



Just Christianity

THE STORY *of* SALVATION FOR ADULTS

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STEVE COPLAND

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The Story *of* Salvation
For Adults

Steve Copland

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by Steve Copland

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In Memory of Ross and Marj

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Just Christianity

Introduction



There are few people who can say they have never thought about the questions concerning the purpose for human existence. In our moments of quiet, moments of grief, and even moments of joy, sometimes a small yet persistent voice begs us to consider if there is an ultimate purpose and answer to life. Some of us successfully drown that voice beneath the noise of business or busyness; we grab a hold of a few useful expressions for warding off religious fanatics, and live as if we will never die. But death reaches us all and if our death is not the end, if we discover that we are completely conscious and existing on a level with absolute clarity of thought and recollection, then it is entirely possible that we will be either relieved, or full of regret, that we did or didn't heed the voice which called us to seek answers to life.

But where should we look? The world is full of religious and secular systems that claim to know

the answers to life. On a personal level, I have tried séances with the spiritists, practiced Zen and Karate with the Buddhists, Transcendental Meditation with the modern day Hindus, and come through it all as empty as when I started. I have read the ideas of Confucius, The Bhagavad-Gita and Rig Veda, countless pieces of so-called wisdom from so-called enlightened philosophers and gurus, and found myself with that small voice assuring me to keep looking, urging me to continue the search. In all of the years that I was searching I usually had the profound instinct that there was a God, and that if I asked Him sincerely, that He would lead me to truth. I did ask, and He did lead.

I have always been a skeptic. Faith had to beg me for years before I would adopt and eventually own it. It was only after the most dramatic experience of my life, after a personal encounter with someone I thought was long gone and dead, that I learned the truth about life. Since that day in the early 1980's, He has shown me the logical and undeniably incredible story of His revealing Himself in the Biblical Scriptures and creation. This book is my feeble attempt to show you that there is one absolute truth, one eternal destiny, and one person who is fulfilling His plan for humanity. His name is written on the atoms, on our fingers and DNA. If you stop for a moment and listen to that small voice, it is His voice, calling you to seek Him. My prayer is that as you read these pages, the road will open up before you and bring you to that place your heart longs to experience.

Chapter One

The Existence of God



Is it possible to prove the existence of God? From a purely scientific point of view we might say 'no'. We may find ourselves trying to define what we mean by a 'purely scientific view', or even what we mean by scientific. Science, generally speaking, is the pursuit of knowledge through the recording and observance of phenomena which can be perceived by instruments and human senses. Human beings belong to the natural order and we are quite well equipped to experiment within our own sphere of existence. However, if there are other forms of life which do not belong to the natural order, as we perceive it, will we be able to determine and verify *their* existence using tools from *our* level of existence?

It would be rather arrogant of us to suggest, as the philosopher Baruch Spinoza¹ did, that nothing can exist which cannot be scientifically validated. This tends to make science into a kind of god, or

the humans who use scientific tools, divine. In actuality, it opens up the question of our first chapter. Is there a God? By the term ‘god’, I mean a being who is not bound by time and space and who exists outside of what we consider to be the natural world. If there is, then I suggest that science may very well provide powerful arguments for this being’s existence, but ultimately be unable to prove that existence absolutely.

It is not the role of the Christian to prove the existence of God; however, throughout the past twenty centuries Christians have systemized certain ways of explaining God’s existence for the purposes of dialogue and debate. The Bible², for example, never argues for the existence of God, it rather assumes that everyone is wise enough to recognize the evidence for God in creation. Psalm 14:1 simply states that, ‘the fool says in his heart that there is no God’. The Bible isn’t so interested in people not believing in God, but rather not *knowing* Him on a personal level. The Bible also assumes that the people who do not want God to exist, are those who reject the idea of a higher authority who may desire that they submit to Him.³

In this first chapter we will examine seven basic arguments that Christians have put forward for the existence of God, and also offer criticisms.

Argument 1. Are there really any true atheists who actually live as atheists?

According to atheist philosophy, human beings are products of macroevolution⁴ and supposedly the

most highly evolved animals on the planet. According to the Bible, human beings are made in the image of God the Creator. The Bible assumes then that we will have a consciousness of what is right and wrong, an instinctive understanding of moral laws such as murder, adultery and theft, although these attributes are said to have been perverted through rebellion against God. The animal kingdom does not live by moral law; there are no concepts of right and wrong, adultery or murder. In this system the highest ideal is the survival of the strongest so that the next generation is better than the previous. In the natural world, the weakest animals are usually destroyed by predators because they cannot run as fast or are crippled, and this means that they never breed. This is what is referred to as natural selection, and it is thought to protect the species from extinction. If there is no God, then on what grounds do we change and effectively halt the precepts that govern natural selection?

If we are to be true to the precepts of macroevolution, then should we exterminate any human who is born deformed, such as a cripple for example? If we are no more than evolved animals, then why have notions like compassion, love, fairness, right and wrong, adultery, stealing or murder? All of these concepts are religious, or come from religious philosophies; they are only found in the one species that the Bible says is made in the image of God. If a person claims to be atheist, then let them reject all religious concepts and live as if they are merely products of evolution, otherwise, perhaps, they live as hypocrites.

Obviously, it will be argued, that such a world would be totally chaotic and I agree with this, however, my argument still stands. If we argue that human beings are the most highly evolved animals then how do we explain that we are also the most violent of species, killing and murdering each other for reasons which no other animal could possibly conceive? The vast majority of animals fight and kill for survival or in mating rituals. Yet the human animal kills out of envy, lust for power, jealousy and a host of other reasons. One may also ask the question; why would evolution gradually evolve beings which are not only more violent and destructive than previous ones, but are basically both capable of, and working towards making themselves extinct? Doesn't that contradict the idea of evolving towards more certain survival?

The true atheist has a life with no hope; a life which ends in what the German philosopher Nietzsche called 'nihilism'. He understood that *true* atheism was to live like an animal, not a creature separated from other animals by being in the image of God. Nietzsche tried to live as if there was no God; in that he was not a hypocrite at least, and the result was that he spent the last eleven years of his life in a mental asylum. He lost his mind at the point where he saw a person mistreating a horse. He ran and put his arms around the horse's head to comfort the animal, and then he burst into tears. I believe, after a careful examination of his works, that he cried because he realized that this simple act destroyed his atheism. No atheistic product of evolution could ever feel compassion for a poor horse; by having these

feelings Nietzsche realized that he was acting as a person with religious ideals. The contradiction drove him insane because he could not escape the fact that he couldn't live as a true atheist. In fact, when he was just fourteen, Nietzsche made a sworn written commitment to serve Jesus Christ all of his life. He spent the rest of his life trying to deny the God he had promised to serve, and as a result, his writings show a man who was obsessed with a God he claimed was 'dead'.

Argument 2. God as 'First Cause' (Thomas Aquinas, 11th –12th century)

The English word 'because' comes from this idea. Everything happens 'because' something or someone made it happen. Behind every effect is a cause. Although this argument may be quite powerful at arguing a God behind everything, it has some very weak points. For example, in this scenario God may have started everything and then just gone on holiday and left us to ourselves. God may also have ceased to exist. Given the evidence of evil in the world, God may also be an evil God, not a loving one. However, apart from these criticisms, consider the fact that everything we see around us and in space is in motion, so it stands to reason that there was something or someone to begin this process.

Consider also, that of all animals, humans are not necessary in the world, indeed the world environment would function much better without us as it is humans who are destroying the delicate balance of nature. If the world has beings which are not neces-

sary, then why are they here? Evolution would not evolve such beings, because the theory of evolution presupposes change for the better, rather than change in order to destroy the process. The answer or ‘cause’ to this dilemma must of necessity be God and the reason be much more than mere survival. The Bible suggests a perfect creation which has gone wrong because of sin, not as Darwin presumed, a chaotic world evolving towards perfection and creating only the necessary evolutionary steps to achieve that end. Human beings do not fit the evolutionary scheme in this sense.

We may also ask about the source of moral ideas such as nobility, truth, etc and what causes humans to have such values? These are not found in the animal kingdom in any of the so-called stages of evolution. If we study the next step down in the so-called evolutionary chain, we find absolutely no moral concepts at all; not even a hint of philosophical thinking. The answer must be that these values are a reflection of a moral being we call God, who has planted them in the only ‘animal’ made in His image.

Argument 3: Design

Like the last argument, this argument is throughout the Bible. The Bible states that God designed the world; that He caused it to come into being. Macroevolution claims that the world is the product of random chance. Imagine that a primitive man is walking across the desert when he finds a shiny object in the sand. It is a watch, but he has never seen a watch before. He plays with it and

accidentally winds it up which starts it ticking and moving. He has two choices as to its origins. The first choice is the evolutionary explanation. The watch was created when by chance all of the parts accidentally flew together and it became a complete watch. The second choice is that someone designed the watch for a purpose.

There are many examples of incredible design in nature which atheist scientists have no explanation for. This subject will be discussed in more detail in argument five. For example, the structure of DNA, the exact tilt of the Earth which determines our seasons, and even the intricate structure of a simple piece of grass. Even atheistic scientists have an impossible task to argue that such examples are random chance. In the past forty years the science of micro-biology has discovered such complexity in the simplest of life-forms, that it is estimated that about 90% of scientists working in this field believe that an intelligent, creative agent is responsible for the creation of life.⁵

There is another part of the design argument which is worth considering. I believe that God has put his label on all of creation. Some people like to wear label clothes, which clearly state who designed those clothes. God has done the same. God told Moses that his name was 'I Am'. This is like saying my name is 'Infinity'. Jesus is called the 'Alpha and Omega' or the beginning and the end. In the Bible, then, God claims to be infinity, He is where infinity comes from, and it is one of His attributes. Scientists discovered that although there are a set number of types of atoms, no

two atoms are the same. Recently the same discovery has been found to be true of the parts of atoms. This means that it is impossible for any two objects to be the same in the entire universe. For example, snowflakes, when seen under a microscope, are extremely complex and beautiful symmetric shapes, but if there are no two atoms exactly alike, then logically, there has never been two snowflakes the same. Infinity is God's label, His trademark. On a more personal level, every human being is completely original, with unique fingerprints, eye retina imagery, and DNA. This is a very powerful argument and one which evolution cannot adequately explain.

Argument 4: Purpose

Does life have a purpose? In evolution the purpose of life is basically to survive and continue the species. At the end of his life the atheist is just another dead monkey. For the Christian, life has a purpose, God created us with a purpose in mind. All of creation has a goal, which is governed by God, and everything is moving towards that goal. This argument also has problems. Why not create a world which cannot have evil? This question we will examine in detail later, but for now we must assume that the presence of evil must somehow fit into the Creator's ultimate goal and design or He would not have allowed it. As we continue through the story of salvation, God's absolute goal and purpose will become crystal clear to even the most determined skeptic.

Argument 5: Evolution theory is dead.

Since the 1960's, macroevolution theory has been basically disproved as an answer to existence, although some scientists still refuse to admit this. The studies of micro-biology, quantum physics, cosmology, and bio-chemistry have found evidence of incredible design which evolution theory cannot explain. There are two types of evolution theory and we need to understand the difference. It is very simple. Macroevolution (Darwinism) claims that all things came from the same primal source, namely, primordial soup. Specific evolution or microevolution states that all animals evolve or adapt within their own species, and Christians agree with this.

Macroevolution is dead! In his book *“Evolution: A Theory in Crisis”* Michael Denton, a molecular biologist, points out the many contradictions to evolution theory. For example: The simplest life form known is the single cell. To create a cell you need certain proteins. These proteins are not found anywhere in the natural world, rather, they are created by other cells. Therefore, you need a cell to produce another cell. It is impossible to create the first cell as there are no proteins. Evolution cannot find an answer to where the first cell came from so it simply avoids the question. But the problem for Darwin's theory is much more serious than a discussion on the origin of proteins.

One of Darwin's most avid promoters in the nineteenth century, Ernst Haeckel, examining cells through what we would now consider a primitive microscope, stated that a cell was a “homogeneous

globule of protoplasm".⁶ He couldn't have been more wrong.

In a more recent book, Michael Behe, professor of biochemistry at Lehigh University Pennsylvania, expertly demonstrates the overwhelming problems that Darwin's theory has in explaining the complexities of the simplest life forms. For example, the system used in the body to cause blood to clot in order to prevent a person from bleeding to death is irreducibly complex. It is called a coagulation cascade and to reduce its complexity even in the slightest detail would mean certain death to an animal or human, through clots blocking arteries, or not forming at all. Behe claims that, "no one on earth has the vaguest idea how the coagulation cascade came to be".⁷

Darwin claimed that all life evolved through many gradual changes and mutations, but scientists have discovered many irreducibly complex systems which did not evolve gradually at all, but are the creation of a master designer. To reduce these systems in the slightest way would mean they would simply not work at all, not that they would work less effectively. The defense system of the Bombardier Beetle, the complexity of a bacterial flagellum, the movement of a cilium, the mind boggling complexity of vesicular transport, and the immune system, are all excellent examples of systems which Darwinian Theory is totally helpless to explain.

Behe points out that in America, evolution theory has become like a religion for many scientists, partly because of the heated debate amongst some Christian fundamentalists and scientists over the years. The

fundamentalists have attacked scientists, who in turn have defended their position for reasons which are no longer scientific. The argument has become one of pride, rather than seeking to discover the truth. Sadly, this position has also meant that textbooks continue to be used in schools and universities which are grossly out of date, namely, because the alternative - teaching that an intelligent agent created the world - would be seen as a backward step and a defeat by liberal Darwinians.

Argument 6: The Nature of humanity.

What do people usually do when they are in trouble or terrified of death? During the Vietnam War there was a common expression. "There are no atheists in foxholes". Foxholes were holes and tunnels dug into the ground where the enemy waited to ambush you. Soldiers had to go down and into these holes to find the enemy, but these places were extremely dangerous and filled with booby traps. In this situation it was said that even the atheists prayed for safety. There is something inside a human being which makes us cry out to God when a situation has overtaken us. When we are rich, comfortable, and safe we don't feel a need for God; we are often arrogant and independent. But when there is a flood, a fire, an accident, a tsunami, something which humbles us through having no control, then we think of God, and even if only secretly, we pray. The father of atheism, Feuerbach, used this argument to suggest that human beings create God in their own minds to comfort them in times of stress and need. Was he

right, or is there an instinct within us, which makes us call out to the one who created us?

Argument 7: Changing sides.

One of the oldest and most frequently used arguments that God doesn't exist is the issue about evil and suffering. Skeptics will argue, "If there is a God, why does He allow evil". Or "if God exists, and He doesn't stop evil, then He is either weak or powerless, or He doesn't care about people". They use this as an argument to deny God's existence. This is a complex issue which will be discussed in detail in chapter three. However, for the sake of argument, what happens if I simply change sides and stand with the atheist? Who are we going to blame if there is no God? Without a God to point a finger at, we are left with only ourselves, and in this regard we would be correct in blaming humanity for the evil and suffering which we commit against each other.

In conclusion, the word 'atheist' has come to be used by those who claim to not believe in a God or higher creative intelligence. This word comes from a Greek word 'atheos' and its original meaning in Greek books such as the New Testament writings is also to not *know* God. In this sense there are millions of true atheists and many of them very religious. Many Moslems, Buddhists, Hindus, Jehovah's Witnesses, and others, claim that it is impossible to know God on a personal level. They are as wrong as Haeckel was about cells.

The Christians' role is not to spend countless hours in pointless arguments about the existence of

God, but rather to point people to ways that they can allow God to make Himself known to them. I personally believe that if a so-called atheist will sincerely challenge God to prove His existence to them, He will do exactly that. As you continue to read through this book I challenge you to ask God to prove His existence to you, if you claim He doesn't exist. However, once proof has been established in your mind, through circumstances which God will choose that are very personal and specific to you, then you will be faced with the problem and responsibility of how to respond to God revealing Himself to you, as ignorance will no longer be an option.

Chapter Two

Creation



In the first chapter I suggested that science is not the enemy of Christian beliefs, but is rather an ally in that scientific discoveries point towards a Creator/designer. In this chapter we will explore creation and the Christian claims surrounding this topic and we will take a look at how the Bible and scientific claims agree.

Often, non-Christians criticize the non-scientific way in which the Bible portrays the story of creation, and also I have heard Christians make apologies for the fact that the Bible is not very scientific. This is an unfair criticism. It is extremely important to place the book of Genesis into its cultural context and then see how it stands up to criticism. Genesis is perhaps about 3000 years old, and was given to Moses as an explanation of how God brought the world into existence. Moses then passed this information on to people who were completely uneducated, indeed a

nation who had been in slavery for 400 years. If God had given Moses a discourse on Quantum Physics, who could have understood it? The Bible was given to foretell and explain salvation's story, to produce faith and an intimate personal relationship with God, not as a book to be dissected like a scientific journal.

Rather than compare the Bible to the latest scientific journals, let's begin by comparing the Bible story with other creation stories believed by the peoples of the world at the same time. The Zoroastrian religion about 1000 years before Islam, believed the world was a continuous battle between many gods, both good and evil. In ancient India, the home of Hinduism, the world was portrayed as resting on a large elephant. The elephant was standing on the back of a very big turtle, and the ancient Greeks believed that there was a god connected to different elements, emotions, etc., e.g. storms, lightning, floods, love, war and disease.

To the ancients, the world was made when the gods were fighting, or when one god had been split into two parts, making male and female. The book of Genesis, when compared to the beliefs abounding at the same time, is very different from ancient creation myths. Although it was never given to Moses as a scientific discourse, it incidentally corresponds remarkably with most modern theories of the origins of the universe.

Let's examine some of the Bible's claims.

God created the universe out of nothing, He simply spoke it into being; 'and God said'. Theologians call this 'creation ex nihilo'. The first thing He created

was the ‘heavens’. This does not mean that He created paradise, the place where He dwells, but rather the ‘cosmos’ which we call ‘space’. Until recently, the idea of creation from nothing had been ridiculed as crazy; however, many reputable cosmologists now believe that this is exactly what happened.

In a recent essay, the cosmologist Owen Gingerich explains that at the moment scientists now call ‘Time Zero’, the moment one 10th (43) of a second before the beginning (10 with 43 zeros), the universe as we now understand it was a ‘dense dot of pure energy’, so small that it could pass through the eye of a needle. Perhaps the easiest way to understand this would be to think of it as a seed of the universe. Just as all of the information to grow an oak tree is on an acorn, the information for the universe was within this dot/seed of energy. Through some ‘cause’, this dot of pure creative energy bursts and begins expanding at immeasurable speed and force.

Gingerich explains that;

It is an amazing picture of pure and incredibly energetic light being transformed into matter, and leaving its vestiges behind.¹

The expansion of the universe from ‘Time Zero’ is what most scientists in this field call the ‘Big Bang’ theory. In the beginning this universe was a void, but as gases expanded and fused, the universe was created. We have no idea exactly how long the universe was expanding before God began the rest of creation. Science believes the age of the universe is

approximately 13.7 billion years, but the Bible does not give any time limit. Genesis simply tells us that it was empty, it calls the planet earth 'formless and empty', and that darkness was over the deep, with the Spirit of God hovering over the waters (Genesis 1). The words 'formless and empty' suggest the process of fusing gases, which eventually form a surface for water which was in this case in the darkness of space. All of this is forming before God announces the end of the first "day". At this point there is total darkness in space, and in my opinion no time as we understand it. Scientist calculate their 13 billion years using different criteria and counting back, however, in order to have a day in human terms, (twenty four hours) we need a sun and a moon, or at least light and darkness, and these did not exist in our solar system during this period.

Then God creates light. We have no idea about this light except that it is likely a manifestation of the energy and presence of God within the area of the new universe. This is the 'first day' of creation (Genesis 1.v 3-5). God then creates the gravity and atmosphere, and the 'water above' it's like a greenhouse effect. God creates the seas, the land, the plants and animals, and notice that throughout the text he says 'according to its kind.' This shows God placing the limits of species, that each thing created must be to its own kind, and it has remained so to the present time. Some scientists are still trying to naturally mate different 'kinds' of animals, like a sheep with a goat, but with no success.

God then creates the sun and moon, but only after the creation of plants, etc. Please note that the moon is created after the earth and perhaps a very long time after the beginning of creation. It is a powerful testimony to the Bible that the age of our moon is believed by many scientists and cosmologists to be only a few days older than the first human beings, and this is an annoying scientific anomaly. When the Americans designed the landing module for the moon they estimated that without moisture, the moon would have dust which was approximately seven kilometres deep, so the landing module was designed with special legs to sit on this dust. They were basing their plans on the assumption that the moon was several billion years old. When the craft landed it sat down on solid rock and later measured the depth of dust at an average of 10 cm. This places the age of the moon at no more than 10,000 years. The Bible story makes the moon not much older than the first human being, and strangely enough scientists have no explanation for this phenomenon, although it must also be recognised that many evolutionary scientists are now refuting this data. See notes for just a few sources of this information.

Equally puzzling is the fact that there is no scientific explanation for how a prophet called Isaiah, writing about 800 years before Jesus Christ, knew that the earth was in the shape of a circle. Until only a few hundred years ago it was believed that the world was flat (see Isaiah 40:22). The book of Job in chapters 38-41 tells of star systems in detail, and an incredible description of a dinosaur like creature. How could

the writer of Job know about start systems that we cannot see with the naked eye? Was the canopy of water acting like a telescope, or did God simply tell him what to write?

But let's return to Genesis. On the sixth day of creation God then creates the first human being. James Ussher, a 17th century theologian, calculated that the creation of Adam happened about 6,000 years ago, by adding the generations and life-spans of people recorded in the Bible. Modern evolution theory suggests that prehistoric 'man' is at least one million years old, but ALL scientists, geologists, archaeologists and cosmologists agree that civilization is no more than five or six thousand years old, a date similar to Ussher's.²

When one reads the Greek version of the Old Testament called the 'Septuagint', one makes a fascinating discovery about Genesis 1:27 which speaks of the creation of men and women. The gender of the text may be read as neuter and singular. Therefore, the text should possibly read 'male and female created He it'.³ There is a textual argument to say that the first human being was not a male or a female, but both in one body, an androgynous being. Is this the answer to the question, 'why do men have nipples'? In the gospels Jesus told the Pharisees that in heaven there will be no marriage. Will those who spend eternity with God be androgynous beings as the angels are presumed to be, and in a sense returned to the original state of the first person?

What does modern science have to say about the human body in relation to this?

All human males have the same number of male and female chromosomes, 24 X and 24 Y. Females have only X chromosomes, the 'female' chromosome. Human males also have exactly the same amount of male and female receptors. This means that if a man takes certain hormones, which he no longer produces naturally, then he will grow breasts and can even in some cases produce milk.

The Greek version of the Bible strongly suggests that male and female were in one being, a being 'made in the image of God', who is strictly neither male nor female.⁴ Then we have the creation of woman in Genesis 2: 21-25. The word translated 'rib' is one of two possible translations. The other is 'side', a word meaning half. The same word is used elsewhere (Genesis 15: 10) to describe cutting in half, and in light of the later part of the passage saying the 'two shall become one flesh', I would suggest that rib is a poor translation. It was traditional to translate the word as 'rib', because the men who translated were not at all happy about the idea of woman being an equal half, and sadly this tradition has continued.

In other later religious writings such as the Greek myths, men and women were created when a god split in half, and the philosopher Plato writes about the first human being as an androgynous person. In both the ancient and modern language of many cultures this idea exists predominantly and many people speak of their partner as their 'soul mate', their 'other half', or 'better half'. A huge percentage of romantic songs portray the idea that a person alone is not entirely whole, but missing half of the

perfect equation. The Bible suggests that male and female were once perfectly united in one body and this being was in 'the image and likeness of God', a perfect being in a sense. I believe, from observing human beings, that this original perfection is like a latent memory written into our DNA, a compelling desire to be perfect as we once were. It is fascinating to me that people all over the globe associate the union of two people with the idea of perfection, of eternal love, of 'love which lasts forever', love made in heaven, etc. The words eternal, perfect, heaven, are used in thousands of songs, the idea being that if you find your true 'other half' then you will experience perfection which lasts forever.

Do people have a silent instinct within them which seeks a perfection now lost? When one examines the number of people involved in religions, in self-development programs, in the new age mystery cults and sects, and even in the desire to vacation on so-called "paradise" islands, it is not hard to imagine that humans unconsciously seek to be perfect as our original ancestors were.

In summary, the Bible was not written as a scientific document but to produce faith and that, compared to other ancient creation stories, the Bible does not contradict scientific discoveries. The Christian teaching of 'creation ex nihilo', 'creation out of nothing', is substantiated by modern cosmology. The age of space being billions of years old is not contradicted in the Bible, as billions of years may have passed before the end of the creation of the first day. The age of the moon being only as old as civilization

is shown clearly in the Bible as the moon is created on the fourth day, and not in the original expanse of space. Job and Isaiah, written 3,000 years ago⁵, reveal knowledge of strange creatures, star systems, and a round earth. The Bible shows civilization as about 6,000 years old and all scientific data agrees with this. The Bible explains the creation of men and women with incredible agreement to modern understandings of human anatomy. The Bible's claim that the original "man" was 'in the image and likeness of God' is a good answer to the human quest for that 'perfect other half'.

God never intended the Bible to be used as a scientific handbook, however, even after 3,000 years this incredible revelation can stand up to the most rigid scientific scrutiny. However, we should never try and make the Bible fit science, for science is always renewing its discoveries as it continues to unveil the truth of God's glory. Also, most of us are aware of the urge within to find perfection. Many people spend countless hours on the internet, or sleeping with many partners in the search of their 'other half', believing blindly that this union will bring 'eternal happiness'. I believe that perfection is found in only one person, Jesus Christ, and the perfect peace we seek is found in being united to Him, not another fallen human being.

