Which came first, the chicken or the egg? It's a real dilemma for an

evolutionist to answer. An egg comes from a chicken, yet the chicken comes from an egg. How can there be one without the other?

To complicate matters even more, the chicken has to come from a *fertilized* egg that has the mixture of two different genetic strains from both its parents. So the problem of the origin of life and initial reproduction is still a mystery that evolutionary science cannot adequately answer.

Yet for someone who believes in special creation by a Creator, there is no dilemma here. First God made the male and female chickens, which produced the first fertilized egg—and the rest is history.

S for Symbiosis

When one living thing needs another different living thing to survive, it's called a symbiotic relationship.

A good example of this is the relationship between bees and flowers. The bees need the nectar from some types of flowers to feed, while these flowers need bees to pollinate them. Both depend on the other



to exist and survive. The question for evolutionists is: How did these plants exist without the bees, and how

did the bees exist without these plants?

Again, atheistic scientists are stumped. Theistic evolutionists are perplexed as well. Yet if you believe in a Creator who specially created the various forms of life on earth, the answer is simple—*both were created at about the same time*.

E for Engineering

All living things are exquisitely engineered or designed. Qualitatively, a bacterium is as majestically built for its purpose as a human body is for its function. Yet evolution says it's only an *illusion* of design—that there is no real designer behind it. Reality is not an illusion! Living things are multi-functional, which means they do many complex things at the same time, something evolution with its step-by-step process has never been able to demonstrate.

One example of a living thing with exquisite engineering is the tree. It provides breathable oxygen for us while processing carbon dioxide, which in high amounts in the air would be toxic to us. It supplies wood, housing for birds, roots to limit erosion, fruit and seeds to eat, is



biodegradable and gives shade. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, "A healthy tree provides a cooling effect

that is equivalent to 10 room-size air conditioners operating 20 hours a day." How could something so complex arise from a random, undirected evolutionary process?

Again, you need more "faith" to believe in blind evolution than in an all-knowing Creator who designed the marvelous tree in the first place!

Now you have five proofs that evolution is F-A-L-S-E and that special creation is true—and we didn't even use the Bible. Remember the acronym FALSE when you read or hear about evolution—and do take time to read our Creator's great book of truth! It has much to say regarding origins. **GN**



LEARN MORE

If you like reading our articles for teens and young adults in *The Good News*, be sure to take a look at our companion magazine, *Vertical Thought*, at www.VerticalThought.org.

This magazine is specially written for our younger *Good News* audience. Each issue is packed with helpful insight and eye-opening articles guiding today's young people in getting the most out of life—both now and in the future.

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How Did *That* Get Into the Resurrection Story?



What do rabbits, painted eggs and colorful Easter baskets have to do with the death and resurrection of the Savior of mankind?

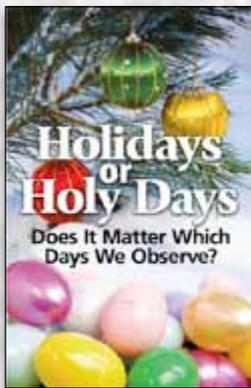
It may sound like an odd question to ask—but then it's truly odd that these symbols should have ever come to be associated with Jesus Christ's resurrection in the first place!

So what *do* these things have to do with Christ's resurrection? The plain answer is *NOTHING*.

So how did this strange association come to be? The same way that holly, kissing under mistletoe, decorated evergreen trees and a jolly plump man in a red suit (riding in a sleigh pulled by flying reindeer!) came to be associated with Jesus' birth.

Curiously, all these odd customs and symbols do have one thing in common. All were important symbols in pagan religions that had nothing to do with Christianity—most *long before Christianity even started*. So why are they part of the world's most important holidays today?

You need to **discover the facts**. And most importantly, since most people think they are worshipping God through these customs, you need to understand what *He* thinks about them! Our eye-opening free booklet *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Observe?* will help you discover the surprising answers. For your free copy, visit our website or contact any of our offices listed on page 2. A free copy is waiting for you!



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