Chapter 3

Evil: An Age-Old Problem



Compared to many people, my own experiences of evil and suffering are not worth considering. For those who have suffered terribly at the hands of oppressors, or other forms of evil, any explanation to this issue may sound unreasonable, or even a way to justify what is humanly impossible to accept. That is not my intention, for I believe that there is never a justification for the evils which people commit against each other. However, I also believe that there will be justice, for although He offers grace to the penitent, God's hatred of injustice is infinitely more potent and intolerant than yours or mine.

For over 2,500 years philosophers and theologians have grappled with the problem of evil. The very presence of evil in God's 'good' creation raises serious questions to which we are hard-pressed to find answers. How could evil enter God's 'good'

creation? If God is a loving and all-powerful being, then how can evil exist?

Either He is not powerful enough to extinguish evil, or He doesn't care enough to do so! This is the question of the Greek philosopher Epicures which he posed some 2,300 years ago.

Over the years various solutions have been suggested to answer this problem of evil. The Greeks, generally speaking, believed in a dualism, that is, that two gods of equal power were always at war. These Gods also had children who were lesser gods who took sides and the battle continued.

Since the beginning of Christianity theologians have entered the discussion. Some have suggested a form of dualism, especially those who were not in the mainstream of Christian thinking such as the Gnostics. For them, the entire material world is evil. The Bible also suggests a form of dualism, but by no means the idea that there are two gods or beings of equal power. Augustine (354-430) had a great influence on both Roman Catholic and later Calvinist theology after the Protestant reformation in the 16th century. He placed his emphasis on the idea that human beings have a kind of freedom which is governed by God. In a roundabout way, he ends up making God responsible for evil as do those who have followed his teaching.

Calvinists, such as Gordon H Clark believe that God has determined all things and that human will is not free. This means that people act exactly as God wills them to, so, although we may think we have a choice, in reality this is like an illusion. Calvinists like

Clark state that, “if a man gets drunk and shoots his family, it was the will of God that he should do it”.¹ God as the ultimate cause of everything, is the cause of sin for the Calvinist, however they also maintain that God is not responsible for it because God cannot sin. This position is no solution at all in my opinion. In a similar way, many people living in developed countries have adopted a secular form of Calvinism that can be related back to the Greeks gods of ‘fate’ and ‘destiny’. Such people have the idea that their entire lives are under some form of destined purpose. The problem with this is that it tends to cause such people to relinquish responsibility for finding and living the true goal and purpose of their lives.

The Arminian position, from the Dutch Theologian Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), states that evil is a natural possibility arising from God giving human beings true freedom of the will. If evil was not possible, human beings would not be truly free, but would only be automatons, robots. This does not mean that God cannot prevent evil; however, for Him to fulfill His plan for humanity, allowing evil was necessary. This position would be closest to the teaching of the Bible in my opinion, and one that doesn’t defame either the character of God, or destroy human freedom to choose.

Christian Science, Buddhism and Hinduism take the position that evil is an illusion, it is unreal, merely a false belief. The Buddhist and Hindu use different techniques including meditation to try and reach a state called ‘enlightenment’ which presumably puts one above evil. These same people, however, die and

get sick even after they have presumably reached this level of perfection, so death wins in the end. In like manner, modern atheistic philosophers such as Marx suggest that evil is merely ignorance. This idea suggests that as human beings gain knowledge they will stop committing acts of evil. The answer to the problem is education. This argument falls to pieces when one considers that some of the most evil humans have been very clever, such as Adolph Hitler, and some of the most pure have been the most ignorant, such as young children.

Let's us examine the origin of evil.

The reality of evil was never possible while only God existed, however, after the creation of beings less than God, the possibility became real. In the previous chapter we were concerned to study creation from the perspective of the material world, however, the Bible suggests that God's first creations were the angels. The Bible tells us there were millions of them, each different in its gifts, appearance, and power. We are not told why they were created, however to ask such a question may be similar to asking an artist why he feels a desire to paint, or a musician a desire to compose. The most powerful, wise and beautiful angel was Lucifer, indeed his name means simply 'the beautiful one'. The Bible states² that he was 'the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty'. He had a special place beside the throne of God. He is called a guardian cherub, another term for 'arch-angel'.

He was blameless, says the Bible, until 'wickedness was found in him'. Then we are given an

explanation of how Lucifer went from perfection to total corruption. We read that his ‘heart became proud on account of his beauty, and he was corrupted because of his splendor’. In another book of the Bible we are given more insight into Lucifer’s thoughts at this time. Isaiah quotes Lucifer as saying, ‘he will raise his own throne above the stars of God, on the utmost height, and he will make himself like the Most High God’³. And there is the key to the origin of evil, those very words of Lucifer’s,

“I will make myself”.

In some versions of Scripture it simply states ‘I will be like God’, but the inference is the same. He will create himself into a god without the help of his Creator, indeed, he will rise even above God Himself. What he wanted was impossible, and when he couldn’t get what he wanted he allowed evil into his heart.

In Greek, the word which we translate into English as I, is the word ‘ego’. It is the elevation of the ego which is the root of evil, both in the case of Lucifer, and as we shall see later, in the case of human beings. At some point in time a creature becomes aware of itself. It recognizes who it is, an individual with independent thoughts, independent looks, and gifts, a unique creation of God. What we do with that information is the vital thing. The ego can give praise to its Creator for the gifts and uniqueness God has given, or it can elevate itself to a point where it becomes arrogant, rebellious and an enemy of God, unwilling to submit or worship anyone greater than itself. This is the root of what the Bible calls sin.

Lucifer became aware of his beauty, his wisdom, and his splendor. Perhaps other angels commented to him, perhaps they adored him. It appears that he enjoyed their praise but he didn't give the glory to the one who had made him this way, rather he cherished the adoration of others. He became conceited and like a drug he desired more and more. Perhaps he enjoyed the power of his position and allowed this also to corrupt him. There is an expression: 'power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely'. Lucifer was in the most powerful position of all creatures, but he wasn't the Creator, he was second to the Lord Himself. Once he fell in love with power it seduced him, and he couldn't stand to be in second place. How could God step down and place Lucifer on the highest place? How can the creature ever be greater than the Creator, this is not logically possible.

Tradition and Scripture claim that there was war in heaven. Lucifer deceived many of the angels and a third of them gave him their allegiance, about 330 million,⁴ the same number as the gods of Hinduism. His name was changed to Satan, which means 'deceiver or father of lies', and he and his followers became totally corrupted by evil and hatred for God. Satan and his followers had seen perfection, had lived in perfection, there was no tainted sin nature in them as there now is in human beings. But they rejected perfection and as a result they went from perfectly good to completely evil, creatures incapable of love, compassion or mercy, beings which in almost all cultures of the world are called demons or evil spirits.

We don't clearly know when all of this occurred, but my own opinion is that this happened prior to God's creation of the universe. I believe that part of God's reason for creating space, the universe, was to provide a place for Satan and the demons. It is essential that we understand something important about God's nature at this point. God and evil are totally incompatible, indeed, if something evil comes into contact with the holiness of God it is likely to be destroyed. Consider, if you will, the nature of a nuclear reactor. If one throws an object into this pure energy the object is destroyed, this is simply the nature of the nuclear energy. God's holiness is similar.

Prior to the creation of the universe there was only God's kingdom, that which the Bible calls 'paradise or the 3rd heaven'⁵. It is an infinite place with no time, the place where God 'dwells in unapproachable light', to borrow a Biblical expression. Our universe is like a huge balloon floating within this kingdom. God spoke creation into being, and the black void of space began and expanded. Science calls this idea the 'big bang' or 'time zero' as we saw in the previous chapter. Into this area he placed Satan and the demons, a place where they would not be destroyed by His holiness. Space became Satan's kingdom, the place where he rules his followers. The environment reflected the darkness of his heart, the 'Prince of Darkness' as he is called. He is considered to be the prince of the universe and god of this world, because people have chosen to rebel against God just as he did.

It was into this environment that God chose to place human beings. He created the Earth, and on the

Earth he placed a perfect replica of the 3rd heaven, a huge garden of about 200 sq kilometres called Eden, most likely within the area now known as Turkey. He banned the demons from entering this area, and His holiness dwelt there as it does in the 3rd heaven. Any demon entering without protection would be instantly destroyed, just as the liquidators were who tried to stop the radiation leaks at Chernobyl.

But why allow evil?

Having some knowledge of the origin of evil is one thing, however, we have still not given an adequate answer to the problem of why God has allowed so much evil and suffering, considering the fact that He knew what the world would become before He began the process of creation. I believe that God not only knows the future, but He also knows every possible future, even those millions of futures which never actually become reality. Some people cannot understand how human beings can have a free will if God already knows the future. It is very difficult for people to think outside of time. From the moment of our birth our lives are measured in terms of seconds, minutes, days, years, etc. But for God time is a created thing. God can be completely outside of time, and also walking with us in time as He chooses. God has seen the choices we have made before we made those choices. He observes what we will do. This is not the same as determining the choices.

We could argue that if the beginning was slightly different, then the future would also be different. In this sense, God could choose which beginning best

suited the ending that he desired the most. He could also choose a future in which He intervenes and warns people through prophets about *their* future, and a future in which He becomes a part of His own created order to help His creatures. There is no doubt in my mind that God knew there would be sin, suffering, evil and pain, however, I believe that the reality we have was and is the best scenario for the salvation of millions. I propose then, that the answer to the problem of “why” is in understanding the purpose for God creating us in the first place. Also, for me it is essential to begin with what we know as facts about the character of God.

So let us lay a foundation upon which to work.

My first proposition is that God is a loving and wise God, a God who hates evil and suffering. This is the God I see revealed in the work of Jesus Christ, not a God who has ‘caused’ suffering, but one who does all He can to alleviate it. Throughout the gospels we see Jesus filled with compassion for the sufferings of His creations, and healing them. Yes, as the Bible states, it is this same Jesus Christ who created the world for His own purposes⁶, the same God who became a human being in order to deal with the consequences of human evil, but more of that later.

My second proposition is that this loving God is, as I have stated, one who knows the future absolutely, and even knows every possible future. Therefore, God knew that when he began the creation process that there would be terrible evil and suffering in the world. He also accepted responsibility to become involved in that suffering Himself, as He knew He

would become a human being and allow His body to be mutilated and crucified.

Thirdly; it logically follows then, that if God is a loving God who knows the future, and who continued to create a world which would be filled with evil and suffering, then that same evil must be necessary in order to complete His plan for human beings. Furthermore, because God has proven Himself to be loving and wanting the best for His creations, we can conclude that the presence of evil is necessary to bring about our ultimate good.

Fourthly, the answer to understanding the problem of evil, then, is to examine and understand the plan and purpose of God for human beings, and to see how evil contributes to bringing about the perfect fulfillment of that plan. We might ask why go to all of this trouble in the first place, but this would be to assume that this tiny world we live in, which I suggest is within a tiny universe inside of God's infinite Kingdom, is all that there is. If we have never tasted infinite joy, fulfillment, satisfaction and love, perhaps we should forego our judgment of God until we have.

Consider as an example of what I have so far proposed in the following scenario. Are you intending to become a parent one day? Most people desire to have at least one child with the person they love. Their desire is born out of wanting to create someone 'in their own image', a little person they can pour unconditional love into. However, they also know, although they may not always consider it, that this child will suffer and experience evil in their life, and eventually

have to face death. All children will be hurt, will cry, some will be subjected to sexual perversions, some will get cancer, but all will suffer. We are in a position of power, like God. Unlike those animals which are not made in the image of God, we have a choice to create or not create, we are driven by more than instinct, we are driven by love. Does the end justify the means? Does the opportunity for life, love, and joy over-ride the certainty of suffering and death? This scenario may help us to better understand God creating; however, there is more to this proposal.

God's Plan

We come to the point where we need to define God's plan for humanity. In the simplest terms, I think that God intends for us to become like Him and to enjoy Him forever. Indeed, God has placed within us the desire to be like Him. Almost every religion testifies to this fact, even Lenin's version of atheist/socialism was striving to produce the 'new man'⁷, the perfect society, but without God.

The Bible teaches that when a person becomes a new born Christian, that the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within them, and the process of becoming like God truly begins, the goal being for this person to be transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Prior to this experience in their life a person receives a divine revelation which always shows them that they are sinful.⁸ The root of their sin always comes back to the same thing, namely pride, which manifests itself in rebellion, vanity, selfishness, etc. And here is the key to understanding evil.

When we try to be autonomous beings, that is, independent of God, we inevitably end up in sin of one sort or other. When and if we recognize this dilemma and compare ourselves to the holiness and love of God we are humbled and in a position to receive salvation. This is the end of the little war we had going with God, a war in which we refused to be governed by Him.⁹ We end up surrendering and recognizing that He was right all along, that if we try to become like God without God's direction, we will end up in a mess. When God asks us to be like Him, He means us to be servants, humble, helpful, unselfish, exactly as Jesus showed us, the very opposite of what people become when they try to be 'gods' without God.

Let's approach this from the opposite end.

God is an autonomous being. That means He answers to no-one, He is completely independent. He has unlimited power, but He chooses to do good with that power, not evil. God created us in His image, and autonomy is part of His image. In order for us to eventually be complete as He is complete, we must have the opportunity to experience autonomy, or independence. We have this desire for independence, and in a sense this is not evil at all, but when it manifests itself in the elevation of our ego, then it becomes a big problem.

When human beings try to be 'gods' as it were, they do this at the expense of other people. Look around you. Many countries have a history of oppressors, men who were 'lords' over the powerless. Look at the many marriages, religions, and cultures where

women are oppressed. Look at all of the wars, at the rapes and murders, and at the suppression of the poor while the rich live as kings. These are examples of human beings exercising their autonomy, trying to be ‘gods’. The heart of this evil is selfishness, vanity, competition, and the desire for power. These things are the most common manifestations of the human ego; they echo Satan’s words, “I will make myself”.

And these things manifest themselves everywhere and in all human beings. We compare ourselves with others, not with the idea of compassion for them, but to make ourselves feel good at the other person’s expense. We become jealous of those considered pretty, we compete in games for fun, but in our hearts sometimes is the thrill of winning, of beating the other, of being higher, better. And selfishness hardly needs any examples, as we see this phenomenon in children even from an early age. Put two kids in a sandpit and give one child ten toys and the other one toy, and the child with ten will be convinced that they must have the one toy which the other child has. In the dog eat dog world of the corporation, the mark of success is how far up the corporate ladder one can get, the size of our bank account, and destroying others on the way is simply a hard cold fact of life. The elevation of the human ego, the lust for power and autonomy is evil indeed, and these things should never be found in those who confess to follow Jesus Christ. Any person, organization, or church which confesses to be ‘christian’, and yet follows the world’s standards of hatred, revenge

and power, has either lost all contact with Christ, or never had it at all!

We can say that God wants us to be like Himself, but to do this we must understand the responsibilities of having autonomy. Therefore God has given us the opportunity through giving us free will. Unfortunately, we don't use our independence to serve others or to act humbly, but rather, we are selfish and proud, power hungry and vain, and this has caused the evil and suffering in our world, that which the Bible simply calls 'sin'. When we recognize the evils which linger in our egos and manifest themselves in various ways, we are then in a mindset to humble ourselves before the Supreme Autonomous Being who was born into a stable, who washed His disciples' feet and who allowed Himself to be whipped, beaten and crucified to pay for that which we have done. Such is the wisdom of God. If we recognize that we cannot be like God without Him, He can destroy our autonomy and give us a new life in which we can submit to His perfect example, love and forgive our enemies. These are some of the marks of a true Christian.

When Lucifer chose to sin he chose to reject paradise and perfection. There can be no salvation for such a creature. When a human being chooses to sin they are rejecting their partial knowledge of heaven and God's plan and perfection, they are almost ignorant of these things. Therefore, God is able to offer us salvation. We have never rejected the perfection that Lucifer rejected, so in a sense our sin is not as all-consuming as Lucifer's was. We are not completely

corrupted by sin as Satan is; we are not in a real sense totally depraved. We are still capable of unselfish thoughts and actions, of love and caring, and so God in His mercy can redeem¹⁰ us. That was his plan all along. Let us also be reminded, that compared to eternity, this life is one grain of sand on all the beaches of the world, or one blink of an eye. God sees the eternal picture, and we the immediate suffering. God sees us experiencing an eternal paradise where love is manifest in perfection, and the pain we knew in this life will be unworthy of remembrance.

Chapter Four

The Fall



In chapter two we examined the creation of human beings. I suggested that the drive for perfection within people may well be connected to the fact of being made in the image of God and that the original couple were created sinless. Some suggest that Adam and Eve were ‘perfect’ as God is perfect; however I disagree with using this word. Perfection suggests a lack of nothing, yet Adam and Eve were not perfect in knowledge, indeed, they were like infant children. Knowledge often comes through experience and the experiences of the primal couple were very limited. God has the advantage of foresight, human beings, generally speaking, do not, therefore a human couple with no ancestry or history would have very little knowledge. It was this lack of knowledge which became part of the temptation of Adam and Eve.

At the beginning of the Biblical book of Job we read about a conversation which Satan had with God.

Satan accused God of protecting Job and he suggested to God that if he was allowed to test Job, then Job would turn against God. People sometimes ask me why God placed Earth in the center of this huge bubble we call space, considering the fact that Satan and his demons are Lords of this domain. I think that it is very possible that Satan suggested to God that He should place us in here so that we would have the choice of following God or him. After all – he may have argued - he does have his own kingdom and followers. However, I also believe that knowing the future, and having experienced the rebellion of Lucifer and his followers, God had always planned to use this scenario to test the love and loyalty of human beings. God wanted us to have the opportunity to experience the power and possibilities of autonomy, even though He knew what it would cost in human lives lost to people like Stalin, Hitler and others.

Satan waited for the creation of woman before entering Eden to tempt the humans. I suspect there are two reasons for this. Firstly, before the creation of Eve, Adam was whole; this being was the image of God, with the intuition of a female and the logical reasoning of a male. These are gross generalizations about men and women, but, as we shall discover, there is a lot of truth in them. The second reason that Satan waited was that he had seen the creation of the animal kingdom, and he speculated that the human would need a mate, therefore he decided to wait and use the tactic of ‘divide and conquer’. Frankly speaking, I think that he recognised that he

was going to have a very hard time convincing the complete Adam to rebel.

After the creation of woman Satan chose the person with whom he figured he'd have the best chance of success. Women, generally speaking, seem to be far more conscious of the spiritual world. This is perhaps why over 90% of all spiritists, Satanists, mediums, witches, psychics, and clairvoyants are women. So, Satan enters Eden. We are not told why he chose to use the serpent, but the connotation is that the serpent allowed Satan to use its body. If Eden was truly an eternal and holy place, then Satan would indeed have needed to use something other than his angelic body to enter for he could no longer dwell in God's presence without being destroyed. I am suggesting that he simply possessed the snake and spoke through it, in a similar way that God spoke through the mouth of a donkey when he was rebuking Balaam. However, it seems that the snake was in on the deal as God later curses the snake to crawling on its belly for allowing Satan to use it.

The book of Genesis, and all of the Old Testament, is basically the history of the Jewish people's dealings with God and the culture developed through that relationship throughout the centuries. If you have a Bible, you may like to open it to Genesis Chapter three and we will examine the account of the Fall and analyze the pattern of temptation. If you don't have a Bible, here are the first six verses of chapter three in the New International English version.

(1) Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?” (2) The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden, (3) but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’ ”(4) “You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. (5) For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (6) When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

This following pattern of temptation is one Satan often uses and I have listed it in five main points. Verse one begins with the interesting fact that Satan already knows about the prohibition of eating from the tree in the center, so perhaps he had been listening in on the conversation between God and Adam in Chapter 2, verse 15. Nowhere does the Bible suggest that Eve was given this information after her creation, so perhaps this is more evidence that Adam was androgynous. Eve speaks as though she was there when God gave the order, however, some people who consider that the original person

created was only a normal man, assume that Adam told her second-hand after she was created.

We should also be aware that it appears from verse six that Adam was with Eve throughout the temptation, and yet he said nothing to contradict the serpent. For me this raises the question of whether or not Adam was even aware that this conversation was happening. Was this a verbal or mental conversation? How can we explain his silence in the face of such an important event? The pattern of temptation Satan uses is very interesting. The following few points show his deceptive cunning well.

Verse 1 continued. “Did God *really* say”.....

Point One. He sows a seed of doubt. This is a very common beginning to Satanic temptation. We may know outright that something is a sin, but we get this thought of doubt, the beginning of trying to find some loophole.

Verse 2-3. Eves reply is... “God *did* say, ‘ you must not eat....”

Point Two. Eve knew that the fruit was forbidden, she confirms that she knows the prohibition, and it would seem then that she has no excuse. Notice too that she does not say that her husband told her.

Verse 4. “You *will not* die”. Satan is the ‘father of lies’. Here he totally contradicts God, but like most of his lies, there is an element of truth. He knew that they would not physically die immediately, but eventually. He did know however that they would ‘die’ spiritually. Death in the Bible generally means

‘separation’, so the death they were to die was a separation from God.

Point Three. Satan sweetens the lie with a little bit of truth.

Verse 5. “Your eyes will be opened, you will be like God”. Satan is suggesting to Eve that she is ‘missing out’ on something. She has a knowledge of good, but no *real* knowledge of evil. She has never *experienced it*, so how does she know that she *won’t like it*.

Point Four. Your missing out. Try it you might like it.

Verse 5 continued. He appeals to her pride and ego by suggesting that she will be wise, she will be like God. This point underlines the lack of knowledge of Adam and Eve, and also the desire for autonomy.

Point Five. He appeals to the pride and ego.

Verse 6. ‘Good for food’. *She wanted to experience it*.

‘Pleasing to the eye’. *It was seductive* .

‘Desirable for gaining wisdom. *Appealed to her ego*.

There are a few points here which are important to discuss. Firstly, it is important to recognize the difference between testing and tempting. The main difference is in the desire for the outcome. God *tests* a person with the hope of a positive result which improves the person, makes them more like him. Satan *tempts* a person with the desire of bringing about their destruction, his motive is to harm.

Secondly, I have often wondered why God chose to tell Adam and Eve that they would die. What would the word 'die' mean to these two creatures who had never seen anything die? Did God tell them they would cease to exist; did He explain that it would be a spiritual death, a separation from Him? We don't know the answers to these questions, but we do know that Satan used this particular area to contradict God, and perhaps this ambiguity was the loophole through which Eve jumped and succumbed to temptation.

The couple both failed the test. They were not willing to trust God. It is obvious that Eve desired wisdom, not a sinful desire in and of itself when we consider that she was like an infant. Satan promised her that she would be like God knowing good and evil, and in this he told the truth (Genesis 3:22). This raises the question, 'is it really possible to know evil without experiencing it'? The answer must be 'yes' because God knows good and evil, and yet He chooses to not commit evil.

Sometimes it is difficult to understand the Fall especially as we do not know which parts of the story to take literally or symbolically. Should we believe that there was a tree which bore the fruit of knowledge of good and evil, or is this merely an analogy of the knowledge which comes from a taste of evil, the voice of conscience which both Adam and Eve experienced immediately after they sinned. They 'knew' they were naked and hid. Personally I do not think that there was a literal tree in Eden which gave knowledge of good and evil. For me the tree symbolizes the decision of the couple to want to make their

own destinies without God, to declare their independence of their Creator. They can only do this by disobeying Him. There may have been a tree, but it is not the fruit of the tree which changes them, but the act of disobedience.

The sin of Adam and Eve has affected the entire creation of God. Adam was given authority over the creation and when he sinned this affected everything under his authority. Although human beings are in the image and likeness of God, we are also in the image and likeness of our ancestors; we receive the mutant genes they pass on in their imperfect DNA. The animals began to change and adapt to what we have today. The Bible suggests that canine creatures such as cats and dogs originally ate grass.¹ Interestingly, whenever these animals become sick, they eat grass as a kind of medicine.

Spiritually, Adam and Eve had changed dramatically. Their intimate relationship with God had been severed because now they were not holy. This was equivalent to a spiritual death. God no longer walked with them as in a physical presence, for His holiness would have destroyed them. Outside of Eden God's presence spoke in their minds or appeared in other ways, but they never again saw the Lord as they had in Eden. God chose to sacrifice an animal and gave them the skins as clothes.² As we will examine in detail later, this sacrifice was to pay for their sin, a life for a life, the animal's life for their spiritual life. The clothes covered their bodies which were now corrupted by sin.

On a physical level they began to age, to deteriorate. They were beginning to die. It would seem that the first couple's sin affected even their DNA, because all human beings are born with a sin nature, that is, a desire and capacity for sin which eventually leads all of us to rebel against God. I do not believe that we are born as sinners in the sense that we are responsible for Adam's actions, but, rather that the inclination in us is so strong that all of us follow its leading and rebel, firstly against our own parents' authority, and later, when we are aware, against God.

And what of Satan? This world was now his world, indeed the Bible calls him the 'god of this world'³ because all human beings since Adam and Eve have chosen to follow him. Satan now had extreme power; indeed the word dynamite comes from the word used to describe his power in the Bible. He wasted no time at all in dominating his own influence on this world, and as we shall see the result was that evil became the way of the world. God also had a warning to him concerning a child who would be born in the future. The Lord prophesied in Genesis 3:15 that this child would crush Satan's head, a reference to destroying his authority. From this time on Satan was looking for this particular child, and doing all in his power to prevent the birth of a person with that kind of power.

And the snake: Well, it was cursed to crawl upon the ground forever. Does this mean that snakes once walked around on legs? Interestingly, recent fossil discoveries have found that ancient snakes had a pelvis, attached to their vertebrae. Sebastian Apesteguía, a researcher with the Argentine Museum

of Natural Science, says a new fossil, named *Najash rionegrina*, is the earliest limbed snake ever found in a fully terrestrial deposit. *N. rionegrina* was discovered in Argentina's Rio Negro province, about 700 miles (1,130 kilometers) southwest of Buenos Aires. Many living snakes, such as pythons, have the vestiges of legs that are not attached to the backbone and simply hang from the body. However, Apesteguía discovered that in *Najash* the hip was connected to the vertebrae, so it has a sacrum. The sacrum is the bony structure that connects the spine to the hips in vertebrates, including humans.

Were snakes once creatures that walked as humans walked? I do not know the answer to this question, but it would seem that it is quite possible.

Chapter Five

The Flood



In this chapter we will examine the Bible's claim that the world was once subject to a flood which covered the entire planet, perhaps about two thousand years after the creation of the first human beings, basically destroying everything that breathed air. I want to look at two aspects of this. Firstly I want to discuss the reasons why God decided to destroy the creation which He had originally called 'good', and then secondly, to examine the scientific evidence of the flood.

Imagine a world in which beings existed who were almost invincible. This was a world where the most sophisticated weapons were swords, bows and arrows, and a world where witchcraft was practiced and used against people. Imagine a world where giants lived, beings who were 3-5 meters in height, beings with incredible strength and supernatural powers. Imagine too what life would be like if these

beings were totally dedicated to the pursuit of pure evil? What if they simply did whatever pleased them, having no law but their own, beings governed by the prince of darkness himself?

What I am suggesting here is not simply my imagination, but rather, recorded history which comes from several written sources, plus many stories, folk tales, myths and legends throughout antiquity. The Bible, The Book of Enoch, and The Rig Veda (Hindu Vedic Scriptures), the legends of the Greeks, the Roman heroes and gods, the Ziggurats of the Aztecs, sacred places such as Stonehenge, the lost city of Atlantis and many other stories handed down through generations all powerfully suggest that these creatures existed and influenced history dramatically before the global deluge.

The Bible tells us in Genesis chapter six that the ‘Sons of God took the daughters of men and had children by them’. The book of Enoch calls these beings the ‘sons of heaven’, the Rig Veda refers to similar beings as ‘Black Rakshasas’, which is Sanskrit for demon angel, and the Aramaic refers to them as ‘Watchers’. You may recall a movie which was produced about angels with physical bodies who were called The Watchers. This was taken from the same sources.

What all of these sources suggest and imply is that some of the fallen angels seduced or forced human women to have sex with them and children were produced from these unions. Their children became known in the Bible as the Nephilim. The word Nephilim in the Hebrew language of the Old

Testament has two meanings. Firstly it means 'to fall upon' as in a giant warrior overtaking you with his power, and secondly it can be translated 'from the fallen ones', meaning that these warriors were the children of fallen angels. They became famous for their power in battle; they were to be feared. It is highly likely that these beings are the source of many Greek legends about the gods becoming men, and about the half human - half god legends such as Hercules, and the giants who ruled the city of Atlantis written about by the great Greek philosopher Plato. The Rig Veda tells us that they were the sons of demons. The Book of Enoch tells us that they taught the people war and demon worship which was all given to Satan, the Prince of darkness. They didn't call him "Satan" as this is God's name for him; rather they worshipped him as Molech, and other names.

The Nephilim were Satan's servants. According to Enoch, they taught the people witchcraft and practiced evil without restraint. This book also tells us that there were wars between these beings also, and that they killed human beings at will. It gives the names of the leaders of the fallen angels, and tells us that they taught the people astrology, sorcery and the craft of war. Everywhere there was terrible violence and bloodshed, rape, fornication and different forms of Satanism. History also records that one of the practices of the worship of Molech was the sacrifice of living children. The god Molech was represented as sitting like a Buddha, with large hands held together to form a huge bowl. Into the bowl was poured oil and under the hands a fire was built. When the oil

was boiling, the priests of Molech threw human children into Molech's hands as a sacrifice. These human sacrifices were used to increase the power of the priests of Molech and the worshippers.

The Bible tells us that God was grieved that He had created human beings upon the earth and that their hearts were filled only with evil all of the time. It was in response to this situation that God decided to destroy the world with a flood, an act designed to wipe out the evil and give the world a fresh start. God was committed to His plan of salvation, and this action was necessary for the completion of that plan.

God ordered the archangels to bind those demon leaders who had taught the people to worship Satan. These were sent into Hades where they are being held for judgment (2 Peter 2: 4, Enoch 10:6). God then instructed Noah to build a huge boat, the Ark, the construction of which took one hundred years. Noah and his three sons built the Ark at a time when there had never been rain but rather a mist watered the Earth. No doubt they were ridiculed and most likely their project became like a well known attraction. The Bible tells us that Noah preached to the people, warning them of the coming flood, but no one believed him. He was most likely thought of as a complete nut-case.

Is this story of a global flood true or not? If it is then we need to take the lessons provided by the story very seriously indeed. What about some evidence! Well, on a merely social front, there are over 250 ancient stories of a global flood in as many different cultures throughout the world.¹ That is rather a lot.

Also, for example, the word ‘ship’ in one very old Chinese language literally means ‘eight people in a boat’. Did you know that it is claimed that there are both photographs and thermo-seismic graphs of the Ark?² During one particular year in the Second World War it was extremely hot in Turkey and the snow on the highest mountains receded more than at any time for many centuries. An allied spotter plane was flying over this area filming troop movements and photographed the broken hull of a huge boat sticking out of the thawing ice. The boat had obviously slid down the side of the mountain and had broken up as it went.

It took over 30 years before a team of American scientists were given permission to climb up to the site. They filmed their entire expedition, and after finding the correct position, used thermo-seismic imaging to determine the size of the vessel. This technology basically sends a form of radio wave back to the receiver whenever it hits an object in the ice. In this way they were able to trace the exact pattern and size of the Ark, which was once again buried under the snow. The size was identical to that given in Genesis. The Russian government, who had been instrumental in persuading the Turks to keep the Americans away from the site for thirty years, published articles calling the finds of the expedition a hoax. It was not in the best interests of the Soviet Union to allow proof of Biblical accuracy to be published.

From a geological point of view the evidence for a global flood is enormous. Evolution science has

been creating its own self contained system of proof for almost a century now. It has led us to believe that the world has gone through various ages, including an ice-age, to bring us to the present. Evolution has used evolution based formulae to govern its own principles, but the evidence of fossils and rock stratification is more often than not completely incompatible with evolutionary science. In simple terms, it is the fossils which are used to determine the age of the earth. This presumes that the fossils themselves are sometimes millions of years old, and that they have evolved over millions of years. So, when a scientist finds a particular fossil, he goes to his evolutionary time scale, and then tells us its age.

But who determined their age in the first place? And how does science answer the problem of finding fossils buried together which are supposed to have existed millions of years apart? Evolution theory presupposes the idea that when a species evolves into another species, then the first species dies out and becomes extinct, but the facts do not hold this to be true.

In Texas, in 1993, the footprint of a human being and the bones of a dinosaur were found in the same layer of sedimentary rock. How could a man and a dinosaur be co-existing? More and more scientists are moving away from uniformitarianism (using evolution theories for dating) and recognizing the obvious evidence of catastrophism (evidence of catastrophe). The flood of Noah falls under the category of catastrophism, a huge catastrophe. Even the finding of any fossil, it is now realized, is evidence

of a catastrophe, if only on a local scale. The fossilized bones of a fish or bird trapped and preserved in silt is evidence that the creature died rapidly and unexpectedly. An extreme number of fossils show evidence of instantaneous death, of trying to escape, etc. And how can we explain so-called ages of time when species which are supposed to be millions of years apart are found to have died together, at the same time?

Creation scientist Harry M Morris, in his book *Many Infallible Truths* states that only the Bible and geology (rightly interpreted) agree in pointing to a worldwide hydraulic cataclysm as the true explanation for the sedimentary fossiliferous strata.³ Consider the proposal that the earth was surrounded by a canopy of water. Because of the vast amount of water above the troposphere there would be no significant difference in temperature, and therefore no rainstorms, wind, or floods. Beneath the crust of the earth were phenomenal amounts of water which were released at the same time as the entire water filled troposphere broke up into a deluge of rain. We know what a thunderstorm can do to a street in ten minutes. Imagine this kind of rain multiplied by one hundred, include also huge underground streams belching out billions of liters per hour, allow this to continue for forty days and nights non-stop, and you have a flood which covers the mountains of Ararat in Turkey.

Imagine the vast amounts of soil and sediment running down mountains and hills which had never before been rained upon. We have landslides when there is a lot of rain, however, keep in mind that

the rain has already removed most loose soil from mountains and hills over the centuries. It is thought that entire forests washed down the mountains into the valleys, forming huge seams of lignite coal. Consider too the fact that some scientists believe that our oil reserves are possibly originate from the putrefied remains of large herds of dinosaurs which died together in a cataclysm of some kind.⁴

Then of course one must consider the volcanic activity which is caused by the hydraulic release from the earth's crust. All over the world, there would have been volcanic eruptions which formed new countries such as my homeland of New Zealand. The incredible amount of steam, ash and dust blotted out the sun for months dropping the temperature to a likely temperature of minus 150 degrees causing an instant 'ice-age' in some parts of the globe, and forming glaciers almost instantly. Animals living near these areas were frozen in time such as the mammoth found on the Siberian Tundra with its stomach still full of grass. In his epic work *Gulag Archipelago*, the Nobel Prize winning author Alexander Solzhenitsyn writes about Gulag prisoners finding a mammoth frozen in the ice. The prisoners systematically thawed the meat and ate it. The animal's body had not decomposed at all, but rather had been frozen instantly, thousands of years ago. There were no cold areas before the flood, so being in the extreme North at the time of the climate changes would have meant certain and instantaneous death. Consider also that natural formations like the Grand Canyon could just as easily have been scoured out by vast quantities of

water over a relatively short time, rather than a small amount of water over a long time.

After the flood the world was a much different place. Now there are extremes of temperature and climate, whereas before the entire planet was warm due to the water vapor in the atmosphere and troposphere. The crust of the earth continues to move and slip due to the effects of the flood, and of course the atmosphere and temperature changes cause floods, hurricanes, tsunamis and other catastrophes.

There is a point at which God will not allow evil to continue. In this case it was perhaps the point at which children were being sacrificed to a demon god. Eight people and a vast number of animals and food lived on a three storied boat which was almost exactly the same size as a football field.⁵ The Ark floated on the flood waters for about 150 days before settling on one of the mountains of Ararat. The people of Noah's day had never experienced rain, wind, floods or other natural phenomena which are usual for us, so they presumed that nothing would change. They were wrong.

God has also given us warnings about the next great judgment of the world, and He gave us signs to watch for. Jesus predicted that in the decades preceding His return to earth there would be a great increase in natural disasters, floods, famines, earthquakes, etc. It may of course be a coincidence, but since 1920, the increase in natural disasters, which have taken human life, has increased ten percent per decade progressively to the present day, whereas prior to this date the rate remains about the same for

all of recorded history. In recent news, governments which recognize this increase in disasters are calling for a greater commitment to international response, as many people are dying, even in developed countries such as the USA. The causes of these increases are most likely climate changes due to the exploitation of the planet, deforestation, pollution and the like. Jesus didn't give specifics about causes; He simply said that these increases would be one particular sign of His return.

The people of Noah's time were given an opportunity to escape God's judgment. Their very act of getting aboard the boat would have signaled their willingness to repent and believe God. When all were aboard the boat, the Bible says that, 'God closed the door'. It was closed from the outside and sealed up. It was basically a huge ramp big enough to support two elephants walking side by side, so no human could lift it. God closed the door and in doing so He cut off any further possibility of salvation. When Jesus returns, the window of opportunity will be closed forever, and God's judgment will once again fall upon the entire world.

And the Nephilim? Genesis six tells us that they came into the world a second time, after the flood. Satan again used them, this time to try and stop the Israelites from entering the land God promised to them. They spread once again and their ancestors bred with different races producing freaks and giants. As in the legends of giants, they were workers of stone-craft, cutting stone to build incredible cities and ziggurats for their human sacrifices. The ziggurats of

the Aztecs are made of stones which have been cut incredibly straight and accurate, and in their drawings of human sacrifice, it is a giant who conducts the ceremonies, a being twice as tall as the humans.

There is much we can learn from the past, and often there are strong elements of truth within legends and folklore. In his dialogue *Timaeus*,⁶ the Greek philosopher Plato describes the city of Atlantis which was built upon a very large island. He tells us that the god Poseidon produced children with a mortal woman called Cleito. Their firstborn was called Atlas, the legendary Titan giant, however, they had many such children who populated the island. Plato says that they controlled large areas of the Middle East and became evil and corrupt. Eventually, the entire island was destroyed through an earthquake and great deluge. We should never be hasty to dismiss those things which cannot be easily verified, for as the old adage says, sometimes 'truth is stranger than fiction'.

Chapter Six

Abraham: The Father of the Faithful



After the flood God made a covenant with Noah, promising to never again bring a global deluge. He told Noah that the rainbow would be a sign of this covenant. The Bible then gives us a table of nations explaining the descendants of Noah's sons. At this time the famed Tower of Babel was built, its purpose to allow people to read the stars and use forms of astrology. The tower represented the power of human civilization over and against God, and for this reason its construction was never completed.¹ God intervened in human history and the people were scattered throughout the world. Our story centers only on those people to whom God chose to work directly, the Jews, and in this sense we will only speak of other civilizations as they came into contact with the Jews as space does not allow for a detailed description of the development of other nations.

Since the mid 19th century, a great deal of archaeological research has been done in the Middle East which has contributed to a growing respect for the accuracy of the Old Testament. Archaeologists study 'tells', raised areas where ancient cities were built. In 1964, Dr. Paolo Matthiae, professor of Near East archaeology at the University of Rome began work on Tell Mardikh, the ancient city of Ebla, 30 miles south of modern Aleppo. He, with his wife and team made many important discoveries over the following ten years, however, in 1975 they discovered the largest and most comprehensive collection of ancient writings ever discovered in one place. In the palace of the city they found rooms containing over 20,000 tablets made of stone and clay, all of which recorded various items of history. This city had a population of about 260,000 and constituted one of the greatest powers of the Ancient Near East during the third to the second millennium B.C. Ebla was a flourishing Semitic civilization, renowned for its metal work, ceramics, textiles, woodworking and weapons of bronze.

For the Biblical scholar the records of this great city shine light on the Scriptures of the same era and the time of Abraham and the patriarchs. Eber, a direct descendent of Noah, and the relation of Abraham, is mentioned there as a King of Ebla. The gods mentioned include El and Ya, shortened versions of Yahweh and Jehovah, and this god is said to be the supreme God of about 500 lesser gods. Tablet number 1860 mentions the infamous cities of the plains: Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim and Bela, in the same order as Genesis 14:2. Furthermore, there are

also stories of creation and the flood, including the following lines which are very similar to the Genesis account of creation.

There was a time when there was no heaven,
and Lugal ('the great one') formed it out of
nothing; there was no earth and Lugal made
it; there was no light, and he made it.²

The discoveries at Tell Mardikh are but one of hundreds of archaeological sites which have reinforced belief in the historical accuracy of the Old Testament. In chapter twelve of Genesis we are introduced to one of the most important characters on the stage of world history. His original name was Abram, a name later changed to that by which he is best known, Abraham. He became the father of the nations of Israel and of the Arab nations, a man at the very heart of the roots of Middle Eastern history. Both Jew and Moslem trace their roots back to this man, and consider him the predecessor to both Judaism and Islam. For Christianity, Abraham's bloodline is not as important as his being the 'father of the faithful', a man who lived by faith in God, a man who trusted God.

God's plan was to reveal Himself through a particular nation, a nation beginning with Abraham. At that time in world history people were again worshipping demon entities. Three major empires existed, the Egyptian, Hittite and Babylonian. These empires had polytheistic religions, that is, they worshipped a multitude of Gods. In the Babylonian

city of Ur, one of the oldest cities in the world, was a huge ziggurat. It was excavated in the twentieth century and found to be similar to those of the Aztecs. These huge structures had but one purpose, the worship of demon gods. To that end, they often offered human sacrifices. The ziggurat stood in the centre of the city and was visible from every point, being the highest building.

Throughout the region were nomadic tribes, and Abraham's could be described as one of these. They lived in large bands, Abraham's tribe having over three hundred trained fighting men³ There was safety in numbers. As a boy Abraham had lived near Ur until he left this region to live in Haran, the area north of the Euphrates River. When Abraham was seventy-five God called him to leave Haran, "his country, people and father's household"⁴ and journey to Canaan, which is now the State of Israel. God promised to make Abraham into a great nation, indeed he told him that two nations would come from him.

Abraham had two choices. He could remain where he was with his tribe, his wife Sarah, and their relatives, or he could obey God and go into the unknown, believing that God would do as He promised. He chose to believe and obey. This is why he is called a man of faith. He believed God and he acted on his belief. Faith is not about blind leaps in the dark, but about acting on the revelation we have been given by God. It almost always means acting without knowing the outcome, but we act in accordance with God's promise, not in presumptuous stupidity as some misunderstand faith.

There are many incidents concerning Abraham and Sarah's lives recorded in Genesis. Some of those stories reveal weaknesses in Abraham's character and others his strengths. When he left for Canaan he took his nephew Lot with him. Eventually it became necessary to divide the territory between them and Lot chose the fertile valleys in which stood the infamous cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. When war broke out Abraham had to rescue Lot, and his nephew took to living in Sodom, the homosexual center of the known world at that time. The immorality of these two cities was such that God decided to destroy them and he made his plans known to Abraham. Abraham bargained with God for the cities, arguing that God should not destroy the righteous with the wicked. God agreed, but in the end a decision was made and the cities and their occupants were destroyed. The Bible suggests that sexual diseases are a natural consequence of immorality, whether heterosexual or homosexual, because the human body was designed for people to live within the sanctity of marriage.⁵ If a disease like AIDS had broken out due to the rampant homosexual practices of Sodom, the effect on a world without drugs to combat it may have been devastating, changing the course of human history.

Abraham then made a covenant with God which is recorded in Genesis 15. A covenant may be understood as a binding contract between two parties. This covenant, like all sacred covenants made with God, was sealed with blood representing that life and death bound the parties of the covenant. At the time of making this covenant God promised Abraham's

descendants the land of Canaan, and in a dream He told Abraham that his descendants would be slaves in a foreign land for four hundred years. After this time God would bring them out of the land of their oppressors with great wealth. During that four hundred years Canaan would become inhabited by many races of giants, descendants of the Nephilim. Archaeological evidence of these races is extensive, stories about them common, and many of the myths and legends concerning giants come from this era. In Abraham's time these beings existed but were not prevalent. It is believed that they presided over the building of the ziggurats throughout this region and beyond, and encouraged the practice of human sacrifices, including those of children. They were also involved in the worship of Molech, a religion which considered the sacrifice of first-born children a norm.

Such was the attitude towards child sacrifice at the time of Abraham so it is not unusual that God chose to test the Father of Israel in the area of child sacrifice. As previously mentioned, God had promised Abraham and Sarah a son even though Sarah had passed menopause. Unfortunately, after a few years of waiting Sarah had not become pregnant. Sarah decided that they could give God some help in this area. Sarah's plan was to build a family through her handmaiden Hagar, a kind of surrogate mother idea. Equally unfortunately, Abraham went along with the plan and Hagar produced him a son named Ishmael. At this time Abraham was eighty-six years old. This boy became the Father of the Arab nations.

God recognised the boy and blessed him on account of Abraham, however, God did not consider Ishmael the son of the covenant.

After fourteen years Sarah did conceive and bore Isaac. Some years later God commanded Abraham to take his son Isaac to the region of Moriah and sacrifice him as a burnt offering. In the discourse God repeatedly refers to him as Abraham's 'only son'. Abraham took two of his servants, wood for the sacrifice and three days later arrived at the place designated by the Lord. He told his servants to wait with the donkey, and when he and the boy had finished worshipping the Lord they would both return. Father and son climbed up to the place on the hill and there Abraham prepared the altar with the wood on top. The son carried the wood on his back to the place of sacrifice. When Isaac inquired as to where the lamb was for the burnt offering, Abraham replied that the Lord would provide the lamb. He then took his son and tied him on top of the altar. As he took out his knife to kill his son the Lord stopped him. He revealed to Abraham that this was a test to him, and then showed him a ram caught in a thicket close by which he was to use for the burnt offering.⁶

There are many powerful issues in this story which are important to our understanding of Christianity. Firstly, Abraham can be seen as an archetype of God as a Father here. God continually refers to Isaac as his 'only son' who is to be sacrificed. Five hundred years after this we learn that a burnt offering of a lamb is performed to cleanse from sin. Isaac, the 'only son' was to be the lamb given for sin, just as Jesus

Christ, God's 'only son', called the 'lamb of God' would be given as a sacrifice for sin. God sacrificed his only son Jesus knowing He would be raised from death. Abraham was willing to sacrifice his only son knowing that God would raise him from death. We know this because Abraham told his servants that both he and the boy would return, and also for the simple reason that Abraham believed it was through Isaac that the nation of Israel was promised. We can also see parallels in that Isaac was a miracle baby, a baby born well past the possible time for Sarah, and Jesus was of course a miracle child, conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Abraham is considered to be the Father of the faithful, the Father of those who are saved by faith. It was fitting that his faith should be such that his test foretells the miraculous coming of the Messiah, the sacrifice of the lamb of God for sin, and faith in the resurrection from the dead. God foretells the plan of salvation in this event, and at the same time He lays down the requirements of those who would come to God for salvation. It is the nature of that salvation that every person who would be free from the guilt and penalty of sin, must in a sense offer Jesus Christ to the Father as a sacrifice for their sin.

Abraham's name appears often in the New Testament especially where the subject of faith is discussed. He is considered a man of faith simply because he acted upon the knowledge he received from God, trusting God for the best possible outcome. He never acted presumptuously, but only as directed, and he acted on what he believed to be true about the

nature of God. It is his absolute trust in God and his willingness to act upon that trust which commends him as the Father of those who have faith.

Chapter Seven

God the Romantic



After the death of his wife Sarah, and when he was into his old age, Abraham organized the marriage of his now forty-year-old son Isaac. It was important to Abraham that God be the one to choose his son's wife. He sent his servant on a journey back to Haran to find a wife for Isaac. Now the servant didn't know the Lord personally, as Abraham did, and he was afraid to return with the wrong bride. Therefore, on the way he devised a plan, a kind of test to ensure his success. As he was approaching the outskirts of Abraham's birthplace, he saw many young women at the well drawing water, so he prayed to 'the God of my master Abraham' saying, 'if the girl you have chosen is here, she will offer me a drink of water, and also offer to draw enough water for my ten camels'. This was an almost impossible idea considering that the poor girl would be offering to draw about 600 liters of water from the well.

As it turned out, a young lady called Rebekah spoke the exact words he had prayed and he had his answer. She agreed to marry Isaac, although she had never seen him, and after consulting with her parents she traveled with the servant and married the man God had chosen for her. This story is unusual for people living at that time in world history. Usually marriages were incidents involving money, property and power and a girl had no options but to obey her parents. Also, it was common for a wealthy man to have several wives. The message of this story is that God knows who your ‘other half’ should be, the person who is most perfectly suited to help you develop into the person He wants you to be. Marriage is a sacred union designed by God. When people enter into this covenant it is sealed for life, and like all sacred sacraments it is sealed with blood, the symbol of life. The marriage covenant is sealed through physical union, the two becoming one like the original human being. God’s plan has always been one man and one woman. Ideally, on her wedding night a woman is joined to her husband for the first time and the seal of her virginity is broken when the ‘two become one flesh’. It is God who designed her body this way. Atheists have great difficulty in trying to find a reason in evolution theory for the existence of a woman’s hymen, as it serves no purpose except as proof of virginity. Our Creator is a holy and idealistic God and our bodies have been designed to reflect his holiness.

Unfortunately, the Church has sometimes developed a very negative attitude towards sexuality

because of a misunderstanding on certain Scriptures. The apostle Paul writes extensively about sexual immorality¹ and the idea developed that any form of sexual desire was wrong, even within marriage. Tertullian, one of the early Church theologians, was convinced that even sexual desire for one's wife or husband was immoral; therefore he refused to have sex with his wife except for the purpose of conceiving children. In 1 Corinthians 7, we have some of the Scriptures which have been misunderstood. Paul is giving advice about marriage, and this advice comes within the context of his belief that the Lord will return to judge the world within a short space of time (v29). In Paul's opinion, because the time is so short, a person should not be worrying about marriage and starting a family, but dedicating their life to serving God in other ways. Paul admits that these are his own ideas and not commandments received from the Lord (v25) and he goes on to suggest that a person who is unmarried has an undivided devotion to God, whereas a married person is divided between devotion to their spouse and devotion to God.

It is not difficult to see how this kind of thinking produced convents, nuns, etc. However, in my opinion Paul was wrong. It was never God's intention for people to remain unmarried; indeed the Lord stated right from the beginning that "it was not good for the man to be alone".² The goal of creating humans has always been for us to become like the Lord himself, and indeed this is the primary goal of every Christian. Some of the attributes of God are learned much more efficiently in a marriage than as

a single person. For example, a single person doesn't have to think of anyone but himself. He can do what he likes, when he likes. He never has to share the TV, put up with someone else's taste in music, he can eat what he likes, sleep when he likes, etc. He never gets dragged around shoe shops for hours, he never has to wait to use the bathroom, and generally speaking he can be totally selfish. The married person, on the other hand, has to learn to be unselfish, to put another person's needs before his own, to be a servant as Christ was a servant, and to learn patience, love, self-control, etc.

And what about the Church's attitude towards sexual desire? Was it not God who created sexual desire? Indeed without it people may not even bother to create children. God's first commandment to Adam and Eve was to 'be fruitful and multiply'³. God designed our bodies to both desire and to enjoy sex, indeed there are parts of our bodies which have no other purpose than to give erotic pleasure during sexual activity. It is not sex or sexual desire which God condemns, but the abuse of these gifts. God hates sexual immorality not because he hates people enjoying sex, but because he hates sin and its consequences. God has designed our bodies to be joined with one person, and when we go against his ideal, sexual diseases are created, families are destroyed, and great suffering is created through sin. Millions are dying in Africa because of AIDS and health workers recognize that the key to fighting this disease is in educating people to have high moral values.

Inside every person is a conscience about what is right and wrong in these matters. When you are passionately in love with a person you can become quite obsessed with them, and sometimes you simply cannot imagine ever feeling like that about any other human being. But come home and discover this person having sex with a stranger and your feelings turn to hatred very quickly. We know that sin is sin because we are made in the image of God, and although that image was broken through the Fall in Eden, we still retain many of the ideals of God deep within our being. Until the last 40 years the Church has been afraid to encourage the celebration of sex within marriage and has given many people the idea that God desires to kill people's joy, when the opposite is true.

Is God romantic? I believe that He is the original romantic and that is one of the reasons that He insisted on the Song of Songs being included in Scripture. My grandmother was a very committed Christian; however, she was also a very conservative Scottish woman who held extremely conservative and Victorian views about sexuality similar to the ones we have just discussed. She was too embarrassed to read Song of Songs and used to say that she couldn't understand how it ever got to be included as sacred Scripture. This small book celebrates romantic love. Jewish parents would not allow their children to read this literature until they were 30 years old. Conservative theologians interpret this text as only an analogy of Christ and the Church as his bride, and liberals as a celebration of marriage. I think both are

correct. Jesus Christ chose the analogy of a bride and bridegroom to speak of his Church. He could have chosen any number of other relationship types, but chose the most powerfully romantic relationship. The time when we are most infatuated, when our love is the most blind, and when we feel most passionately willing to sacrifice our own desires is when we are engaged. This is how Jesus Christ feels about his bride the Church. Song of Songs brings out the dedication and adoration of the bride to her bridegroom, and teaches also how much the Lord cherishes his bride the Church.

It is also a beautiful example of God's ideal for romantic love. This passage of Scripture celebrates the beauty of the human body, the passions of being in love, the powerful feelings of sexual desire, and the absolute commitment of one man to one woman. The writer says that the young lovers⁴ were chosen for each other at birth and they have waited all of their lives for each other. Their longing for each other through the years is expressed in erotic language, and finally their friends come and attend their wedding with joy.

Chapter Eight

The Development of a Nation



Isaac and Rebekah had twin sons, Esau and Jacob. They were very different both in appearance and personality. Esau was a red-headed hairy looking guy, a man who liked to hunt, and a man who looked and acted a bit like the imaginary pre-historic man. Jacob, on the other hand, was something of a scholar and indoors person. He liked to hang around with his mother, do a bit of cooking, and scheme ways of depriving his brother of his inheritance. The firstborn son was the one who inherited the greatest share of the property and authority, and Esau had this privilege. Jacob tricked his brother out of his birthright and they became enemies for many years. Esau married many wives from different tribes and from him a great nation of people known as the Edomites developed. He never bothered to consult with his father about his wives and his intermarriage with other cultures meant that the worship of demonic

idols became the inheritance of those who followed his bloodline. Because of his disregard for God, Esau and his descendents play no significant role in the story of salvation.

Jacob took his father's advice and returned to his relatives to find a wife. He fell in love with a girl named Rachel and agreed to work for her father Laban in exchange for her. Rachel was very beautiful, but her older sister Leah was a plain looking girl who was also unmarried. After seven years of work the time came for his marriage to Rachel. The girl was veiled throughout the ceremony, a custom still observed even in Western cultures, and it wasn't until after the marriage had been sealed through sexual intercourse that Jacob discovered he had been tricked by his uncle. The girl he had married was Leah. Laban explained that it wasn't their custom to marry the younger girls before the older, and agreed to give Rachel to Jacob after a week, however, he would have to work for another seven years. The trickster had been tricked; however, the real victim was Leah, for she lived her life with a man who never really loved her even though she served him well as a wife.

Through his wives Jacob had twelve sons and several daughters. God changed his name to Israel and generally, his sons became the tribes of Israel. Israel was a foolish man in many ways, not the least of them being that he loved the sons of his wife Rachel more than the others. He made his son Joseph a beautiful robe and when it became obvious to the other boys that their father loved Joseph more than them, they began to hate Joseph. Joseph was a man who loved

and obeyed God. There was no written law of God at this time, and wouldn't be for another 400 years, however, Joseph had a deep relationship with the Lord and obeyed his conscience in all things. Joseph had a special gift. God gave him dreams which foretold future events and he could interpret these dreams. He dreamt that he and his brothers were binding sheaves of grain in the field when his sheaf stood upright, and his brother's sheaves bowed down to his. He told his brothers the dream and they hated him even more. Then he had another dream in which it appeared that all of his families were bowing down to him.

One day Joseph's brothers decided to kill him but the older brother intervened. When the older brother was away they sold Joseph to an Egyptian slave trader. They kept his beautiful robe, covered it with goat's blood and took it to their father. Israel wept when he saw it, believing that his son had been torn to pieces by wild animals. In the meantime, Joseph was sold to one of the King of Egypt's officials, a man named Potiphar. Joseph honoured God in all that he did and his master recognized that he was an honorable man. Consequently, Joseph became Potiphar's personal attendant and the man in charge of everything he owned. The Egyptian became wealthy through Joseph's work.

Now Joseph was a well built man and his master's wife decided she wanted to have an affair with him. She ordered Joseph to go to bed with her but he refused saying that this would be a sin against God and his master. Every day she tried to seduce him but Joseph did his best to avoid her. One day when he was

alone in the house she trapped him in the room and grabbed his cloak. Joseph ran from the house and the woman, standing with his cloak in her hand, started screaming that Joseph had tried to force her into bed. Potiphar had Joseph thrown into the jail where the king's prisoners were kept. But the Lord was with Joseph and he earned the favour of the prison warden and was given authority over time and eventually the running of the prison.

Two of the prisoners who were there with Joseph had been personal slaves of the Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Both of them had dreams and Joseph asked them why they were looking so sad. They explained that they had had dreams but there was no one to interpret them. Joseph explained that God was the one who could interpret their dreams and he asked them to tell him what they dreamed. He told the Pharaoh's cupbearer that in three days he would be back serving the King again, and asked him to remember him to Pharaoh in order to get him out of the prison. To the King's baker he had bad news. The baker would die in three days. These things happened exactly as Joseph had said, however, the cupbearer forgot his promise to Joseph, and he stayed another two years in the king's prison.

One night the Pharaoh had a strange dream. He dreamt that he saw seven fat, sleek cows come up out of the Nile River and graze on the grass. Then seven ugly and thin cows came out of the Nile and ate the seven fat cows. When he woke Pharaoh was very disturbed by his dream. He fell asleep and had a second dream about grain. In this dream seven

heads of healthy fat grain were devoured by seven heads of weak thin grain. The next morning Pharaoh sent for all of the wise men and magicians of Egypt and demanded that they interpret his dream. No one had any idea. While the wise men and magicians were standing there dumb-founded, the cupbearer suddenly remembered Joseph and told the Pharaoh about how this prisoner had interpreted his dream exactly. Pharaoh sent for Joseph. Pharaoh told Joseph that he had heard he could interpret dreams, but Joseph replied, "I cannot do it, but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires".

So the King told Joseph his dreams and immediately the Lord told Joseph the answer. He explained that God was warning the Pharaoh of what was about to happen. There would be seven years of plentiful harvest when there would be a great surplus of food in Egypt. After this would come seven years of famine so severe that no one would even remember how good it was before. Joseph advised the King to appoint someone to have authority to store up food for seven years in all of the cities of Egypt so that the country wouldn't be destroyed by the famine. Pharaoh decided that there could be no better man for this job than one in whom God had given wisdom, so Joseph became the second most powerful man in all of Egypt, wearing the Pharaoh's signet ring as a symbol of his authority. Joseph was thirty when he became the Pharaoh's servant and Pharaoh also gave him a wife. During the next seven years he built huge granaries throughout Egypt in every city and stored

vast quantities of food, much more than the Egyptians would need in the famine which would come.

When the famine struck, Israel sent his sons to Egypt to buy food. Joseph recognized them and after a time of his testing them he eventually revealed who he was. The dreams he had previously had about them bowing down came true. He forgave his brothers and told them that he believed that God had used their evil for good. It was the Lord who ultimately sent him to Egypt, he told them, in order to save thousands from the famine. Israel, his sons, and their families left Canaan (now Israel) traveled to Egypt and were given the land of Goshen as their home, a fertile valley in Egypt. There were seventy people in all who entered the land of Egypt. For a time they prospered and multiplied, enjoying the benefits of Joseph's legacy.

After a few generations the Egyptian Pharaohs who had known Joseph were long gone. Egypt became extremely wealthy because of the actions of Joseph. Egypt became a world power in the Middle East and its kings became conceited and arrogant. They considered themselves to be gods; they held the power of life and death over other nations. When the Jewish people became too numerous they were forced into slavery. With the wealth Egypt had accumulated its Pharaohs built cities and one of the tasks of the Jews was to make bricks for this purpose. It was around this time that many pyramids were also built. For the next several hundred years the descendants of Israel were slaves. They were perhaps the biggest workforce of the Egyptians, and they cried

out to God daily to free them from this oppression. God eventually decided it was time to take them back to Canaan, to the land promised to Abraham.

Back in Canaan Satan had also been busy. He knew of God's promise to Abraham and he was determined to stop it being fulfilled. To that end he had spent the past 400 years preparing a nasty surprise for the Jews. Canaan was now full of Nephilim, powerful and evil, part human creatures who lived and ruled in different tribes throughout the region. The Nephilim had not spread throughout the world as they did before the flood, trying to bring the entire world under their control; rather they had a single purpose, to stop the people of Israel from inheriting the land God had promised.

Chapter Nine

Moses: His Birth and Call



Our story now centers around the land of Egypt and in particular on the life of Moses. Moses is considered to be perhaps the greatest of Israel's leaders, a man who knew God intimately, and a man whom Jesus spoke about. Not until the ministry of Jesus would the world witness again such incredible demonstrations of the power of God as were performed through Moses. He was a man who spoke openly with the Lord and, it seems, a man who heard God speak as in normal conversation. He was responsible for writing down most if not all of the first five books of the Bible, and it is through him that we come to know God's revelation in the law and commandments.

At the time of his birth, it is about 320 years since the seventy people of the tiny nation of Israel went into Egypt. Many things had changed. The Jews, as we also call them, now numbered in the hundreds of

thousands. There were about five hundred thousand men besides women and children, and this caused the Pharaoh some concerns. Pharaoh was concerned that the Jews may join one of Egypt's many enemies and try to overthrow the nation. Egypt was constantly being attacked by a group that is referred to in their ancient writings as the 'sea people'. They would attack from the Mediterranean and also come into the Nile in boats.

The Pharaoh decided to put the Jews under forced labor as slaves and in this way to try and control them. They were thus treated as subhuman, as Pharaoh's possessions, human animals put to work. What was even worse is that the Pharaoh set out on a course of mass genocide in an attempt to slow their increase in population. He ordered the Jewish midwives to kill every male child born as soon as it entered the world. However, the Jewish midwives feared God and refused to kill children, so they told the Pharaoh's servants that they were never able to reach the mothers until the children had already been born.

Owing to the actions of the midwives, the Jewish people increased in number. Their lives however were very difficult. They were forced to make bricks all day and to build great cities for the Pharaoh. They were allowed little or no rest and they became bitter towards the Egyptians. Then the Pharaoh decided to issue a new command to the people. They were ordered to throw every newborn male child into the Nile River, but to allow the girls to live. It was at this point that God intervened. We are not told of how many children were murdered in the Nile, but

from out of this river which the Egyptians considered sacred, God also brought the leader who would be used to deliver the people from their sufferings and slavery.

Moses' parents were Levites, the tribe which would later be set apart to be the priests of God. When Moses was born his mother hid him, but he soon became too big to hide so she placed her three-month-old son into a wicker basket which she covered in tar. It was like a miniature ark, and like the huge ark before it, it would be an instrument of salvation. Moses' mother knew that Pharaoh's daughter often went down to the river to bathe, so she placed the child and ark in the reeds beside the river's edge and told her daughter to watch and see what would happen. Pharaoh's daughter came to the river, saw the basket, and found a crying young Moses inside. She took pity on the child and decided to keep him. She needed a wet nurse and Moses' sister asked her if she would like her to get one of the Hebrew women to come and help to feed the child. Pharaoh's daughter agreed, so the girl ran and fetched her mother. So Moses' mother was paid to raise her own son, and when he was older Pharaoh's daughter adopted him as her own son and he lived in the palace. Moses therefore received the benefits of Egyptian education, and he was also taught about the God of Israel.

The main events of Moses' life are roughly divided into three equal parts of forty years. At the age of forty he was a well educated man, a prince of Egypt with social and political power. However, he was also aware of his heritage as a Jew. One day

he saw an Egyptian brutally beating a Jewish slave and he intervened. The fight ended with the Egyptian dying so Moses buried the man in the sand. The next day he saw two Jewish men fighting and he asked them why they were beating each other up. One of them asked him if he had been made a ruler over them, and if he was going to kill him as he had done the Egyptian the day before. When Pharaoh heard about this he was furious and decided to kill Moses, so Moses decided it was time to leave town.

He fled to a place called Midian. One day Moses was near a well when the seven daughters of a priest of Midian came to water their flock. These shepherds started harassing the girls and drove them off, so Moses decided to intervene. It would seem that Moses enjoyed fighting, as he managed to get rid of these shepherds and help the girls to water their sheep. No doubt he had been trained as a soldier while living in Pharaoh's palace, and it appears that he was a well build and very able man.

The young ladies reported to their father how this Egyptian had rescued them and he told them to invite Moses to dinner. His name was Jethro and he decided to give Moses one of his daughters in marriage. They had a son and Moses took up life as a shepherd for the next forty years and over that time he came to know the entire area of the Sinai Peninsula very well. Over this period of time the Pharaoh who had wanted Moses dead died himself, but his predecessor was even more cruel. This despot was convinced that he was a god and he recognised no other gods to be greater than himself. He was extremely arrogant and

he worked the Jews brutally hard. The Jews cried out to God for deliverance and God heard their prayers. The Lord had prepared Moses for just this time and now it was time for them to make introductions.

One day Moses was grazing sheep on the mountain of Horeb which was also called the 'mountain of God' or Mount Sinai. He saw an unusual sight. There was a bush that had caught alight, however, the flames were not consuming the leaves. It wasn't uncommon for a bush to burst into flame on a really hot day, yet Moses had never seen a bush burn which was not destroyed. He went over for a closer look. As he approached a voice spoke from within the bush and said his name. He said "here I am", and the voice told him to stay where he was and remove his sandals as he was now standing on holy ground. Then the voice explained that he was the God of Abraham and Isaac, the God of the Jews. Moses was afraid and hid his face, too scared to look at the bush. Then God told him how he was about to bring the Israelites out of Egypt and take them to the land he had promised Abraham and Isaac. And the Lord explained to Moses that he would be the one to tell Pharaoh the news. Moses told the Lord that he was not the man for the job and the Lord contradicted him.¹

Moses asked, "and if the people ask who sent me to Egypt what shall I tell them?"

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM has sent you. Just tell them 'I AM' has sent you and that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has sent you. Go to the elders and tell them that I have decided to bring you out of your misery. However," continued

the Lord, “Pharaoh will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him, therefore I will strike the Egyptians with wonders and powers which I will perform, and after that the King of Egypt will let you go. And what’s more,” said the Lord, “the Egyptians will give you gold and silver and riches, and you will plunder them.”

The name that God used for Himself, “I AM” is another way of saying “I have always been, or I am Infinity, the source of Infinity”.

Moses was still unconvinced that he was the right man to be heading off to Egypt on such a task, indeed this all sounded a bit too easy. So he said, “what if they will not listen to me and say I am not sent by God.” Then the Lord told him to throw his staff on the ground and it immediately turned into a large snake. Moses got a real fright and started to take off in the other direction, however the Lord told him to grab it by the tail and when he obeyed it became a staff again. Moses was then told to place his hand inside his cloak and pull it out again. It was covered in Leprosy, a disease which was seen as sores and rotting skin, and was feared as there was no cure in those days. The Lord told him to repeat this procedure and the hand became normal.

“Do these things, and the people will believe you,” the Lord told him, “and if not, take some water from the Nile, throw it on the ground and it will turn to blood.”

Moses was more convinced than before, but he decided that it was best that he point out another problem. I st, st, st, stutter he said. Now the Lord was

losing patience with Moses. He told him to get going and that he would speak through him. But Moses insisted and this time the Lord got angry. However, the Lord recognised Moses' fear and lack of faith and told him he could meet his brother Aaron and take him with him. Moses would speak to Aaron and Aaron would speak to the people because Aaron was a good public speaker. And so Moses left the mountain and went to find his brother.

Chapter Ten

Into Egypt and Spiritual War



There are many unexplainable things in our world; however, most of us would recognize that there is a realm beyond what we consider to be natural. TV shows like the X Files illustrate our fascination with things we cannot understand, yet try to put labels onto. We speak of the ‘supernatural’, or ‘psychic phenomena’, but most of us believe that there is at least an element of truth in superstitions and the practices of voodoo, witchcraft, magic, clairvoyance, destiny, etc. Scientists throughout the decades have tried to analyze and even to harness such experiences. Experiments have been done on people who seemed to have the power to move objects with their minds, and many thousands of instantaneous healings are claimed by as many people. Others, seeking answers to unexplainable phenomena are turning to the illusive idea that alien beings are interfering periodically into human history.

The Bible talks about miracles and signs. We might call these ‘supernatural phenomena’. We humans are extremely arrogant in how we define things sometimes. We consider that anything *we* cannot do ‘naturally’, must be ‘supernatural’. We make ourselves the measure of what is natural in the created order. But did we create this order? We are not capable of creating even one blade of grass; indeed, if someone did we would call it ‘supernatural’. But our Creator is outside of His created order, and He can rearrange the atoms at any time and in any way He likes. Nature may and does reflect the nature of God’s creativity, but God is not a part of nature in the sense that nature is a manifestation of God. The painting may portray something about the painter, however, the artist remains outside of his creation; he is not lost within it.

Also, there are forces beyond the visible spectrum which are recognised in every culture in our world. These forces are referred to as spirits, demons, evil spirits, familiars, angels, etc. There have been millions of claims that these beings have interfered into the lives of ordinary people throughout the history of humanity, and it seems clear that these creatures also have at least a limited power to change the natural order that God designed for this world.

The story of Moses and Aaron going into Egypt and performing miraculous signs is thought by some to be fantasy, and by others to be absolute truth. For the Jews it is simply historical, however, many modern Jews would likely question the accuracy of the story in regards to the miraculous signs Moses is

said to have done. In this story God is not portrayed as the only one who has the power to control nature, but Israel's God has a rival who can match Him, at least for a while. The writer has not portrayed Jehovah God as the only power, or claimed that all other so-called gods are impotent. The ancient Egyptians were experts in many forms of witchcraft, and some of these forms still survive in African countries. The Bible suggests that until the crucifixion of Jesus on the cross, demonic beings had great power, but since His resurrection their power is limited.

The story of Israel's deliverance from Egypt is to an extent about a spiritual war between God and the gods of that country.¹ If God was not involved in the release of Israel from slavery, then perhaps we are forced to ask the question "What would convince an arrogant despot to release two million slaves?" There was no military revolt or coup; the Jewish slaves were helpless to fight against the trained armies of this mighty world power. And yet Pharaoh eventually let them go. God fought for them because they were His people, and He had made promises to their forefathers. This was not a war between Egypt and Israel, for Israel had no army, no weapons and no opportunity to fight. This was a war between a demonically inspired despot, Pharaoh, a man who was convinced of his own divinity, and almighty God.

Moses and Aaron went to the palace of Pharaoh and gave him God's ultimatum to release the Israelites. Pharaoh challenges them to perform a miracle. Pharaoh wants to see exactly what he is dealing with; he wants to ascertain the level of

power that these two possess. Notice that he didn't ask them if they had an army, he is more concerned about powers that he may not be able to counter or control. When Aaron performed a miraculous sign, the Pharaoh summoned his magicians who were able to perform similar things. In most cases the signs of Moses are more potent than those of the Egyptian magicians; however, the fact that His magicians are able to perform them hardens the Pharaoh's heart. What is also interesting is that the miraculous signs which Moses and his brother Aaron perform are often associated with the gods of Egypt. In this sense God was showing Pharaoh, the Egyptians, and Israelites, that he had power over their so-called gods. The Jews lived in one particular area of Egypt, and God showed His specific directives in that none of the plagues affected the Jews.

The Egyptians worshipped their Nile River considering it to be sacred, somewhat like the Hindu beliefs concerning the Ganges River. From the Nile God brings plagues of blood, a reminder to Pharaoh of the innocent lives he destroyed in these waters. God also brings a plague of frogs which entered the houses of the Egyptians. Egyptians worshipped frogs, so God used these beliefs as a curse against them. Every time God brought a plague upon Egypt the Pharaoh would agree to release the Jews, and then after the threat was gone he changed his mind. During this spiritual conflict some of the Egyptian magicians and officials lose confidence in their Pharaoh. When God warns them of a hailstorm that will devastate their animals and crops, many of the Egyptians get

their livestock under cover. The Egyptians tell their Pharaoh that they are convinced that God is with Moses, however, they only come to this realization when they are unable to perform the same supernatural signs as God is performing. Such is the arrogance of the human heart.

God brings total darkness over Egypt for a period of three days and although this brings great fear to the people, Pharaoh still hardened his heart and refused to let the people go. On the last visit of Moses to Pharaoh, the Egyptian king loses his temper and threatens to kill Moses if he sees him again. It is at this meeting that Moses gives him a final ultimatum. Moses isn't intimidated by this powerful man. He tells him that God will go throughout Egypt and every firstborn son of the Egyptians will die, from the greatest to the least, including Pharaoh's own son. Moses also prophesied that the Egyptians would give their Jewish slaves gold, silver and other treasures.

Moses told the Jews that God would *pass over* their homes and their firstborn would be spared if they followed very specific instructions. This event came to be known as The Passover, for obvious reasons, and is still celebrated in Israel today as the event which finally brought the freedom of the Jewish people from slavery.

However, Passover had much deeper significance. God gave the Jewish people instructions which were symbols for all future generations, symbols pointing to the person of Jesus Christ, His death, and sacrifice for sin. For those in Egypt at this time these symbols were mysteries without meaning, but like

God's testing of Abraham, they were given so that we might know the truth about, and reasons for, God becoming a human being in the person of Christ. These symbols are guidelines to salvation, markers on the road to paradise. The symbols begin with directions about the human condition and then move on to the solution for dealing with that condition. In the next chapter we will see these symbols come alive as we interpret them in the light of history.

Chapter Eleven

Passover: Signposts from God



From the very beginning of human civilization God has used events in human history to foretell, illustrate, and explain the way of salvation. Salvation is only by faith, which simply means that people act upon the knowledge or revelation that they have received, without proof of the outcome. Faith is NOT acting on presumptions, or leaping into darkness without particular certainties. That is simple stupidity and God does not command us to act as idiots. God hasn't made it easy to find Him, after all, He is invisible to us as a being. God doesn't want superficial relationships, therefore only those who seek eagerly, sincerely, even desperately will find truth. The truth is plain to see for those with pure motives, but for the skeptic who is clinging onto his own ego as if it were the greatest prize, the signposts to salvation will flash past his eyes like a driver moving too fast to read

them. If any person will humble themselves and ask God to open their eyes, He will do it; however, the Bible tells us repeatedly that He also actively opposes the proud.

The instructions for Passover can be found in Exodus chapter twelve. Throughout Scripture yeast is used as a symbol for sin. When yeast is used for bread making, it works through the entire lump of dough. When left uncooked the dough turns black. The Bible teaches that human beings have a sin nature, that is a capacity and inclination to do those things which are against the laws of God. Our entire beings are contaminated with this nature. Left unchecked, sin can lead the person into total darkness. God says we must turn away from sin and turn towards Him. This is the idea of repentance, to turn around. Only unleavened bread, that is, without yeast, was able to be used in any religious ceremony, as God was teaching the people that they must clean the sin out of their lives in order to have a relationship with a holy God. The Jews were instructed to clean all of the yeast out of their homes ten days prior to the Passover. They were not allowed to touch any food which contained yeast for this period of time. They had no idea why they were receiving these instructions, but they were warned that if they disobeyed, they would be cut off from the Jewish community forever. We will see why shortly.

The Jews were also ordered to prepare a lamb for a special meal. The lamb must be chosen exactly four days before it was killed. It must be in the prime of its life and perfect in every way. The lamb

must be killed in the late afternoon. They were to take the blood of the lamb and place it on the top and sides of their doorposts. The lamb must then be attached to a forked piece of wood using metal, with its front legs apart, so that when it was cooked over a fire it could be turned. None of the bones of the animal were allowed to be broken. They must eat all of the meal inside and must not share the meal with any foreigner. They must eat the meal while dressed as if ready to leave at once. They must eat it with bitter herbs.

What do all of these things mean? For the Jews who were commanded to do these things, these instructions would have seemed very strange indeed. It is only when we come into the New Testament and the life of Jesus that we can understand the meanings. Of course, we have also many specific prophecies about Jesus' life, death and resurrection to help us verify, but these we will see when we come to them. Let's examine the Passover symbols. I have shown where in the New Testament these symbols are fulfilled some 1,300 years or so later.

1. The lamb was chosen four days before its death. Jesus entered Jerusalem, and was chosen by the people as 'king of the Jews' four days before His death. Luke 19.
2. The lamb must be in the prime of its life, perfect in every way. Jesus is called the 'lamb of God', the sacrificial lamb for sin. He was in the prime of His life and perfect in every way. 1 Peter 1:19, John 1:36.

3. The lamb must be killed in the late afternoon. Jesus was killed in the late afternoon. Mark 15.
4. They had to place the blood in the shape of a cross on their front doorposts. Jesus blood was shed on the cross. Gospels.
5. The lamb must be attached to a piece of forked wood with metal. Jesus was attached to a piece of forked wood, the cross, with metal spikes. Gospels.
6. None of the lamb's bones were allowed to be broken. None of Jesus' bones were broken. John 19: 31-37.

The New Testament teaches that when a person comes to God for salvation they must first turn away from their sins, be willing to live without sin. This is the first preparation and prerequisite to salvation. If a person refuses to do this, then they are cut off from God's community forever, they cannot receive salvation. Such was the symbolism of the unleavened bread and the meaning of the penalty imposed about being cut off from the community of Israel. In order to be saved, each person must be willing to offer God a sacrifice for their sin. This sacrifice is the perfect Lamb of God. Without a perfect sacrifice we cannot attain perfection, and without perfection we cannot ever enter the kingdom of God. When a person accepts that Jesus has died in their place as a sacrifice for sin, God declares that Christ's perfection is placed upon that person and their sins are totally forgiven. This is symbolized by the taking of

communion, eating the bread and drinking the wine, and was symbolized at Passover with the Jews eating the lamb. The meal was eaten with bitter herbs, a symbol of the excruciating pain of Jesus death and the bitterness that sin can bring.

The Jews had to eat the Passover meal dressed and ready to leave. This symbolizes our readiness to leave behind our sinful life and start out on a new journey with God in control. And the meal could not be eaten with any foreigner, just as it is forbidden for any person who is not truly Christian to take communion in a Church, that is, eat the bread and drink the wine. Finally, several families could share one lamb together as God wanted all people, rich and poor to have the opportunity for salvation.

On the night of the Passover death came to Egypt. This was God's judgment on unbelieving people. The firstborn of all who were not covered by the blood of the lamb died, from the poorest to the greatest, including the firstborn son of Pharaoh himself. There was great sorrow in that place and finally the king of Egypt let the Israelites go. In fear, the Egyptians gave them silver, gold and other riches. They begged their Jewish slaves to leave and God led His people into freedom and a new life. They came to God with nothing, slaves without the power to help themselves. Through the blood of the lamb they escaped the righteous judgment of God, they were freed from slavery, and then they received gifts in order to help them on their journey to the Promised Land, Canaan, that place which symbolizes heaven.

Passover is extremely clear in its message to us. We must be willing to leave our slavery to sin, to offer the blood of the Lamb in faith, in order for us to be forgiven and cleansed, and then we will escape the judgment of God against unbelief and faithlessness. We come with nothing, slaves to our sinful desires, and afterward, God gives us gifts, especially that of the Holy Spirit, in order that we can live this new life for Him, while on our journey to the Promised land. However, God never promises that the journey will be easy; indeed it will often seem very difficult. It will be a walk of faith and trust, a new life of learning to rely on Him, rather than solely on our own means. Such was the lesson the Jews were about to learn, lessons which also are given so that we may further understand this story of salvation.

Chapter 12

Learning to Trust



One can only imagine the scene as the Jewish people left Egypt. Four hundred years of slavery and here they were leaving, not poor and destitute, but wealthy and in victory. About two million people left Egypt along with their animals, and headed toward the Red Sea. They must have been jubilant, singing, dancing, celebrating and praising God. They marched out of Egypt and camped beside the Red Sea at a place called Pi Hahiroth. During the day they saw above and in front of them a pillar of cloud, a vertical symbol of God's presence with them, and at night it glowed as a pillar of fire, visible to every person in the group, and offering ample light for night travel.

Meanwhile, back in Egypt, Pharaoh and his officials were having a change of heart. They realized that they had lost an incredible workforce, not to mention untold amounts of wealth. Perhaps they figured that

there was nothing else that God could do to them and their fear of Him diminished. Pharaoh ordered his chariot made ready and a huge army to assemble, including chariots, horsemen, and foot soldiers. They pursued the Israelites to the Red Sea. When the people saw this huge dust cloud approaching and recognised the army of Egypt they were terrified. They complained to Moses, suggesting that it would have been better to work as slaves than to die in the desert. Moses told them to stand firm and trust God. He claimed that the Egyptians they were now terrified of, would never be seen again.

God instructed Moses to raise his staff over the sea in order to divide the water and then the pillar of cloud moved towards the Egyptians and stood between them and the Jews. The Egyptians stopped advancing, they had seen too much of the power of God to risk coming closer. A strong wind began to blow and the sea divided, causing the waters to stand up on either side of a path through the center. Moses ordered the people to walk through to the other side, no short distance. The Jews traveled through the night to the opposite side, and in the morning the pillar of cloud moved back towards them, leaving the path open to the Egyptians. Pharaoh immediately raced towards the Jews on the opposite side, and all of his army with him. The chariots wheels got caught in the mud and started to fall off, and the foot soldiers caught up. They fell into confusion and started to realize that God was fighting against them. When they were all between the shores, God commanded Moses to stretch out his hand over the

sea. It was early in the morning, and as the Jews watched in awe, the huge walls of water collapsed on top of the Egyptians, drowning the entire army including the Pharaoh. None of them survived, and when the Jews saw their bodies floating to shore they were utterly amazed at what God had done for them. They composed a song, had another celebration, and decided that from then on they should trust in God and His servant Moses. As for Egypt, as a nation they were instantly vulnerable to their enemies, indeed, this event opened the door for the Sea People¹ and others to invade.

The Israelites traveled into the desert beyond the Red Sea, the area now known as the Sinai Desert. For three days they searched for water in vain, but finally came to a place they called Marah where the water was too bitter to drink. God instructed Moses to take a particular kind of wood and throw it into the water, which in turn made it sweet to drink. They left there and came to an oasis called Elim, where there were twelve springs of water, and here they took a vacation for a few weeks. It would seem that during this period they also ate most of the food they had taken from Egypt as they began to complain of having nothing to eat. Two million people take a bit of feeding no doubt, and there were no restaurants nearby.

They complained to Moses suggesting that he and Aaron had brought the entire assembly out into the desert to starve; they even claimed they were better off as slaves in Egypt. So the Lord promised them meat that very evening, and the next morning they would have a kind of bread which they would be able

to gather every morning except on the seventh day of each week. That evening a flock of quails came into the camp and the people had roasted fowl for dinner. The next morning they saw what looked like thick pieces of frost on the ground. Moses told them this was the bread God had provided. It tasted like fresh wafers covered with honey. They were told to gather only as much as they needed for each day, and on the sixth day, to gather enough for two days. Human nature being what it is, many people didn't obey. They tried to store enough for several days, only to find that overnight it became full of worms and inedible. Only on the sixth day did the Manna last for two days. God was teaching them to observe one day each week as a day of rest. This was the Sabbath day, a day in which God commanded the people to rest and think about what He had done for them. It was to be a day of worship.

They set out from Elim heading for Mount Sinai. On the way they were attacked by an army of Amalekites. This was a group from Canaan (now called Israel) who had come out to hinder the Jews' progress to the Promised Land and to try and fill them with fear. At this time the Jews were traveling south towards Mount Sinai, and not towards Canaan, so it is most likely that they were especially waiting for the first opportunity to attack them. The Amalekites were related to the Nephilim. Many of them were giants, and none of them were completely human. It appears that Satan's plan was to stop the Jews entering the Promised Land and by doing so, prevent God's promise being fulfilled to Abraham four hundred

years before. The Amalekite army firstly attacked the weak and tired Jews at the rear of the line, killing at will. They were not the entire Amalekite army, but rather a large scouting party.

The next day the Jews confronted this army using what weapons they had plundered from Egypt. Moses ordered Joshua, a young captain, to fight the Amalekites and at God's direction, he went to the top of the hill overlooking the battle and held aloft the staff. While he held it up Joshua's men were winning, but when he grew tired, and his arms lowered, the Amalekites began to overtake the Jews. Moses had two guys help him throughout the day, and by sunset the Amalekite army had been defeated. God ordered Moses to write down the account, and swore that He would erase every Amalekite from the face of the earth. The people had seen a victory over these mighty warriors, however, sadly they would forget this lesson in due course.

Three months after leaving Egypt the Israelites arrived at Mount Sinai, the same place where Moses had first met with the Lord. God then gave the people of Israel the following message. He told them that of all nations on earth, He had chosen them to be His treasured possession. There was a condition. They must keep all of the laws and commandments that He was about to give them. If they did, they would be a nation of priests and a holy nation, a nation set aside to show the world that He is God. Moses conveyed this message to the people and they all said, "We will do everything the Lord has said."

God ordered them to prepare themselves to receive His commandments. They were to clean themselves and to gather at the foot of the mountain, but none were to step onto the mountain. After this time of preparation Moses led them to the foot of the mountain. Suddenly there was thunder and lightning, and Mount Sinai became covered in thick smoke and fire was within the smoke. Then there was a loud sound like a trumpet and the entire mountain shook violently. The people were extremely afraid. They asked Moses to speak to them only, they were afraid that the very voice of God would cause them to die. Moses told them not to be afraid, but that God was testing them so that their respect of His power might keep them from sinning. God wanted them to consider very seriously the proposal and promise they had made to obey His laws and commandments, as He was about to enter into a covenant with Israel, a contract signed in blood.

Chapter Thirteen

The Covenant of the Law



Most civilized cultures have laws and, perhaps not surprisingly, the essences of those laws are similar. In western cultures our laws have been predominately influenced by Biblical laws, however, we could say the same for many eastern societies as well. The Laws that were given to Moses from God are perhaps the most comprehensive list of guidelines, decrees, penalties and safeguards ever written in the ancient world. They cover the basic and international laws for the protection of private property, extra-marital sex, murder, giving false testimony and honoring parents. On top of these are laws covering all manner of circumstances such as social responsibilities, human rights, loaning of money, diet, avoiding diseases, and unlawful sexual practices. In total the Jews were given over six hundred laws. Most of these laws could apply to almost any group

of people and would constitute a sound basis for establishing a well functioning community.

However, there is a large body of the laws given by God which have a very specific function. These laws are connected to the issue of sin, that is wrong motives, thoughts and actions against the holiness of God. God chose the nation of Israel to make Himself known to the world through them. An important part of that process lies in the fact that the laws of God reveal what God is like. The law, then, is part of the self-disclosure or revelation of God's character. When we examine the most well known of the Jewish law, the Ten Commandments, we can see our point illustrated. Here are the Ten Commandments in brief.

1. Have no other gods but the Lord.
2. Do not make idols and worship them.
3. Do not misuse the name of the Lord. E.g.
"Oh my God"
4. Keep the Sabbath day.
5. Honour your father and mother.
6. Do not murder.
7. Do not commit adultery.
8. Do not steal.
9. Do not give false testimony.
10. Do not covet (do not earnestly desire or lust after) anything belonging to another person.

The first commandment reveals God's desire for our affection and allegiance. God created us for intimate relationship with Him. He wants to be number one in our lives. God wants us to love and worship

Him, rather than our being in love with money, material possessions and ambitions. Those things will not prepare us for sharing eternity with Him.

The second commandment is related to the first, however, it includes those things which have demonic origins. Don't make idols. In days past people would worship all number of idols and false gods, indeed many still do. Sometimes demonic entities pose as gods and demand worship in exchange for protection or reward. In the modern world people have other forms of idolatry, such as their ideals. Militant Communists have created a religion of an ideology; some scientific atheists do the same. Post-modernists worship and cherish their plurality and some people pay homage to alcohol, drugs and sex. Anything that demands our attention over and against God's ideals is an idol.

The third commandment is about respecting God's name and many cultures abuse this. The fourth is about taking time to worship the one who gave us life. God wants us to stop relentlessly pursuing money, power, etc., and spend time with Him. The Sabbath regulation was for this purpose. The other commandments are mostly self explanatory, but again, all show us what God is not like, and also reveal some of the fundamental ways which people sin against God's holiness.

The tenth commandment is interesting. It is about coveting and jealousy. It is a sin against God to lust after someone else's spouse, or to jealously desire their property, their popularity or position in life. It is the opposite of the commandment "love your

neighbour as yourself.” This particular sin leads to a host of others, such as adultery, murder, stealing, corruption, extortion, etc., and yet most of humanity is guilty of it.

God then gave the Jews a system of ceremonial worship and sacrifice in order to deal with issues of sin, guilt, forgiveness and purification. He commanded them to make a large tent with many sections, a small prototype of what later became the magnificent Jerusalem temple. He also commanded them to make an exquisitely decorated box called the Ark of the Covenant¹ and within this box His presence dwelt, alongside the Ten Commandments and other items. After the Ark was finished and placed within the most holy and exclusive area in the temple tent, no human hand could touch it without dying. However, the Ark could be carried in public with the aid of rings along the sides in which were placed long poles. Whenever Israel carried the Ark into battle they were victorious.

God then set aside one of the twelve tribes of Israel to serve as priests in the temple and to administer the Laws. These were the tribe of Levites. They were in charge of administering the intricate system of sacrifices for the cleansing of sins, and administering justice to convicted criminals. All of these laws, commandments and regulations, make up what we are referring to as the Covenant in the Law.

Whenever God enters into a covenant, that covenant is sealed in blood. A covenant is like a contract; however, the breaking of a covenant has consequences of life and death. Life and blood are synony-

mous in Scripture, and when a covenant is sealed in blood, the breaking of the covenant is the forfeiting of one's life. In the case of marriage, for example, this covenant is sealed in the bride's blood on the wedding night. God has designed a woman's body specifically to show the sacredness of the marriage covenant, and under the Covenant we are examining, the penalty for breaking the marriage vow through adultery, was death to both parties.

After the laws were read to them the Israelite community entered into a covenant with God. They agreed to obey all of His commandments and laws. Moses sprinkled blood over the entire community as a sign and seal of the covenant, and all of the males were circumcised as a physical sign of the covenant. This covenant promised prosperity, fertility, victory over enemies, food, freedom from disease and overall blessings in all areas of life. However, this covenant had a little word which makes it differ from the New Covenant which would come over a thousand years later. That word is "if". The blessings of the covenant were conditional. "If" the Jews obeyed they would be blessed, but "if" they turned to the worship of false gods and committing the evil practices of other nations, then the blessings would turn to curses in order to turn them around.

Unfortunately, Israel couldn't keep the covenant. Like all people, they sinned and it was for dealing with sin that God set up the sacrificial system. One particular way of understanding sin is the concept of missing the mark. Imagine an archer deliberately missing his target and you have an analogy of sin. He

knows where he should aim, but temptation draws his aim away from the true mark. Through the temple sacrifices a person could receive atonement for sin. Basically, this meant that the crime could be forgiven through a compensation being made. Sin brings with it two things; a penalty and a consequence. Many sins carried a penalty of death, such as adultery and striking one's parent, whereas other sins carried a lesser penalty that could be forgiven through the offering of a sacrifice.

The consequences of sins vary, but one thing they all have in common, and that is a separation from the holiness of God. God's nature cannot tolerate sin, cannot compromise with sin. Even the smallest sin separates us from a perfect and holy God; therefore, in order for relationship to be restored, a suitable atonement must be made. The Bible teaches that the wages of sin is death. There are two meanings to this. The first is obvious, a physical death which we are all experiencing as our bodies decay. The second is a spiritual death, a separation from God. God's holiness demands perfect justice. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and a life for a life. When death is caused through sin, a life is needed to restore the person to God. One cannot even offer one's own life as an atonement, as our life is imperfect and therefore unsuitable as a sacrifice.

Here again I am introducing God's plan of salvation, His signposts to Christ. Every year, a person was commanded to choose a lamb, a perfect lamb without any blemish or spots. They would bring the animal to the entrance of the temple. A ceremony would be

performed in which the guilty person would hold onto the head of the lamb as the priest killed it by cutting its throat. The lamb was a substitute; it gave its life on behalf of the guilty party. The person continued to hold its head while its lifeblood flowed out. The blood would get onto the person and that blood, that life, would cover their sins. One doesn't need to be a genius to understand that this signpost also points to Jesus Christ, the perfect Lamb of God.

Under the Old Covenant a person performed this sacrifice every year, but the sacrifice was a signpost to the future, and although God forgave the person's sins, the blood of an animal could never equal that of a human being to accomplish perfection in that person. Under the New Covenant, which was to be established through the death of Christ, a person would symbolically offer by faith, Jesus as a sacrifice for their sin, for their sin as an individual, and then God would declare that person perfect forever. There would be no more need of sacrifice year after year, and what is most important, once the person was perfected through the blood of Christ, the Holy Spirit of God could enter that person and dwell within them, giving them both the power and will to live for God. The establishment of this covenant was still about 1,300 years away, and the Lord had much to prepare before He would enter into this world and give His life as the Lamb of God. The Jews as a nation would also continue to serve as an example, and often as an example of what not to do. They were about to do exactly that and to pay the ultimate consequence for their sin.

Chapter Fourteen

Unbelief: The Ultimate Sin



The Israelites continued on their journey and finally came to the banks of the Jordan River, the border of the Promised Land of Canaan. It was about 400 years since Israel had crossed this river and traveled to Egypt with his eleven sons to join Joseph. There were just seventy persons then, and now two million were camped on the border of the land which was their inheritance. For us living in the twenty-first century, Israel's journey can be understood as an analogy of the human condition and journey towards death and eternity. All of us enter into our Egypt of slavery when we enter into sin through disobeying God's laws in one way or other. God provides emancipation from that sin, an opportunity for freedom. We have to offer the Lamb of God as a sacrifice for cleansing, and then walk the journey to the Promised Land, believing that God is with us. Then, we can

cross that river into eternal life, into the Promised Land of eternity in paradise.

For the Jews, this wasn't an analogy, but the reality of life. Moses chose twelve men and sent them into Canaan on a mission to spy out the land and bring back a report. They were to check on the condition of the cities. Were they fortified and difficult to conquer, or unguarded and ill prepared for attack? They were to check on the military capabilities of the inhabitants, and they were to see what the land itself was like. Was it dry and unyielding like much of Egypt, or fertile and bounteous? The spies spent forty days exploring the land and returned with evidence that it was indeed very fertile. However, they also reported that the cities were large and well fortified and therefore difficult, if not impossible, to conquer. But what they were most afraid of was the inhabitants of Canaan. They reported that many of Canaan's people were of great size physically; they were descendants of the Nephilim. Their advice was that there was simply no way that the Israelites could conquer these people. Ten of the spies filled the people with a sense of hopelessness and fear. Hopelessness because behind them was the nation of Egypt, and in front a nation of oversized, part demon creatures determined to annihilate them, and fear because in between these two choices was little other than sand and rocks, the Sinai Peninsula.

Two of the spies contradicted this advice. Their names were Joshua and Caleb. They encouraged the people saying that if God had given this land to them, then the inhabitants were already conquered.

If the Lord was on their side how could they lose? Had the people already forgotten the battle against the Amalekites which they had won with the Lord's help? These giants were not invincible. But the people were too afraid. They wanted to stone Joshua, Caleb, Moses and Aaron and choose new leaders. None of this pleased God, indeed one could say that His patience with these rebellious and unbelieving people was running out. The glorious light of God suddenly appeared before the entire community of Israel, and He said to Moses, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all of the miraculous signs I have performed among them? I will strike them down with a plague and destroy them..."¹

Now Moses was never one to walk away from a challenge and indeed he was even willing to challenge the Lord Himself. Moses challenged God about what the Egyptians would say about Him. He reminded the Lord that the nations such as Egypt and Canaan had already seen the power of God, and that He protects Israel by day and night with His visible presence. He told God that if He put all of these people to death at one time, then His enemies would say He was unable to bring them into the land He promised them so He slaughtered them in the desert. Moses then appealed to the Lord to display His strength and character. He reminded God that He is slow to anger (Moses was counting on that), abounding in love, and forgiving sin and rebellion. Moses pleaded with the Lord to forgive these people, just as He had been forgiving them since they left the land of Egypt.

And the Lord did forgive them as Moses asked, however, He swore that none of those who had seen the miracles He had performed for them, and disobeyed would ever enter the Promised Land. God swore an oath that no person who treats Him with contempt will ever enter His Promised Land. God swore that every person twenty years old and over were responsible for their unbelief. All would live in the desert until they died, none of them would enter Canaan. Only Joshua and Caleb would inherit the land God promised to Israel, simply because they were the only two who believed that God would give what He promised.

In this famous story in the life of the nation of Israel there are many issues which we are wise to take notice of. In the New Testament book written to the Hebrews it states that, “without faith it is impossible to please God.”² The Israelites were condemned solely on the grounds of their unbelief, their lack of faith. God had promised them the land. He had given them everything they had asked for and more. They had seen the miracles in Egypt, they had marched through the sea and then witnessed the destruction of Egypt’s elite army, and they had been fed manna in the mornings and quail in the evenings. They had witnessed the winning of the battle against the Amalekite army, so they knew that these ‘people’ could be conquered. They had all of these things as proofs that God keeps His word. They had every reason to believe that God keeps His promises and He had promised them victory. They didn’t know the

final outcome, but they refused to believe Him, to trust Him, to obey Him.

Faith is simply believing what God has promised and acting in obedience to what He commands. Unbelief is the ultimate sin because it suggests that God is unworthy to be trusted, it defames His character, and it calls Him a liar. The Jews were offered life in the Promised Land if they would simply believe God's words and trust Him. The world is offered eternal life in the Promised Land if they will simply believe God's Son and trust in Him. Sadly, many commit the ultimate sin, and like the Jews, God swears that they will never enter the Promised Land, they will never see paradise.

Chapter Fifteen

The Conquest of Canaan



After the death of Moses and a period of forty years, God brought the Israelites back to the banks of the Jordan River. All of those who had stood there and refused to trust God were now dead. Those who had been under twenty years old now had their opportunity to trust Him. Joshua became their leader. God anointed him as leader and gave a sign to the people that he must be obeyed. God ordered the priests to carry the Ark before the people into the Jordan, which was in flood at this time of year. When they entered the river the waters stopped flowing as if the gates of a dam had been closed,¹ so the people saw again the power of God as they entered the Promised Land, and recognised that Joshua was God's chosen leader.

Joshua sent two spies into the city of Jericho to check it out and they entered the house of a prostitute called Rahab. This woman had heard about how

God had brought the Jews out of Egypt and also how the Jews had destroyed the Amalekite army which attacked them on the way to Canaan forty years earlier. She told them that many of the people were terrified of the Jews and their God. When the King of Jericho discovered that the spies were at her house, Rahab hid them and made them promise to spare her and her family's lives when they conquered the city. Rahab later married a Jewish man, and is listed in the human lineage of Jesus Christ.

The conquest of Jericho was rather strange. One might call it a kind of siege, however, a siege without bombardment from catapults or the like. The Lord commanded them to march in a particular order, with the priests carrying the Ark, the army following, and the priests blowing trumpets. This they did once a day for six days. On the seventh day they marched around seven times and then at the sound of the trumpet all of the marchers shouted as loudly as they could. The Bible says that the walls collapsed and the army rushed in and overcame the inhabitants and burned the city. Jericho had double walls and was well protected against siege attacks with an internal water source. The archaeological evidence points to an earthquake as the main reason for the city's collapse, and this may well be true; however, if so then the earthquake happened precisely at the moment that God commanded the Israelites to shout.

Since the early twentieth century various archaeological digs have been undertaken at the site of ancient Jericho. In the 1950s, a British archaeologist named Kathleen Kenyon excavated the site which

had been started in 1907 by a German team, and using modern methods she determined that the walls had been destroyed and burned about 1500BC², however, there is strong evidence to support a slightly later dating which is consistent with the biblical account. A recent team, which according to sources had been trying to discredit Jewish biblical claims concerning Jericho, rediscovered that a part of the wall was still intact, and had never been destroyed by the conquest of Joshua. Incidentally, Rahab's house was built against the outer wall, and her house was not destroyed. Coincidence? Throughout Canaan, many excavations have found evidence of burned cities at the same time as the destruction of ancient Jericho, consistent with a major invasion of a foreign power.

Critics of the Bible often point to the fact that Israel often totally destroyed every person within the cities they conquered. The fact that women and children died, not as a consequence of accidentally being shot, but purposefully, is abhorrent to most people and rightly so. It was very common in ancient times for an army to offer an enemy to its gods as a sacrifice for victory. In such cases no provision was made simply on the grounds that one was a child or a woman. Sometimes people were spared for their workforce potential as slaves; however, the destruction of every person was believed to be the only proper sacrifice to some gods.

This, however, was not the practice of the Jews. The Bible totally condemns the murder of men, women and children in sacrifice, and its condemnation is consistent with Jewish practice. So why do

we have an apparent contradiction in the conquest of Canaan? A close study of those tribes where God demanded total destruction reveals one consistent thread. All of them were related to Nephilim. Every tribe has a Nephilim bloodline. This doesn't mean that they were all giants, but that all had Nephilim blood flowing in their veins. Consider this! The world has witnessed and continues to witness the evil and suffering that human beings can inflict upon one another. It is out of our sinful natures that we desire power and control over others. Every war, rape, murder, and selfish deed comes from the ugly side of our human nature expressing its autonomous ego. And yet humans are capable of love, goodness, self-control and generosity, clemency and mercy, pity and caring; we are not totally depraved in any real sense.

But imagine a being that has no such capability. Demons are incapable of any good thing. By means of their very nature they are totally corrupted. They have no opportunity for salvation for two reasons. Firstly, they have seen the absolute glory of God and His paradise and rejected it, and secondly, they are incapable of a righteous deed or thought. Imagine the nature of such a creature joined to that of a human being, and add also the supernatural powers that such a creature would have to help it manifest the evil it craves to constantly produce. Such were the children of Nephilim. Those who were demon spawn were destroyed by God, because they were a living perversion of creation. They were created for a single

purpose, namely, to turn people's hearts to evil, to turn them away from the love of God.

But the Jews failed to obey God's command and some of the Nephilim offspring survived. We read of other giants in Biblical history. One had six toes on each foot and six fingers on each hand, and of course another giant became famous because of the means of his death at the hands of a young boy called David, the Philistine champion Goliath. In that story, it is the blasphemies against God which the Nephilim descendent is yelling for forty days which enrages David so much. The Nephilim were a satanic creation designed to attempt the destruction of God's plan for salvation. They failed, but this does not mean that some form of these creatures will not appear again at the end of this age. If, for example, demons manifested themselves as some form of alien creature, this would deceive millions of people into rejecting the Bible.

Many people in our time are fascinated with the idea of alien creatures, and this form of thinking has become popular with those who understand that Darwin's theory of macro-evolution is no longer valid as an origin of life on our planet. God may allow Satan to bring a final deception on those who are so desperate to be deceived. At this time some claim that alien creatures interfering in our history can explain all of the mysteries of the world. For me, the Nephilim were simply that, a form of alien creature who should never have been here, creatures who were an abomination to God.

Chapter Sixteen

Kings and Prophets



After a period of the establishing of Israel as a nation, a period in which a group of judges and spiritual leaders governed, the people decided that they wanted to be like other nations and be under a monarchical government. They wanted a human king. God gave them a fighting man called Saul, however Israel's two most famous and notable kings were David and his son Solomon.

David was the youngest son of a man named Jesse. He was a shepherd boy and while his big brothers were away fighting the wars, he was fighting off lions and bears with a sling-shot as he protected the sheep and goats. Israel is in conflict with the Philistines during this period, the 'Sea People' who had previously harassed the Egyptians and finally settled in the land. One of their fighting men was a giant known as Goliath. The two armies were drawn up on opposite sides of a large valley. Every day

Goliath would go down into the valley and taunt the Israelite soldiers, and curse God in such a way as to incite them to battle.

Goliath challenged the Israelites to send down their own champion to battle with him one on one, and the winner would claim victory over the other's entire army. No-one in the Israelite camp dared to fight this descendent of the Nephilim. He was about three meters (nine feet) tall, was heavily armored and well trained in battle. David heard him blaspheming God when he was delivering food to his brothers on the front line. He was infuriated that this creature should be allowed to say such things against the Lord, so he asked Saul's permission to kill the giant. David's only real claim was that God was always with him and that the Lord would help him to kill this abomination. Saul agreed reluctantly, and after unsuccessfully trying to dress the boy in battle armor, David headed down into the valley in simple shepherds clothes.

The giant was highly amused to see a young boy approaching him and even more amused to see that he was armed with nothing but a sling-shot by which he could throw stones. David told the giant and the entire Philistine army that the Lord God of Israel would deliver the giant into David's hands, and that he would cut off his head using his own sword. David loaded his sling-shot and his stone struck Goliath in the unprotected area between his eyes. When the giant fell, David then proceeded to cut off his head.

In this story, David is not commended for his skill with a sling-shot, considerable as it may have been, but rather for his faith in God. He had no doubt that God would help him kill Goliath. He went on to become Israel's king and most prolific writer of worship songs and poems. David was a worshipper, a man who delighted in God, a man whose first passion was to know and enjoy the presence of God in his life. While he was king over Israel, the people, generally speaking, followed the commandments and laws given by Moses. David was a powerful man, in the sense that he was a king, and at one stage of his life he allowed his power to seduce him into adultery and murder. He seduced another man's wife, got her pregnant, and then killed her husband to hide his guilt. God sent a prophet to challenge him and David was driven through his conscience to repent sincerely before God and receive forgiveness for his actions. He lost the child of his affair, a consequence of the sin; however, after marrying Bathsheba, the woman in question, they produced a son who they called Solomon.

Solomon is the king best known for having profound wisdom and also for building the magnificent temple in Jerusalem, of which only one wall survives today. Solomon was a young man when he took the throne of Israel. He was commended by God for seeking wisdom to govern and judge rather than asking for long life and wealth, therefore, God gave him his request and great wealth also. Kings and queens from other nations brought large quantities of tribute to Solomon and for a time Israel was a

wealthy and powerful nation. However, Israel's prosperity was always tied to its faithfulness to God and often its leaders led the nation away from God and into demonic worship.

All people have weaknesses, and Solomon's was women. He disobeyed the decree of God and married women who worshipped demons. The old adage, 'you become like those you live with', manifested itself in his life, and he turned away from the worship of God and toward demonic practices. Solomon had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. He ruled over Israel for forty years. He wrote several books which are included in the Bible and his wisdom sayings are indeed profound and inspired. His worship of foreign gods marked the beginning of a downward slide for the kingdom of Israel. It also marked the beginning of a divided Israel. Over the next several centuries Israel had many kings. Most of them worshipped demonic entities, false gods and idols, leading to an almost total collapse of the covenant system established through Moses. Sometimes the holy temple itself was converted for demonic worship.

But God has always had a voice for the people through various individuals. Throughout this period of Israel's history and right up to four hundred years before the birth of Jesus Christ, God raised up individuals who gave Israel instructions and warnings about their sins. Sometimes Israel listened and reformed, but more often than not they ignored God. Warning Israel of coming judgment and doom was not the only task that prophets performed, they

also gave hundreds of details about the birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ the Messiah. There would be many pretenders claiming to be Israel's Messiah, and also the people themselves would have preconceived ideas of what their Messiah should be like, so the Lord gave all generations precise details so that no sensible person would miss the signposts which point to Christ. If you have a Bible, I invite you check the following references.

In the charts below are some of the most important prophecies concerning Jesus. Biblical references are given of the prophecy in the Old Testament, and its fulfillment in the New Testament. Most of the following Old Testament prophecies are dated between 1000 – 400 BC and fulfilled from 1-33 AD.

Description	Old Testament Prophecy	New Testament
Christ as God and Human	Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given...he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.	John 10:30-33. I and the Father are one. John 14:6-11

Description	Old Testament Prophecy	New Testament
His Birth Place and Eternal Origin	Micah 5:2 But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah...out of you will come for me one...whose origins are from old, from eternal times.	Mathew 2:1 Jesus was born in Bethlehem.
His Year of Birth	Daniel 9: 24-27 Daniel shows that the Messiah must appear an exact number of years from when king Artaxerxes issued his decree.	Luke2:1ff Caesar Augustus' decree verifies the date of Jesus birth.
His Mother will be a Virgin	Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself will give You a sign: the virgin will be with child, will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.	Mathew 1:18-23. Mathew quotes Isaiah here.

Description	Old Testament Prophecy	New Testament
He will go to Egypt, Herod tries to kill Him	Hosea 11:1. Out of Egypt I will call my son... Jeremiah 31:15	Mathew 2:13-23
His Ministry in Detail	Isaiah 52:13-15, Isaiah 53.	See Table Below
Sacrificed for Sin	Isaiah 52:14 His body beaten, whipped and bruised beyond recognition. Psalm 22. Details of crucifixion.	See table Below

In one of his Psalms, (22), king David prophesied about the crucifixion of Jesus in detail. This Psalm was written at about 1000 BC, and crucifixion would not be used as a means of execution for at least another 700 years.

Description	Psalm 22	New Testament Fulfillment
Christ forsaken. His cry on the cross	Psalm 22: 1	Matthew 22:46, Mark 15:34

Description	Psalm 22	New Testament Fulfillment
Mocked and abused by those watching	Verses 6-7	Matthew 26:67-68, 27:27-31
Jesus' trust in the Father ridiculed	Verse 8	Matthew 27:39-44, Luke 23:35, 37
Surrounded by spiritual enemies	Verses 12-13	1 Corinthians 2:8
Physical torture	Verses 14-15	Matthew 27:27-32, Mark 15:16-20
In need of something to drink	Verse 15	John 19:28
Romans nail Him to the cross	Verse 16	John 20: 20,25
None of His bones will be broken. Exodus 12:46	Verse 17	John 19:31-36
Soldiers gamble for his clothing	Verse 18	Mathew 27:35, Luke 23:34
God hears His prayer for help	Verses 20-24	Hebrews 5:7-8

Description	Psalm 22	New Testament Fulfillment
Future generations will hear about Jesus	Verse 31	Acts, Christian History

In Isaiah's book of prophecy, especially chapters 52 and 53, there is a detailed description of the ministry of Jesus. These two chapters succinctly outline that He will be rejected by His own people, He will carry our sicknesses, He will be considered as cursed by God, wounded for sinners, whipped as a punishment for human sin, and that He will not cry out during His crucifixion ordeal. Isaiah also tells us that He will live a sinless life, He will die with two thieves, be buried in a rich man's grave, be an offering for sin and offer forgiveness to all who will trust in Him for their salvation.¹

Those who have read the New Testament will recognize that Jesus fulfilled every prophecy written of Him. He did this in order that people might believe and seek God for forgiveness and salvation. Over the years, many enemies of Christianity have tried to find ways of disproving the prophecies in the Bible, however, none have ever been able to find an answer to how the prophets could be so detailed and accurate. If a person chooses to remain ignorant, that is their prerogative, however, when each of us finally stands before our Creator God, we will have no excuses for rejecting a message which has been made so plain to us.

Chapter Seventeen

Final Preparations



The six hundred year period of Jewish history before the birth of Jesus is extremely important in terms of preparation for His coming. About 587BC Israel was conquered by the Babylonians, the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, and the people were taken into captivity. Israel's prophets had warned them that this would happen because of their worship of false gods, but they refused to turn back to God. This event saw the Diaspora of Jews into many countries. They took their beliefs in the one true God with them and synagogues were established. This was to prepare the way for when Christian missionaries would later enter these areas.

The Persians conquered the Babylonians and ruled Israel from 400-330BC. Many Jews returned home and the temple was rebuilt. This period also marks the beginning of what is called the silent years. There are about 430 years from the last recognised

prophet speaking, and the coming of the Saviour. This is the same length of time that the Jews were in captivity in Egypt.

Then onto the scene comes Alexander the Great, the Greek ruler. For the first time in human history a kind of world culture was created, although it should be recognised that there were other existing dynasties such as that in China. Through Alexander, the Greek language was spread throughout the known world. The Greeks also brought many deep philosophical concepts to this world culture that still influence human cultures globally. This language and philosophy would be used to help people to communicate and understand the meanings of deep philosophical questions about life and death.

After the death of Alexander his kingdom was divided between the Egyptians and Syrians, who both ruled over Israel during this time. The Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes was an evil man who tried to establish idolatry in Jerusalem and who defiled the temple. This led to the Maccabean revolt in 166BC, which secured the independence of the province of Judea. During this period the religious parties of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes were established. The first two would form part of the resistance towards Jesus teachings, and especially against His claims to be equal to God.

Another extremely important development was the translation of the Old Testament Scriptures into Greek by Hebrew/Greek speaking scholars. This very accurate version became the main version used

by the Early Church, and today remains the version by which other translations can be tested.

The Roman period began around 63 BC with Pompey's assault on Jerusalem. From this time on and for centuries the Jews would be ruled by Roman governors or Roman puppet rulers. The Jews were never able to accommodate Roman rule as they had with others. This led to all out war with Rome between 66-70 AD, and the final destruction of the temple which had been rebuilt and added to by Herod the Great. Jesus predicted this event.

Both the temple and the Torah, the Hebrew Scriptures of the Old Testament, played an important role in the identity and lives of all Jewish people. The temple in Jerusalem, at the time of Jesus, covered about 25% of the city of Jerusalem. It was incredibly big and was considered to be the main focus of Jewish life. It is estimated that 10 football stadiums would have fitted inside the temple site, so it is easy to see that it was an impressive structure. There was a court of Gentiles, a place where non-Jews could come, and further in a court of women. Further still was the Court of Israelites, where only Jewish men who were correctly purified could enter. Further in the priests performed their tasks of preparing and offering sacrifices, and in the very center was the Holy of Holies, separated by a curtain 10 centimeters (4 inches) thick. Within this sanctuary was the Ark of the Covenant and only the High Priest could enter once a year to make atonement for the sins of Israel.

In the first century the Essenes, a religious community, lived in Qumran and it is from this

group that we have the Dead Sea Scrolls. These scrolls were most likely buried to protect them from the invading Romans. The Essenes were a selective group who lived life similar to that lived in a medieval monastery. They were a very religious group who were separate from everyday Jewish life, and were especially looking for the coming of the Messiah. There were many pretenders who claimed to be the long awaited Messiah. The Jews knew that the Messiah would come around this time according to the Prophet Daniel's time frame. They also knew that He would be from the line of David, and they expected a human king who would unite Israel and defeat the Romans in physical battle, eventually setting up a holy kingdom of Israel. It was partly due to this assumption that the Jewish leaders rejected Jesus as the Messiah. They could not understand the idea of their 'Saviour' being killed. They wanted a Saviour like Moses, a conqueror, a King like David who would re-establish the empire. God had different plans.

By the time of Jesus the Roman Empire was well established. Roman policy was to incorporate the religions of those Rome conquered. The Romans considered themselves the most religious people alive, and they worshipped many gods. Mystery religions flourished as people were seeking for real meaning in their lives. Rome also gave the world a single currency, and it was possible to travel almost everywhere without a passport. This fact would mean that later on, missionaries like the apostle Paul would be able to take the gospel message almost anywhere

without border restrictions. There was a powerful sense of universalism under the Roman Empire.

The Romans respected anything that was ancient. New things were not trusted. The Roman gods were considered to be organized in the shape of a pyramid – a Greek idea – with the most powerful on top and the lesser ones beneath. The God on top of this pyramid was known as the ‘Logos’, the most powerful and pure creative intelligence. Christian writers borrowed these ideas to help explain God becoming human in the life of Jesus.

For the Romans, two of the most powerful forces were Necessity and Fate. It was thought that external forces beyond one’s control controlled all of life. Moreover, in this world, women and children had virtually no rights. The ‘fates’ decided what you would be born. Women and children were considered to be the property of the husband and father. There were a few exceptions to this rule amongst very wealthy aristocratic Roman families; however, in most cases women had no rights. Divorce was a tragic event for a woman as she would have no source of income, no home, and her children would be lost to her. Women were considered to be unreliable witnesses and generally speaking could not give testimony in a court of law.

Children were to be ‘seen and not heard’. Children had no rights at all and a father had the right to kill his children for various reasons. Roman women were often subject to crude forms of abortion to terminate an unwanted pregnancy. Roman fathers preferred sons to daughters, and it was a Roman practice to

‘expose’ an unwanted child, a practice of leaving a young infant out in the cold in order that it should die of exposure. Many baby girls met their ‘fate’ this way. The Romans predicted the gender of the fetus by dangling a piece of silver over the belly of the pregnant woman and watching which way it turned.

Galatians 4:4 says that when the time was ‘fully come’ God sent his Son. The word translated ‘fully come’ is the Greek ‘kairos’, the ‘most opportune time’. Throughout the East those who read the stars, read the prophecies and examined ancient texts, understood that a great event, unequalled since the foundation of the world, was about to happen. A king was about to be born, indeed, the King of kings, but he wasn’t coming to conquer the Romans – He wasn’t coming to conquer any human Empire – but rather coming to conquer death and sin, coming to establish a path back to God, and also to crush the serpent’s head.

The following chart gives a brief overview of Old and New Testament history as it relates to other cultures and empires.¹

Old Testament History (B.C) Dates are approximate.	Other Cultures and Empires
4000-2200 The Fall, the Flood and tower of Babel	Oriental and Aztec Empires
2200-1700 The call of Abraham, history of Isaac, Jacob Joseph goes to Egypt	First Pyramids built by Egyptians
1700-1250 Birth of Moses, The Exodus, Joshua and the conquest of Canaan	Aryan Migrations Beginnings of Hindu Scriptures
1250-1050 Period of Judges, Othniel, Gideon, Eli, Samuel	Early Babylonian Empire

1050-950

United Kingdom of Israel, Jerusalem made capital (David 1000)
King Saul, David, Solomon

950-538

Divided Kingdom of Israel, Josiah's reforms, Prophets Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Joel Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekial, Micah, Daniel and other minor prophets.

538-400

Jews return from captivity, Nehemiah begins repairs to Jerusalem's Walls, Prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

400-63

Persian, Greek and Egyptian Rule
Maccabean and Herodian (166-AD 37), Greek Version of OT

Assyrian Empire

970 Syrian Empire founded
753 Rome founded
722 Israel captured

Babylonian Empire (Chaldean)

625-538

Jerusalem conquered
586

Persian Empire

538-330

538 Babylon captured by Cyrus
Achaemenian Empire, Parthian Empire, Zoroastrian Tradition

Greek Empire

Alexander the Great's conquests
Sasanian Era

<p>63-2 Pompey (Roman) captures Jerusalem (63)</p>	<p>Roman Empire Julius Caesar assassinated (44)</p>
<p>New Testament History (AD)</p>	<p>Roman Empire Continues Augustus, Tiberius Herod Antipas, Pontius Pilate</p>
<p>2BC -33AD Birth of Jesus, John the Baptist, Jesus' Ministry, Crucifixion Resurrection, Pentecost.</p>	<p>Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian Nero burns Rome</p>
<p>33-70 Paul's conversion, Missionary journeys, Epistles and Gospels Written, Gnosticism, Persecution</p>	<p>Christians persecuted Jerusalem captured, End of Jewish State</p>
<p>70-100 Last Epistles written, Death of Paul and other apostles Persecution under Domitian</p>	<p>Domitian Major persecutions</p>

Chapter Eighteen

The Birth of Jesus Christ



The story of Jesus' birth is well known. Three kings from different lands understood His birth would take place from studying the stars and written prophecies about him. At the time of His birth King Herod was governor of Israel on the Romans' behalf. When the kings entered Israel they explained the reasons for their visit as a matter of courtesy, and Herod had his own scholars search the Hebrew Scriptures of the Old Testament in order to learn where the Messiah would be born. Satan used this man to try and destroy the one who God told him in Eden would "crush his head". Herod ordered his soldiers to kill every male child in Bethlehem up to two years old; he was trying to make sure that the Messiah would never grow up to replace him. Like most Jews at this time, he falsely believed that the promised Messiah would be a warrior king like David. By the time Herod's soldiers arrived, Jesus and His family had

left for Egypt, having been warned by God to leave immediately.

But the three kings were not the first visitors that Jesus had, in fact, the kings were the uninvited guests. The story of Jesus' birth indicates to us something very important about the character of God. The baby Jesus had two groups of guests, one invited and the other not. The invited group were shepherds and the other uninvited group was of course the three kings. Some scholars say that they represent the entire social structure and classes from the bottom to the top, and in one sense this may well be true, however, there is a far more important point to understand here. God could have chosen any family to be born into. Jesus, the King of kings, may have been born into the most wealthy, powerful and influential Roman family, in a palace, surrounded by servants and living in luxury. However, God chose a middle class family. Joseph was a carpenter, an honest occupation. By no means an occupation of high social order, but then again, not one which was despised either. But those who were invited to be the first witnesses of the greatest event in human history were considered - in human terms - to be the lowest of the low.

Shepherds were despised. They smelled like sheep, they seldom bathed, they slept in the open, they were very poor, uneducated, and simple people. They were usually accused of stealing property because they were nomadic. A dishonest shepherd could steal your clothes off the line and leave the same night with his sheep. It was to these people that the Lord sent the angel to invite to see Jesus in

the stable. Why shepherds? Why not some middle of the road people, neither rich nor poor? And why not arrange a room in the inn? Wouldn't it have been better if Jesus had been born in a simple hotel, say about 2-3 star accommodation, an average place? And why not invite middle class people? Say, for example, the baker and his wife, perhaps even the mayor of Bethlehem and a few shop owners? Why these shepherds?

I am thinking as a human being using human ideas. My culture, my traditions, the TV, radio, movies, fashions, education, and upbringing all tell me that success is about possessions, about status, nice clothes, money, etc. All of these are human standards and ideals and incidentally, they are opposite to God's standards. Some people believe that the Lord chose to be born into a poor environment because this was the lowest denominator. They think that if He had chosen a middle class family then anyone lower would be left out, so He went to the lowest to include everyone. This again is using human standards of importance. In order to understand God's standards it is necessary to take human standards and completely invert them, turn them upside down. This will then give you an accurate picture. God chose the highest ideal in His eyes, and the lowest in human terms.

For God, the greatest ideals are servanthood and humility. God chose to be associated with the poor in His birth. I believe the main reason for this is that poverty is associated with humility, and humility is the highest ideal with God. God hates pride and He actively opposes the proud (James 4:6). Wealth and

arrogance are often, but not always, associated. Most certainly the poor can be proud; however, usually those who are poor cannot afford to be arrogant, as they must rely upon others for their existence. The rich need no one. Jesus' entire life expresses the two qualities of servant-hood and humility. For most people, humility must come before they are ready to offer themselves to serve others. Those who are rich tend to serve in order to become wealthier, and the concept of humility remains only a concept that is seldom genuine humility. Jesus was never a materially rich person, as some who love wealth are trying to teach; indeed He never had anything good to say about money.

Jesus never bragged about being a king. On the contrary, He referred to Himself in association with the lowest socioeconomic group, the shepherds. He called Himself the 'good Shepherd', the one who was ready and willing to die for His sheep. Psalm 23 gives a beautiful picture of God as a shepherd, leading His sheep throughout their lives. Those who give their lives into the control of Jesus Christ are called sheep, one of the Bible's names for Christians. Perhaps this is because sheep are simple and humble creatures that must rely upon their shepherd for their existence.

The world and its concepts of 'might is right' despises such ideals as humility. Humility equals weakness and poverty powerlessness. God's ideals invert these human concepts which have their roots in human autonomy and ego. Jesus declared that unless people come to God like children in an attitude of humility, they will never see the kingdom of heaven.

The autonomous human spirit is an enemy of God. It manifests itself in vanity and egoism, in pride and self-worship. Left unchanged it will face a righteous and holy God who actively opposes its elevation of self; left unchanged it will be ultimately tormented and destroyed forever.

Both shepherds and kings came and knelt before Jesus. Both saw a sight which had never been seen before; the Creator of the world clothed in a human body and laying in the food trough of a cow. They recognised Him as the King of kings and they worshipped Him as such. The baby in the feeding trough was both Shepherd and King. The Good Shepherd and the King of Kings. The Kings came to find the King and found a King who was a Shepherd, the Shepherds came to find a baby Messiah, and found the same. Jesus Christ is King and Shepherd for all humanity, rich and poor, but all must come in humility.

Chapter Nineteen

The Message of Jesus



Jesus began his ministry with the proclamation; “The time has come, the Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15)

Jesus’ ‘Kingdom of God, or Kingdom of Heaven’ sayings have two basic elements to them. Jesus claimed that the kingdom was present as He was present; however, the kingdom was also a future event. Theologians call this the ‘now and not yet’ message of Jesus. The kingdom of God is both an experience and a place, a power for the present, and a promise for the future. It is all of these things, and perhaps this is why many misunderstand Jesus’ essential message.

The ‘now’ aspect has two basic meanings. Firstly, that Jesus’ arrival meant that God’s kingdom had come in the sense that the power of God’s kingdom, which would be demonstrated in the life and ministry of Jesus, was here on earth with Him. Jesus brought

the power to heal the sick, possessed, lame, blind, deaf, etc., a demonstration which showed His power over death, disease and demonic entities. Secondly, the kingdom of God would enter into the very souls of those who believed Jesus' message and committed their lives into His hands. They would live in this life with the kingdom within them. This would happen after He returned to Heaven and sent the Holy Spirit to establish the New Covenant.

The 'not yet' part is simple. Those disciples of Christ who have the kingdom within them in the form of the Holy Spirit are still not physically with Christ while they are alive on this planet. They have a guarantee or seal upon them, however, they have 'not yet' entered into the Kingdom of God which is their inheritance with Him for eternity.

To prepare people to receive the Kingdom, Jesus commanded His listeners to "repent and believe the good news." Repent is a term which simply means to turn around and change your direction. In this context it is to turn away from sin and go towards God, to leave our own desires, which lead to sin, and move towards His will which leads to holy living.

The good news statement is very important. To claim that there is 'good news' presupposes that there was 'bad news', and that is precisely the case. Over the previous chapters we have seen how the Jewish people were commanded to keep all of God's commandments, decrees, and laws, over six hundred of them. This was the Old Covenant in the law, and the sign of this covenant was circumcision. It was impossible for people to keep these laws perfectly,

therefore sacrifices had to be made, and for those who refused to repent, various curses came upon them. The Old Covenant was 'bad news' for those who tried so desperately to keep it. Furthermore, there were never great numbers of Gentiles breaking their necks to commit themselves to this covenant, especially among males, as the prospect of adult circumcision was hardly an incentive to convert to Judaism.

The bad news was that individuals had to earn and keep their salvation by trying to live exemplary lives. The good news is that Christ has lived His life for every person, and those who give their lives to Him have His perfection transferred to them. One Covenant is about what every person *must do*, the other covenant is about what one person *has done*. In both cases the person must have a desire to change and live for God (repent), but, only in the New Covenant, the 'good news' is this truly possible.

And there is one other major difference between these two covenants. Under the Old Covenant people had to rely upon their own strength of will in order to try to be holy. The Holy Spirit could not enter into the souls of people who were still imperfect through sin. The blood sacrifices of animals could not change the actual sin status of the person. The blood of Jesus' sacrifice is wholly different because He is holy different. When Jesus' sacrifice covers the sinner, the sinner is made perfect in a spiritual sense, and at that point the Holy Spirit of God enters into their soul. This is not a mere theoretical idea, but an existential encounter, a very real and powerful experience. From that point on in their life, the new Christian has

the power to live for God, the power to leave their life of sin behind them. That is 'good news' indeed.

What most people do not realize is that there are two main conditions for entering God's Heavenly Kingdom. No-one, who is not perfect, can ever dwell in the absolute presence of God. We saw how Lucifer and those angels who rebelled were put out of heaven after they sinned, and we saw how Adam and Eve had to leave Eden for the same reason. In the same way, those who are not absolutely perfect in regard to sin, can ever enter heaven, indeed God's holiness would simply destroy them. That is the 'bad news'. A person may be 'good' in human terms. We may compare ourselves with notorious criminals, murderers, rapists, pedophiles and the like, and we may look good compared to such people, but the bad news is that 'goodness' is not good enough.

God's standard is no less than perfection and that perfection can only be gifted to a person, never earned. We may earn praise from God for doing good deeds, for being a good neighbour, and for living unselfishly; however, perfection can never be earned because the imperfect cannot achieve perfection. Once perfection is lost, it is forever lost, it can never be undone by the individual. I am speaking in spiritual terms here. God demands a blood sacrifice to destroy sin because sin brings death. Sin must be punished! What sane person does not get angry when those who have done disgusting crimes go free and unpunished? Justice demands punishment for sin, and rightly so. Sin leads to spiritual death. Jesus offered His own life to be killed as a punishment for

every sin ever committed. God the Father accepts this sacrifice as a punishment. Under the Old Covenant a person had to offer a lamb. The death of the lamb, its life-blood, gave the person forgiveness, but could not impart perfection.

If a person offers Jesus as a sacrifice for their sin - the 'Lamb of God' - then His death, His life-blood, gives them forgiveness, and also imparts a status of spiritual perfection to them as a guarantee of their acceptance into heaven. That is the 'good news'.

The second condition is love. The Bible clearly states that God is preparing a place for those who love Him. I often meet people who would not claim to be practising Christians, and yet say that they want to live in heaven. It is remarkable how many people judge themselves to be good enough to go to heaven, and yet fully confess that they do not know God at all. For such people, heaven is better than the alternative destination, hell. Such people are seeking only for a fire escape, although just as many don't believe that there is such a place as hell.

I cannot imagine that any sane person would go up to a total stranger and ask the stranger to marry them. Common sense says that one should court and get to know a person you intend to live your entire life with. One might also suppose that being in love would be a good way to start a marriage. If one requires courtship and love for perhaps a fifty-year commitment, then why would people consider living with a total stranger for eternity?

A relationship is always two-sided and God also has His point of view. The Scriptures clearly teach

that God is not interested in some shallow relationship with people. He wants relationships which are deep, passionate, intimate, and powerfully life-changing. God's love for us is unconditional and beyond measure; indeed, love sums up the whole reason for the existence of all that exists. Human beings pro-create and bring children into the world in order to love and be loved. We are not satisfied with shallow, pretentious relationships with our children, so how can people expect that God would desire any less in our relationship with Him. It is in understanding, acknowledging, and accepting Jesus' incredible sacrifice for us that begins that relationship. It is in our recognition of the immeasurable depth of God's love for us that we can begin to fall in love with Him and return His love.

Such is the message of Jesus; such is the 'good news'.

Chapter Twenty

The Teachings of Jesus



Jesus' teachings were different than anything anyone had ever said before. Sometimes He seemed to teach things which are impossible, such as the commandment to love our enemies, to turn the other cheek, and to pray for those who do evil to us.¹ How can ordinary people achieve such things? The answer to that question is that we cannot do such things naturally. One would need to be divine to forgive and love enemies. Can human beings become 'divine'?

Jesus' teachings were revolutionary. However, this was not a military revolt, but a turning upside-down of human principles. And Jesus nearly always spoke in parables, telling stories which had a meaning, a meaning which was not always obvious, and this He did on purpose. To the humble of heart His words turned on the light in a dark room, and to the proud His sayings were foolish. To the person who desper-

ately wanted to experience the love and salvation of God, His words were the sweetest music ever played, but to the religious hypocrite, they were a sound they couldn't bear to hear.

He never gave a formula for becoming a Christian. He never said that believing in God, going to church or being christened as a child would save you, in fact He made it abundantly clear that being a Christian would have a personal cost, a cost most people were, and are, not willing to make. He never taught that we are born sinners; He never said that children who are not christened will go to hell if they die. On the contrary, He said that unless adults become like children in their humility, that they would be the ones missing out on heaven. He never told men to call themselves father, cardinal, archbishop, his holiness, or reverend; indeed, He said to call no man your spiritual father, and all of His opposition came from those who considered themselves as righteous religious leaders.

Jesus painted a portrait of God the Father which was much different to the Jewish leaders of His day, and often much different from what some who have called themselves 'christian' have claimed God to be. Jesus' portrayal is of a loving Father who longs to heal His children, waits and watches for them when they leave home, forgives every sin of the sincere and repentant person, and is preparing a wonderful eternity for those who love Him. Some understood, but many did not, and when He confronted the arrogance of the Jewish religious leaders, they began to plan His death. But not all of them.

One night a Pharisee, a member of the ruling Jewish council, came to Jesus in secret to speak with Him.² His name was Nicodemus and He was convinced that Jesus was from God because of the miracles He had performed. Jesus told him that ‘unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven’. This statement seemed very strange to Nicodemus who rightly said that an old man cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb. Jesus went on to explain that there is a physical birth and a spiritual birth, a birth from flesh and a birth from above.

Nicodemus was a man that everyone respected. He was the kind of guy you wanted in your church, on your local council, or as the archbishop or pope. He was very religious, and not a hypocrite like so many of his contemporaries. He was a priest, a teacher, and he dressed as such. Yet Jesus told him that if he wanted to enter and experience the kingdom of heaven, then he would need a re-birth, another birth. It was not enough to be a really good man, not enough to be a priest or the equivalent of a cardinal or archbishop, and to Nicodemus this most likely came as a bit of a shock. Jesus then went on to explain to Nicodemus that any person who believes on Christ for their salvation will receive the Holy Spirit and be born again. It is not enough to merely believe *in* Jesus, millions do that who don’t know Him at all, rather, one must put their life into His hands, hand over control, give their life to Him so that He can give back a new life, a new birth.

Sometimes crowds were following Jesus as if they were ready to follow Him to the ends of the

earth. He would turn to them and challenge them about the cost of being His disciple.³ Jesus never suggested that there would be true Christians who were nominal believers. He spoke only of disciples, people who recognised that finding the way to heaven is the single most important thing any human being can do. There is no distinction between disciples and believers in the Bible, such things are human traditions which were created later. For Jesus and the New Testament writers, being a Christian and a disciple are one and the same, a radical change of life.

Jesus used many ways to express the same idea concerning what it meant to be a Christian. He told Nicodemus that he must be born again and he told the crowds that if they wanted to be His disciples, they must take up their cross and follow Him (Mark 8:34-38). Jesus was not suggesting literally that people must be crucified to become a Christian, but He was using a symbol of death to describe the meaning of being born again. It is the self which must be surrendered to God, the human will must be prepared to submit to God's will. In his letter to the Galatian church, the apostle Paul, who was formerly a persecutor and accomplice to murder, stated that his ego had been crucified with Christ and his ego no longer lived, rather his life was under the control of Jesus Christ.⁴

Those who commit crimes on Monday, commit adultery on Tuesday and then think they can confess to a man who calls himself 'father' on Wednesday, and go back to their sins on Thursday are not Christians. They are people who have a convenient form of man-made religion which allows them to live as they

please. Jesus warned that those who are His sheep hear His voice and obey His commandments. They have surrendered their lives to Him, they have been filled with the Holy Spirit, and they joyfully live for Him growing more in-love every day.

Some may call such people fanatics, however, the same people know in their hearts that such people love and worship Christ. Jesus broke many so-called rules of men and made many enemies because of this. His teachings were radical and all consuming. He took the laws of Moses and made them apply to the heart of a person rather than religious rules to be observed and abused. God is no fool. If you are in love with sin rather than truth, then sin is your master.

Chapter Twenty One

Evidence and Miracles



Of course, one could say that if a person called Jesus Christ never existed, lived, was crucified and rose again from death, then all of the above can be disregarded. How one explains the prophecies in the Old Testament becomes a problem for such a theory, however, perhaps some verification about Jesus is in order.

Over the past 200 years, the New Testament part of the Bible has been subjected to intense scholarly research in order to ascertain the truth of its claims. Many various literary tools such as textual and form criticism have been used to study the authenticity of New Testament texts. Researchers also study non-biblical writings of people who were not Christians, such as Josephus the famous Jewish historian, letters to Roman Emperors and the like. What all of these indicate is that there was most definitely a person called Jesus who was crucified by Pontius Pilate

around the year 32AD. The more important question relates to who Jesus really was. If He was simply a good teacher, or a moral example with some new and radical ideas, then we can take Him or leave Him, we can choose to follow any such teacher and there are many available.

On the other hand, if He was the only Son of God and equal to God, and the one through whom God created the universe as the Bible claims¹, then His words about what we must do become extremely important. The Old Testament prophesies that the Christ will be God, equal to the Father God.² Jesus claimed that He was this person. According to the records of His life in the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), Jesus claimed that He was God's Son, equal to God and He pointed to the things that He did as proof of His claims.

In theology and everyday life we use certain logical criteria to determine the nature of a thing. We can know its nature by what it does. A dog is a dog if it barks, wets your tires and smells bad when wet. A bird is a bird if it has feathers and lays eggs. We determine the nature of these creatures by their functions. When we use this formula to determine the nature of Jesus Christ, we can come to only one conclusion. Yes, He was a human being who became tired, hungry, felt pain and could be tempted, but on the other hand, only God can raise the dead, heal a man with leprosy and walk on water. The human part of this equation is easy enough to accept, but what about the miraculous part? Is there any evidence that Jesus did the miracles He is claimed to have done?

What if His disciples made up these stories as some have claimed?

Let's begin with the disciples. Israel is an occupied territory at this time. Jewish people are expecting that God will send them a Messiah who will defeat the Romans and Israel will become the ruling nation of the world. Over the past 100 years there have been many claiming to be this messiah. They have raised armies and been defeated, and another has taken their place. The proof that these claimants were the true Messiah would be their success, but none have been successful.

Furthermore, Jewish people knew the Law of Moses. They would not make an image or carve a sculpture of an animal or created object; they knew that they were forbidden to worship idols or demonic gods. To worship a human being was absolutely forbidden, to claim that one was equal to God was blasphemy, a crime punishable by being stoned to death. Jesus disciples were godly Jews. Some of them had been disciples of John the Baptist. To suggest that such men would create false stories to create a Messiah is ridiculous in the extreme and shows a total lack of understanding about the attitudes of such men. There was no reason to create lies and every reason to tell the truth. If Jesus wasn't the true Messiah, then why not simply wait for the right one to come along, as many orthodox Jews who misunderstood Jesus are still doing today? Jews had been taught from birth that to do something totally against God's will would only bring His wrath upon you and your plans would ultimately fail.

The gospels record the embarrassing fact that even though they were with Him for three years, Jesus' disciples still didn't really understand His mission until after He was crucified and resurrected. They still had the earthly kingdom mentality, they expected Him to overthrow the Romans.³ When He was arrested and tried by the Jews and Pontius Pilate they deserted Him, and when Mary Magdalene told them He had resurrected they didn't believe her. Some of them went back to their fishing, no doubt very confused about what had happened. It was the risen Christ and their recognizing a right understanding of the Old Testament prophecies and then the coming of the Holy Spirit who brought absolute clarity of understanding, that changed these men into the leaders of the Church.

Over three years Jesus disciples saw and experienced things which made them incredibly excited about who He was. The miracles themselves were absolute proof that God was with Him in a way that was greater even than Moses. Imagine their confusion when Jesus was crucified. How could their Messiah King, a man who seemed to have unlimited power, be crucified as a common criminal? These were not men who wanted to make up lies, they were men who had preconceived ideas which changed through the power of their experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit and seeing the risen Christ.

And what of the miracles? It is actually very easy to verify Jesus' miracles through his enemies rather than His disciples. Throughout the gospels we read about Jesus' opposition to the ruling Jewish religious

leaders, the Pharisees and Sadducees. To them, Jesus was a law breaker and blasphemer. Jesus healed on the Sabbath and when they confronted Him He would ask them embarrassing questions and make them look foolish. On one occasion when He was in a synagogue, Jesus asked the Pharisees if they would pull their child out of a well on a Sabbath if the child had fallen in. The answer was obviously yes. He then proceeded to heal a person in front of them. The Pharisees never denied that Jesus had incredible powers. They saw the miracles themselves, even miracles which they themselves had claimed only God could do, but they accused Jesus of using demonic power, they said He healed and exorcised people with the power of Satan.

After the Church began to grow and be persecuted, many pieces of literature appeared which were written to discredit Jesus. One such document is reasonably well known and called the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*. In this gospel is a story about Jesus when He was a little boy. On a Sabbath day Jesus is playing at a little stream with another boy. Jesus makes a dam to stop the flow of water and He also makes twelve sparrows out of clay. A person fetches Joseph and confronts him about letting his son break the Laws of Moses. As Joseph approaches Jesus says 'be off with you' and the clay sparrows come alive and fly away. The other boy then breaks Jesus' dam releasing the water, and according to this gospel the following happens.

When Jesus saw what he had done he was enraged and said to him: "You insolent,

godless dunderhead, what harm did the pools and the water do to you? See, now you also shall wither like a tree and shall bear neither leaves nor root nor fruit.” And immediately that lad withered up completely; and Jesus departed and went into Joseph’s house. But the parents of he who was withered took him away, bewailing his youth, and brought him to Joseph and reproached him: “what a child you have, who does such things.”⁴

The writer of this story is trying to make this account appear true by using the well known accusations of the Pharisees. The Pharisees had claimed Jesus was a lawbreaker and in this story Jesus breaks three of the Ten Commandments. He works on the Sabbath, He makes clay sculptures, and He murders a little boy. But notice the section about the tree. In Matthew 21:18 we read the story about Jesus cursing a fig tree which had no fruit. This was the only miracle that He did which could be considered to be negative in its outcome. All other miracles helped people, but this one was done to show the issue of the destruction of faithless people on judgment day, the role Jesus will fulfill as judge in the future. The writer of Thomas has used this miracle to suggest an evil side to Jesus, and the wording is extremely similar to the gospel account, however, notice the mistake. He writes that the boy Jesus says “see now you ALSO shall wither like a tree...” But the withered tree was later when Jesus was about 30 years old. The boy Jesus is supposed to be saying that the

boy will wither *as well as* the fig tree, and in writing this way this person shows that he knew the story of the fig tree but made a silly mistake because that was a future event for the boy Jesus, not something which had already happened.

This is only one example and yet it shows some important points.

1. That Jesus' enemies recognised that He had incredible power to do miraculous things.
2. That Jesus' enemies knew about His life well and tried to use the one negative miracle to prove He was not from God, as God's Son would never break God's laws.

So what is a miracle? One definition is that a miracle is something which happens that cannot be explained by our usual understanding of the laws of nature. Philosophers like Baruch Spinoza suggested that since the laws of nature are unchangeable, then miracles do not exist. It was also suggested that everything can be explained in scientific terms, and if miracles are unexplainable by nature, then they do not exist. The problem with this kind of thinking is that it places the laws of nature and science as gods. It makes them the judge and jury of what is true or false. If nature was its own creator, and science its only evidence, then perhaps this argument would work. However, if nature was created by some being outside of it, then that Creator is not bound by the laws of nature, rather He created them for His own purposes. If God creates laws by which nature

remains to a certain degree orderly, does this mean that He can never do something outside of those laws, even to make a point?

This particular argument also applies to humanity as a whole. Human beings are part of the created order. We are not 'supernatural' beings, indeed our bodies are made of the same stuff as the natural world around us. If a human being can supposedly do things which are outside of the natural order, then it is a logical assumption that the power to do such things is not natural to the person, but coming from another source. In this sense, those who advocate that people have some kind of hidden powers which can be developed make such claims in contradiction to the natural order. Human beings as part of the natural order are bound to the laws of nature.

Another definition then suggests that a miracle is when God intervenes and temporarily breaks the laws of nature. However true this may be, it is still too narrow a definition. The Bible is quite clear about the fact of other beings, namely demons, performing miracles through human agents such as the magicians of Egypt. A miracle, then, is an event which generally at least appears to happen outside of the normal understanding of the laws of nature, and the power to perform the miracle comes from a source which is also outside of nature, a force which is supernatural.

Let's examine one more example. In a well known story in the gospels⁵ Jesus feeds a crowd of about 15,000 people. He has already healed their sick, and upon seeing these miracles the people, and disciples, are convinced that He is the Messiah King and they try

to force Him to announce Himself as Israel's earthly monarch. Jesus sends the crowd away and orders the disciples to cross the lake in the boat. He then retires into the hills to pray. Sometime between midnight and morning He comes down from the mountain and walks out to the disciples on the water. They are struggling to row against a strong wind. When they see Him coming they think He is a ghost as He is most likely glowing with God's glory. Even though they had seen Him just a few hours earlier they don't recognize Him. The gospel writers tell us they were basically screaming with terror, they thought they were going to die.

Jesus tells them not to be afraid and Peter asks if he can walk to Jesus. After Jesus gets into the boat the disciples do something that no Jewish man would ever do. They get down on their knees before Him and worship Him as God. Their reaction was due to what they had witnessed. He had healed the sick, He had fed thousands of people, He had walked on top of the water, and therefore, His actions confirmed to them that His nature was Divine. At this moment the only appropriate response was to worship Him as the Creator of the world for He had proven to them that He was in some mysterious way outside of the created order.

Chapter Twenty Two

Death and Resurrection



The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the event which separates Christianity from all other spiritual beliefs. If Jesus simply died and stayed dead, then He is just another dead spiritual teacher, just another prophet like Mohammed, Buddha, and others. However, if he has risen, if He returned from death in his own body, then He is unique, and the claims He made about Himself must be taken seriously. Some suggest that Jesus never rose from death and that His disciples invented this story. Jesus had claimed that He would be resurrected and His enemies, the Pharisees, tried to prevent the possibility by asking the Roman governor to seal and place a guard at his tomb. When Jesus' body disappeared, the guards having failed to prevent this occurrence, the Pharisees then spread a rumour that Jesus had never truly died, but been taken out of the country in secret, and that He married Mary Magdalene and had

children, possibly living in Kashmir (Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code* perhaps borrows from this idea).

Before we can answer questions about a resurrection, we firstly need to establish that Jesus truly died. The first point we can make is in understanding the efficiency of the Romans. The Romans were professional killers. They tested to see if a person being crucified was dead by piercing their abdomen with a spear. When the body dies the blood and water separate; when still alive the blood is mixed with water. In John 19:32-37 the eye witness mentions the Romans testing Jesus body in this way. If the victim wasn't dead the legs were broken so that the person suffocated immediately. John testifies that Jesus was dead, not to prove that He had died, but to show how He fulfilled prophecies about being pierced with a spear and his bones not being broken. John didn't realize that people would ever question that Jesus truly died on the cross. The idea of Romans not doing the job properly would have been ridiculous to John.

Secondly, Pilate himself ordered a report on the death, and he ordered the Roman guard at the tomb. The Roman guards who were on duty that night would have been in serious trouble for losing Jesus' body. Roman soldiers did not just fall asleep when executing Pilate's own commands. Matthew claims it was an angel who rendered them unconscious. Taking all of these facts into account, we can safely assume that Jesus was dead.

But what of the disciples' claim that He came alive again three days later. The main objection to

this claim is that the only written accounts are the gospels, although there are more than the Bible's four which make the claim. For our purposes we will confine ourselves to the four gospels, and the Apostle Paul's account in his letter to the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 15: 3-8). As we read the gospels and Paul's account we discover that some of the details given appear to contradict each other. If the accounts are different, then which one is correct, and if they cannot agree should we disregard them all? These are serious questions.

The chart below points out some of the main differences between the gospel accounts.

Gospel	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
1 st Witness	Magdalene	Magdalene	Magdalene	Magdalene
Women	Two	Three	Several	One
Time of day	Dawn	After sunrise	Early	Still dark
Angels	One	One	Two	Two
Earthquake	Mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not Mentioned

As shown, we can summarise the table as follows. All agree that the first witness to the resurrection was Mary of Magdalene. There is disagreement about the number of women with Mary, the time of day that the women went to the tomb, the number and placement of angels, and the earthquake. It is possible that the angels may have moved about which would explain

this difference, however, the names and number of women, other than Mary, are too different to reconcile. It is also impossible to reconcile the women visiting the tomb after sunrise and while it was still dark. It would appear that at least three if not all of the disciples got some of the details wrong. Considering the fact that these accounts were written at least twenty years after the event, this is not surprising. The disciples generally speaking had the impression that Jesus would return within their own lifetimes. When time past and it appeared that this was not going to happen, they wrote the gospels as a witness to future generations. However, a deeper investigation and understanding of the cultural prejudice of the time reveals some powerful points.

The apostle Paul had the task of preaching to Greeks and Gentiles throughout Asia Minor. In his first letter to the church at Corinth he writes an account of Jesus' resurrection. This was almost certainly written before the gospels.¹ There is one glaring omission in this account. Women! Paul never mentions women to his Greek speaking audience, and for good reason. At this time, as in much of human history until recently, a women's testimony was considered almost worthless. The English word for 'testify' comes from the word 'testes', from which we take our English word for a man's reproductive organs, 'testicles'. The connection is simple. Without 'testes' you cannot 'testify'. Even today in some Moslem countries one man's testimony is considered equivalent to five women, a similar cultural perspective as in Paul's time.

Most of Paul's audience did not believe in the idea of a resurrection. If Paul had told them that the first witness of the resurrection was a woman they would have laughed at him. If he had added that she had previously been possessed by seven demons and had most likely earned her living as a prostitute, he would have been run out of town as a fool. Paul understood his audience would react unfavourably to the fact of women being some of the key witnesses, so he simply omitted them, although what he says about the men is quite accurate.

It is interesting that the single detail which every gospel writer remembered accurately was that Mary of Magdalene was the first witness to Jesus' resurrection. When Mary told them the Lord had risen, they didn't believe her, even though Jesus Himself had promised this would happen. It is no accident that Mary was the first to see Jesus. He waited until the male disciples had left before appearing to her for reasons which we cannot know for sure.² Perhaps it was to test the other disciples' faith, perhaps it was to elevate the position of women and perhaps it was just like God to honour this changed woman who loved Him because of the forgiveness she received. Like the shepherds who were invited to be witnesses of Jesus' birth, Mary was a social outcast until Jesus changed her life. I believe the disciples were extremely embarrassed that they had refused to believe her, and so they all remembered the important detail that she had been the one to tell them, especially when Jesus appeared to them shortly after Mary's proclamation.

In Paul's account the most respected people are mentioned by name, including the Lord's brother James who was a public figure in Jerusalem. Paul's was most likely the first account written, so why didn't the disciples simply follow his example and leave potentially embarrassing details out altogether? The answer is clear. They wrote their accounts as accurately as they remembered, they didn't try to make the story more credible for their readers. Neither Paul nor the gospel writers invent anything; the gospel writers simply write what they recall, and Paul chooses to leave out potentially embarrassing details. If the disciples had wanted to invent a story surely they would have chosen highly respected people, perhaps a Pharisee or two as there were some Pharisees who believed in Jesus such as Joseph of Arimathea, the man who provided the tomb where Jesus' body was laid. It is also perfectly obvious that they didn't sit around a table together inventing a story and making sure all of their details were exactly the same.

We may not, by logical argument, prove that Christ has risen; indeed that is an existential experience one needs to encounter for oneself as did the apostle Paul and millions of people over the past 2,000 years. However, we can adequately show that Jesus was killed by the Romans, that everything was done to prevent a fraudulent stealing of His body, and that His disciples recorded for us exactly what they remembered about His resurrection, even though they knew this would make that message unbelievable to the majority of 1st century people.

Chapter Twenty Three

Two Thousand Years



In this chapter we will take a very brief walk through the past two thousand years and examine what has happened to the church, why there were Crusades, an Inquisition and a Reformation. On the Day of Pentecost, about 50 days after Jesus' resurrection, the Holy Spirit was sent to consummate the new covenant and the first people were born again.¹ On that day the divine nature of God came to dwell within about three thousand people and they saw physical manifestations of His presence. This was the birth of the Church. The Church was never thought of as a building where people gathered, but rather the people who gathered in the building. Some of the last words Jesus had said to the disciples were that they would receive power from above to be His witnesses throughout the world. Jesus commanded disciples to 'go into all the world and make disciples, and to

baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit’.

Within a few weeks the first Christian was murdered for preaching the good news. Stephen infuriated the Jewish leaders by associating them with the people who had killed the prophets and rejected God’s message. Stephen was stoned to death, and a young Pharisee called Saul was guarding the clothes of the killers and watching the scene with approval. The Church was scattered. This same Saul hunted Christians throwing them into prisons, however, in an encounter with the risen Christ he was born again and became the greatest Christian missionary and the man who wrote the majority of New Testament letters as the Apostle Paul.

In 64 AD the Roman emperor Nero falsely blamed Christians for the burning of Rome and used this as an excuse to murder many brave souls who refused to deny Christ. Even Roman citizens such as the pagan historian Tacitus were disturbed by the ferocity of Nero’s attack on these innocent people.² Heresies also began to develop at this time such as Gnosticism which claimed a secret knowledge to certain people through angels and other mediums. Satan was busy trying to destroy the Church from within and without. The godlessness in the world meant that some desired to live apart, and a misunderstanding of Paul’s instructions about marriage led many to believe that a single life was more holy.

Within a few centuries of sporadic persecutions the books considered to be inspired were collected into the final Bible, a process which was done within

extremely strict criteria. For three hundred years it had been the Christians themselves who knew through the collective witness of the Holy Spirit which books were inspired by God and which were not. In a very real sense, only those letters and gospels which had been written by an apostle, and verified as truth by all Christians, everywhere since the birth of the Church were considered to be inspired by God. In other words, it was only those Scriptures which had been used by the entire Church which were accepted.³

In general terms, the Church resisted those who tried to make it into a religion of rules and regulations for the first 300 years, and generally speaking the requirements for becoming a Christian were consistent with Jesus' teachings. People did not become Christians unless they were truly called by the Holy Spirit and had considered the possibility of dying for their faith. Persecution keeps the Church pure; there are few hypocrites around when it comes to being ripped apart by lions or burned to death by crazed emperors.

In the early fourth century all of that changed radically. The Roman emperor Constantine decided that Christianity would be helpful for his empire. Some suggest that he became a Christian; however, I believe that this is a completely wrong understanding of true Christianity. Constantine was a pagan worshipper, he considered the Sun to be the greatest god and he insisted that a symbol of the sun be above all pictures of Jesus or other Christian figures, the sign which is now commonly referred to as a halo. Constantine remained the high priest of the pagan

cults until his death, and he received baptism on his death bed, thinking that this act would save him.

Once the Church joined the Roman empire, it entered into a thousand years of darkness, which is called the Dark Ages or the Medieval Period. People were ordered to be Christians against their will, but secretly, many remained pagan worshippers. Christianity became something you inherited rather than a personal surrender to Christ out of conviction of sin and love for God. In short, the Roman Catholic Church became a form of christian religion and a far cry from the pure Church of the first three centuries. The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) used fear as a means to force people to submit to its rule. It incorporated pagan festivals into its teachings in order to make people 'catholic'. It created a theology of hell and purgatory which is not biblical, and painted pictures of people being tortured for eternity within the walls of the churches. Christ was portrayed as a merciless judge who watched the eternal torment of disobedient 'christians' and pagans. People had no access to the Bible to see the truth for themselves, and the church services were said in the Latin language. People ignorant of truth and full of fear were easy to control.

God was portrayed as an angry God who must be appeased. People turned to Mary for help. Perhaps Jesus' mother could speak to her cruel son on their behalf. The RCC developed a hierarchy of holiness with the pope at the top of this spiritual pyramid and some popes claimed to be infallible. The papacy also claimed that popes were the spiritual heads of the

Church, a succession from the apostle Peter. Popes created 'saints' and the cult of worshipping and praying to dead people developed over time.

The theologian Augustine suggested that people were born sinners, possibly a knee jerk reaction to another theologian, Pelagius who was accused of teaching that it was possible to live a perfect life.⁴ This doctrine posed a problem. If Jesus inherited a human nature and all babies were born sinners, then how did Jesus escape this predicament? The RCC found a solution. They declared that Mary was perfect, indeed she was God's wife, the Queen of Heaven and therefore Jesus could be the only child born sinless. Children were then sprinkled with water with the false idea that this form of 'baptism' would save these "born sinners" from being thrown into hell.

The idea of salvation by a simple faith in Jesus Christ was all but lost during the Dark Ages. Instead, a political religion which had as its agenda to take over the world by force in the name of God, met a similar force with a similar agenda, namely Islam. Mohammed had supposedly seen a vision of an angel and after initially thinking he may be either insane or possessed, he convinced himself he was the new prophet of a god called Allah. Islam captured most of the Middle East and was stopped in Europe by RCC armies. As the first millennium drew to a close RCC leaders were convinced that Christ must not return to find the Holy City of Jerusalem in the hands of Moslems so the first crusades were organized. Popes promised crusaders a guaranteed eternal life, and also that their dead relations would get time off from

eternal torment. The crusaders raped and murdered in the name of Christ, they destroyed all who opposed them, even those who claimed to be Christians; they were terrorists long before the name was used for Moslems. The teachings of Christ to forgive and love one's enemies were entirely ignored. This was a political power on a mission, not a Christian Church taking a gospel of love and peace to a dark world.

The two branches of the RCC, the Greek East and Latin West, split over arguments about power and policy. The Orthodox churches moved into the North; however they carried the basic message of the RCC with them, and in a real sense they were simply daughters of the RCC. At one stage in RCC history there were three popes at the same time, all claiming to be the true successor of Peter.

For all its political and religious might, the RCC could not stop various groups which refused to accept its perverted form of Christianity. The Inquisition was formed to control such people and all who opposed the pope's authority were tried without a defense council, tortured into confessions of heresy, burned, hanged or drowned. Thousands of innocent women were accused of witchcraft and murdered. Any who tried to speak in their defense were considered to be under their demonic spell or in league with Satan, so these women died alone, murdered by an organization which claimed to be acting on behalf of Jesus Christ.

By the fourteenth century there were more voices of discontent. People wanted the truth. The RCC had turned true Christianity into a religion of power and

wealth. Salvation was sold. Relics of dead people were viewed for a price, collections were taken to pay for a person's dead relatives to help them get out of the RCC invention of purgatory, and beautiful cathedrals and palaces were built with the money. The RCC leadership lived in luxury and often sexual debauchery while those they were supposed to be discipling were in poverty. The Black Plague killed millions and did not discriminate between priest or farmer, cardinal or prostitute. People who had been taught that sin was God's punishment began to ask why so many church leaders were struck down by this disease.

In the fifteenth century a young Augustinian priest by the name of Martin Luther, who desperately wanted to know God, had tried every religious discipline taught by the RCC without success. One day he was born again and his experience opened his eyes to the disgusting practices of the RCC. He wrote a document of 95 articles for discussion about the state of the Church, and this action eventually led to the Protestant Reformation. Through the invention and production of printing presses the common people could finally get access to Bibles. Here they discovered that their so-called Virgin Mary had many children, that she considered Christ her Saviour, that infant baptism is unbiblical and praying to dead people banned, that all who are born again Christians are called saints, and that all Christians are equal in the sight of God. They also discovered that salvation is a free gift to all who recognize their sin and place

their lives into Christ's control by faith, taking Him as their Lord and Saviour.

Satan was also active and within a short period of time salvation by faith became salvation by God's secret selection of the few. Hyper-Calvinism claimed that God chose a few for salvation and the rest were condemned to eternal punishment. Protestantism also became a religion of rules for many, although there were those who rejected such teachings and paid with their lives, such as the Ana-Baptists who refused to baptize their children or fight in wars. The RCC launched a counter-reformation, and eventually a war which lasted for thirty years was fought between nations who all claimed to be 'christian'.

Science and rationalism gave birth to skepticism which led to many questioning the validity of the Bible. The Bible was dissected and analyzed by deists, scientists, atheists and others; however, although people like Nietzsche claimed that God was dead, God had other plans. A Great Revival of simple "born again" Christianity broke out and spread throughout the globe and many different branches of Protestant Christianity were created in different cultural settings, and although they had minor differences, on the whole there was a consensus regarding what it meant to be a Christian. Millions came to know and experience being filled with the Holy Spirit as did those first Christians on the day of Pentecost.

The history of the church, especially during the Medieval Period, is often cited by opponents of Christianity in order to bring dishonour to Christ. There is no doubt in my mind that the RCC and

others have done exactly that and criticism of them is both warranted and justified. Millions were murdered by this organization, and sadly some protestant churches adopted RCC ideas and hunted people who they considered to be antichrist. We are fully justified to ask by what authority these people killed. Did Christ condemn sinners to torture and death or did He not command Christians to forgive and love their enemies?

I have no doubt that there were many sincere, loving and wonderful Christians who were part of these organizations, people who saw the hypocrisy but had no power to change it. Many tried and failed, many died trying. Some were heroes of the faith caught up in an organization which banned people from reading the Bible, banned people from questioning its teachings, and claimed to be the sole authority of Jesus Christ on earth.

Chapter Twenty Four

Conclusions



Throughout this book we have taken a journey through human history. Space has not allowed for a discussion on the development of other cultures which were not mentioned here, but rather I have confined myself to those cultures which have had direct contact with the story of salvation. That story shows us a God who chose the history we have as this was the best history to fulfill His plans for humanity. He chose to allow us to experience the freedom of choice, and the freedom to commit evil, for without this freedom we could never have the freedom to choose to love. God counted the cost before He created the world, and although we may think the cost was too great, He set our history in motion.

If God knew our future does this mean that He is responsible for our actions? God did not predestine the actions of human beings; He simply looked into our futures and witnessed the actions we chose. He

could have chosen any number of possible futures, any number of ways of beginning history, however, I believe that He chose the one we have because the greatest number of human beings would come to know and love Him. He also chose to become a part of our history. God of course knew we would sin, He knew we would accept the offer to have autonomy, and He knew the disgusting things we would do to each other with our autonomy. He also knew the disgusting things that we humans would do to Him when He came to live among us and pay the penalty for sin. He entered into our suffering so that we could enter into His paradise. The holiness of God could not leave sin unpunished, but God chose to punish Himself in the person of Jesus, for the sins of His creations.

From the beginning of creation to the birth of Christ, God revealed Himself and His plan to us. Satan tried many times and in various ways to stop the coming of Christ, but He failed. The world was changed through the great flood, the different peoples spread throughout the world, and God chose to reveal Himself to the world through a particular nation. Our salvation story centered on the Jewish nation because it was through these people that God revealed Himself through history, and came to live among us.

Jesus Christ revealed the character and purpose of God to us. God made it extremely clear through hundreds of prophecies who the Messiah would be. People misunderstood because they were blinded by human agendas, and many remain that way in our

generation. For the past two thousand years great numbers of people have come to know Him through the experience of being born again. Satan has also been busy, perverting the truth, adding human traditions which distort and conceal the simple path to experiencing Christ.¹ Satan knows his time is short, for the Lord will return to judge this world. In that sense the story of salvation is not over yet.

The last book of the Bible known as Revelation testifies to events which are yet to happen. Many theologians believe that these events are unfolding before our eyes and that the end of the world as we know it will be in the not too distant future. Jesus spoke of signs in the weather and the stars, and there are few who would deny that global climate change has become a major agenda since the 1990's. Experts in biblical prophecy, of whom I am not one, point to the events which have been fulfilled in recent history. The re-establishment of Israel as a nation in 1948, the bringing down of the Berlin Wall in the eighties and other events such as the establishment of the United Nations and the European Union are all considered to be revealed throughout the Bible.

And it is not only Christians who are anticipating apocalyptic events. In a recent book about the future forecasts of Nostradamus we can read about comets which will hit the earth and the rising of an Antichrist figure around the year 2012. The Mayan calendar is said to finish in this year and some also believe that planetary alignments in 2012 will affect the world's climate and magnetic fields. Doom and gloom is a prominent topic and even Hollywood is getting in

on the act with movies in apocalyptic genres. Is all of this simply twenty first century paranoia, or are human beings as a whole becoming aware of something which is unfolding around us?

The Bible teaches that there are some extremely violent and frightening events still to come upon this planet which will affect the lives of every human being, and unlike other sources of future information, the Bible is always 100% accurate. If the weather changes we are seeing globally, and the political events which seem to coincide with biblical prophecies are those which are spoken about by Jesus and throughout the Bible, then the reality is that time is indeed short. Jesus spoke of famines and everywhere we are beginning to see food shortages because of climate change. He spoke of earthquakes and floods and every other week we hear of weather records being broken. He spoke of wars and rumors of wars, and for all our mass communication, social progress and institutions which are supposed to initiate diplomacy, there are wars, revolutions, dictatorships and political turmoil in places all over the world.

We live in perilous times. For those who consider this life to be the ultimate existence, there is little to hope for in the future. Some people choose to ignore the catastrophic problems we are facing globally, hoping that scientists will find a magical cure for all of the world's problems. Jesus simply told us to be ready, and the Bible tells us that the universe as we know it, including our planet, will be totally destroyed.²

If you are reading this and you have experienced what Jesus called being born again, then you surely have peace about the future and the Spirit of God who lives inside of you leads you each day. If you have fears and uncertainty you need to receive the peace of God that only He can give. God wants you to know Him. The story of salvation is for every person who will come to God in faith and receive forgiveness for their sins, accepting that Jesus has paid for their sins on the cross, and submitting their future into His hands.

In his letter to the Roman Christians the apostle Paul outlines the problem of the human condition and tells us what is required to be born again. The first thing is to recognize our imperfection, to be honest about our desire for sin and the fact that we have chosen to do what we knew was wrong. The second thing is to desire to change, to desire to turn around and walk away from the slavery we have to our sinful desires, and to want to live God's way. If we have this desire then we need only to seek His truth with all our hearts and we will find Him. Half-hearted desires will only produce half-hearted attempts and God is not found by such people. God is the all and everything God. He calls us to seek with *all* our hearts³ and to be willing to lose everything in order to have His salvation.⁴

Start from wherever you are with God. If you don't have a desire to seek just ask for it. If you are not certain that you're a sinner, simply ask God to reveal your sin to you. He will meet you in whatever condition you are in. God will lead you along

a path of revelation until you are ready to give your life to Him. He will not demand that you surrender to Him without knowledge of what you are doing. If you seek Him, you will come to a point where you understand that there is nothing that any human being can do to be saved. Only the perfect Son of God can give salvation to the imperfect. We are saved by the gracious act of God, and that act of grace is not one of obligation to us who seek Him, but a Father's love reaching out to His lost children.

We seek because He reveals that we need to seek, we understand we are sinners because He shows us our sin, we surrender our wills to His will because we come to know that *our* wills will lead us to eternal destruction, whereas His will is for us to have eternal life. God lights the path and calls, but we must place our feet on the next step. We do not earn salvation by walking towards Him, we simply receive the revelation needed to surrender to His gracious offer. We have all willingly sinned and in that sense God has the right to punish us. He has chosen to punish Himself for the sins of His children and to offer them salvation by accepting what He has done without seeing the proof with their own eyes. This is what is meant by the word *faith*.

The Bible says that without faith it is impossible to please God.⁵ It is an issue of trust. God promises to save us and fill us with His Holy Spirit if we sincerely ask forgiveness for our sins, and surrender our wills to Him. These promises are found in His word the Bible, however, we also *feel* this promise in our hearts when we seek Him, that thing Christians

call a conviction. This is the voice of God and this voice never contradicts the Bible. We cannot see or experience this salvation until we have believed that we will receive it. Just as when He commanded the people of Israel to trust Him without knowing the outcome, so He does the same with us. Faith is revealed knowledge which we act upon. Faith is not some presumptuous leap into the dark without prior knowledge. In Hebrews 11 we are given many examples of faith. Noah, when He was *warned* by God built the ark. Abraham, when he was *called* by God obeyed. Noah did not wake up one morning and decide to build a boat on the presumption that God might bring a flood one day. That would have been rather stupid. He acted on a prior revelation as do all who act by faith.

Our revelation is the word of God in the Bible, and the voice of God in our hearts. Our part is to obey through our action. Our action is to humbly ask forgiveness, humbly surrender our will to Christ as our Lord, and then to show our sincerity through public baptism. Jesus commanded that we be baptized because firstly it shows publicly that we have chosen to become His disciples, and secondly, because it is a physical symbol of what has happened to us spiritually. The water represents a grave. We go down into the grave, and we rise up again. We bury our old life and are resurrected into a new life with Christ living within us.⁶

Finally. It is my prayer and hope that this book has helped you to see and understand the story of salvation through history. Perhaps you still have

many questions. I have tried to anticipate questions, however, no doubt there are many left unanswered for some readers. I challenge you to take your questions to God. I have met people who have endless questions simply because they have endless excuses for holding onto their sinful life and autonomy as if it was the greatest prize. I have met others with genuine questions which no person can answer. God may not answer every question; however, He will give you enough revelation to make an informed decision to act by faith. We are to use our intellects to consider the truth, however, it is within our hearts that we will find the decision to be born again.

Our Creator loves you. He desires that you come to know the truth, for He is Truth. He has a purpose for your short life here in this world that only you can fulfill, and an eternity of experiences filled with love waiting for you when this life is over, or when He returns and closes this chapter of the story of salvation.

Notes



Chapter One

1. See for example *Tractatus Theologicopoliticus* (1670) and *Ethica* (1677)
2. Please note that the Bible is not a book written by one or two people at one point in early history. Rather, it is 66 books written by about 40 different authors, over a period of about 1000 years. The dates of many biblical books are easily verified by Sumerian, Persian, Babylonian, Phoenician, Egyptian, Zoroastrian, Greek and Roman writings, many of which feature stories of biblical characters.
3. Romans 2.
4. Macroevolution: I use this term in its contemporary usage, to denote a system which claims that all life happened by random chance without the help of any intelligent Creator being. I use the term *microevolution* to mean specific evolution or adaptation within species.

5. Behe. M, *Darwin's Black Box; The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (New York: The Free Press, 1996) p239
6. Ibid, Behe. P99-100
7. Ibid, Behe. P97

Chapter Two

1. Owen Gingerich, *Is There a Role For Natural Theology Today*, in *Science and Theology: Questions at the Interface*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 1994) p33
2. Lyttleton, R.A., *Mysteries of the Solar System* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1968), p. 110, Joss, P.C., *Astronomy and Astrophysics*, Vol. 25, No. 2, pp. 271-273, John G., *The Search for Extraterrestrial Life*, filmstrip and printed text (Creation-Science Research Center, San Diego, 1973); Barth, C.A., and A.L. Lane, *Science*, Vol. 175, p. 309; Masursky, H., *et al.*, *ibid.*, p. 294. Slusher, Harold S., *Age of the Cosmos* (Institute for Creation Research, San Diego, 1980),pp.55-64.
http://www.pathlights.com/ce_encyclopedia/05agee2.htm,
<http://www.answersingenesis.org/creation/v14/i4/moon.asp>
<http://www.seekthetruth.org/earthage.html>
3. There are many powerful arguments which refute the idea of pre-historic humanoids. For example, why should humans be illiterate for millions of years and then, over a tiny period of 10,000 years, evolve so rapidly.

4. See Genesis 1:27: the account before the creation of Eve. It is all of “mankind” which is in the first being.
5. These dates can be verified through references in the writings of other cultures which came into contact with the Jews at the same time, and with the help of discoveries such as the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Chapter Three

1. Gordon H. Clark. *Religion, Reason, and Revelation* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1961) p221
2. Ezekiel 28 : 12-17
3. Isaiah 14:12-15
4. According to the Apocrypha there are 100 million angels of which now one third are fallen and have become ‘demons’. Incidentally Hinduism claims to have 330 million gods. Coincidence?
5. There are three ‘heavens’ or worlds in the Greek language of the Bible. The first ‘world’ is to the edge of Earth’s atmosphere. The second is simply called the heavens, ‘cosmos’ in Greek and refers to the universe or space. The 3rd heaven or paradise is everything beyond the edge of space, God’s eternal and infinite kingdom.
6. For example, John 1: 1-5
7. The ideal of Marx was to create the ‘new man’ without God, however, Marx completely underestimated the problem of the nature

of sin which dwells in all human beings. Communism tried to force the ideal of brotherhood and comradeship onto people, but without essential change in the human heart people continued to be selfish.

8. Romans 7
9. Professed atheists like Nietzsche are classic examples of people being in war with God.
10. The word 'redeem' comes from the idea of buying a person back who has been sold into slavery. The Bible uses this term to speak of Jesus' life as the cost of our redemption.

Chapter Four

1. Genesis 1:30
2. Genesis 3:21
3. 2 Corinthians 4:4

Chapter Five

1. For example, the Babylonian story of Utnapishtim, who built an ark and was saved by the gods from a great primeval flood.
2. Consider the many websites devoted to this subject, and the following references. Crouse, Bill. 1992. "Noah's Ark: Its Final Birth," *Bible and Spade* 5:3 . Livingston, David. 1993. "The Date of Noah's Flood: Literary and Archaeological Evidence," *Bible and Spade* 6/1,
3. Morris and Morris, *Many Infallible Proofs: Evidences for the Christian Faith* (U.S.A., Master Books, 1974)

4. Some Christian scientists also point to the fact that the highest percentage of oil fields is in the Middle East, the area where the Garden of Eden was, and the original site of the creation of animals. Were the largest herds of dinosaurs in this area?
5. Sceptics often criticise the idea that two of every kind of animal were on the ark. The bible suggests only two of each original species, not the hybrids and vast numbers of different breeds which have adapted from these originals.
6. See also the dialogue with Critias for more details.

Chapter Six

1. The architecture of the European Union headquarters is based on this building.
2. G. Frederick Owen, D.D., Ed. D, *Archaeological Supplement* (The Thompson Chain Reference Bible, 1983)
3. Genesis 14:14
4. Genesis 12:1
5. Romans 1
6. Genesis 22.

Chapter Seven

1. E.g. Galatians 5:19, 1 Corinthians 6, Ephesians 4:19.
2. Genesis 2:18
3. Genesis 1:28

4. The word ‘lovers’ means ‘young people in love’, not lover as in the modern context of unmarried people having sex.

Chapter Nine

1. Exodus 3

Chapter Ten

1. The entire account is found in Exodus, the second book of the Bible.

Chapter Twelve

1. The Sea People later settled in Southern Palestine and became known as the Philistines.

Chapter Thirteen

1. The movie “Raiders of the Lost Ark” is based on the finding of this box.

Chapter Fourteen

1. Numbers 14: 10ff
2. Hebrews 11: 6

Chapter Fifteen

1. It is most likely that God used a natural phenomenon here as the Jordan River is sometimes temporarily blocked by landslides caused by earthquakes.
2. See *Walls of Jericho* by Bryant G Wood for further information.

Chapter Sixteen

1. Isaiah also states that Jesus will leave no natural children behind him, contrary to some modern publications that suggest He was married and produced a daughter.

Chapter Seventeen

1. The chart is taken from the Thompson Chain reference Bible and other sources. Dates are approximate only.

Chapter Twenty

1. Matthew 5,6,7
2. John 3: 1-21
3. Eg, Luke 14:25ff
4. Galatians 2:20

Chapter Twenty One

1. See for example, John 1: 1-5, Colossians 1:15-17, Hebrews 1: 1-3
2. See for example Isaiah 9:6
3. Some of the disciples thought that after the resurrection Jesus would immediately restore the Kingdom of Israel and be its King (Acts 1:6).
4. Infancy Gospel of Thomas, 3:1
5. Mathew 14, Mark 6, John 6

Chapter Twenty Two

1. The gospels are placed first as they are about the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus,

whereas Paul's letters are about the Church which was obviously established later.

2. John 20:10ff

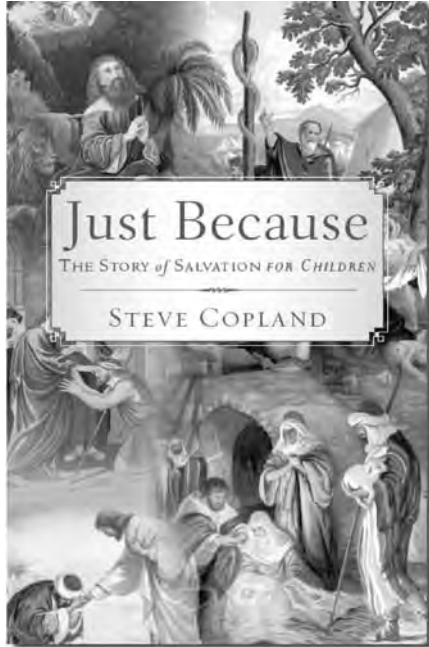
Chapter Twenty Three

1. Acts 1-2
2. Tacitus, *Annals*XV.44
3. For example, of the forty-four gospels which were claimed to be inspired by the Holy Spirit, only four were considered by all Christians, everywhere, and at all times throughout church history to be truly inspired.
4. Ivor J. Davidson. *A Public Faith: From Constantine to the Medieval World, AD 312-600* (Grand Rapids Michigan: Monarch Books, 2005) pp179-185

Chapter Twenty Four

1. The Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons are examples of how Biblical Truth has been perverted.
2. 2 Peter 3:10-13
3. Jeremiah 29:13, Hebrews 11:6
4. Luke 14:25-33, Matthew 13:44-46
5. Hebrews 11:6
6. See Romans 6

Also, by Steve Copland



Just Because takes children on a journey through the Bible. It gives them an exciting bird’s-eye-view of God’s plan unfolding as He prepares the world for the coming of Jesus Christ. Throughout the story Satan is watching out for the child who will “crush his head”, (Genesis 3) and he endeavors to stop God’s plan from unfolding. The reader knows who that special child is, and the story especially opens up the insights that point to Jesus throughout the Old Testament, such as the symbols of Passover and

prophecies. Each chapter takes about twenty minutes to read and ends with a short Biblical lesson.

Just Because was originally written to be read to un-churched children in secular schools about twenty years ago. Since then teachers in New Zealand, Australia, and Cuba have used it to grow, and deepen children's faith in Jesus Christ and the Bible. Kids love it.

