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Good News Unlimited

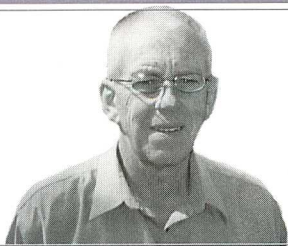
WHY?

The Door to the Kingdom

Serving God
with One Eyebrow

Topsy-Turvy Hormones

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EDITORIAL

Perhaps the greatest and most persistent question raised by human beings about God is the 'Why?' question: Why does God let innocent people suffer? Either God is good, or he is evil. If he is evil he wouldn't care if innocent people suffered, but if he is good then he must care. The logical conclusion is that because God doesn't do anything about the suffering of innocent people, then he must be powerless and incapable of acting on their behalf.

The weakness in the above argument is that it totally overlooks God's gift of free will to human beings. If God gave us permission to choose our own way in life, and then interfered because he disagreed with our choices, it would hardly be *free* will, would it?

In the beginning God gave our first parents the choice of living with him, or without him. They chose to live without him in their lives. The alternative—to be God's robots, hav-

ing no free will—hardly bears thinking about. So should God be blamed if parents, high on drugs or besotted with alcohol, murder their own children? I read about one father who would thrash his young son every time he wet his bed, which only made the situation worse. One morning the young boy, crying and shaking with fear, was seen by a neighbour attempting to push a soiled bed sheet through the toilet window to escape punishment. Later that day the battered and bruised body of the child was taken off to the morgue and the father was taken off to prison. Can we blame God for that? Anyone who does so is not thinking clearly.

If we, as parents, have the privilege of passing on to our children the benefits we have garnered from life—benefits such as self discipline and industry, love and respect, care for their health, a hunger for knowledge and wisdom, gratitude and compassion, etc.—then the opposite must also be true; we can pass on to our children a lack of self discipline, laziness, anger, a disrespect of authority, a careless attitude toward their health and a hatred of learning, etc. That's the way freedom of choice works in a world that is not one hundred percent under the guidance of the Spirit of God.

What about child refugees in countries like Zimbabwe and Sudan? The same applies there too. Zimbabwe was the food basket of Africa until it

was stripped of its heritage by selfish, corrupt and misguided leaders. The 'parents' of Zimbabwe and Sudan, through corruption, bad government or bad religion, have left their 'children' a heritage of poverty and despair.

Should other countries intervene to turn around the situations in nations where the governments or leaders are failing their people? History reveals that intervention rarely works and often worsens the problem. Healing and change for good must come from within. If the people don't want it, if they are unwilling to give up bad religion or politics, then being forced to change will only make the situation worse. In the meantime, thousands of innocent people will suffer. And until these people rise up against the injustice of their oppressive political or religious situation, conditions will rarely change.

This world is the theatre of the universe revealing what happens when man decides to choose a destiny apart from God. And the 'play' will continue until the very final choice—either for or against Christ—has been made (Matt. 24:14). Once everyone has had the opportunity to make the choice, then sin and those who cling to it, will be annihilated forever and no longer will people ask, Why?

Ritchie Way

—Ritchie Way

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Mission Statement

Christians united in offering to all, meaning and direction in their lives by a knowledge of God's reconciliation with humanity through his Son, Jesus Christ.

Email



WHY?

Ritchie Way

The following letter was received by the *Good News Unlimited* office in South Tweed Heads on 19th February, 2009. As we decided to address this matter in our July magazine, we sent the writer of the letter a copy of the October 2005 GNU magazine, hoping that it would provide some answers in the meantime.

Dear Sir/Madam

I would like you to provide a few answers as each day I am becoming more of an atheist.

- 1. Where is God?*
- 2. Why does he allow such suffering to those who are supposedly part of his flock?*
- 3. The bush fires have caused untold grief and suffering to thousands of people. Why did he allow this to happen?*
- 4. Why are little children allowed to suffer cancer and lots of other terrible things? They have done no wrong.*
- 5. Why did Jesus get nailed to the cross to save us from our sins? People are still sinning.*
- 6. Why do we have droughts, fires, floods etc.? They serve no purpose other than misery.*
- 7. If God loves everybody then why does he allow bad things to happen?*
- 8. Murder, rape, and starvation, etc. are every day occurrences. Why?*

Learned church people have been asked these questions before and they just waffle on like politicians without giving anything that slightly

resembles an answer.

I could go on with many more questions but I ask myself, What's the use?

Hopefully you can provide some sort of answer, or maybe you won't even reply.

Yours faithfully

D. W.

Dear D

The answers I give to your questions, while far from being comprehensive, are answers that have brought me peace and assurance in difficult situations that have confronted me. But because these answers satisfy me it does not necessarily mean they will satisfy you. I can only recommend that you arrive at your own understanding of these issues through wrestling with God at your own particular Jabbok. I am convinced of two things in this matter: There can be no victory without a struggle; and the answers you seek are there for those who sincerely wish to find them.

1. WHERE IS GOD?

When our forefather, Adam, rejected God, he erected a barrier between himself and the Lord. We wanted to go it alone, so God, being the gentleman he is, left us to our own devices. But being the contrary creatures that we are, while we don't want God interfering in our lives, we are quick to accuse him of being insensitive and uncaring when he doesn't respond to our cries for help in times of crisis.

Yes, we want God in our lives, but only on our terms, and only when we say so. In other words, we don't want him interfering with our personal lives, telling us what we can or can't do; we just want him to get us out of trouble when it strikes; trouble like tsunamis, earthquakes, bushfires floods and financial disasters. Isn't that true?

2. WHY DOES HE ALLOW SUCH SUFFERING TO THOSE WHO ARE SUPPOSEDLY PART OF HIS FLOCK?

There are people who *do* want God in their lives; they want him to direct their thoughts, words and actions. And God chooses to dwell with such people. But he has never ever promised to keep them from personal disaster, whether it is boils, marital problems, destruction of property, loss of income, family, or whatever. He has, however, promised that no test that comes their way will be beyond the course of what others have had to face.

Furthermore, he would never let his people be pushed past their limit and he would always be there to help them come through their difficulty (1 Cor. 10:13 TMB). He has also promised that their daily needs will be provided for (Matt. 6:25-34), and if they remain true to him, no one will snatch them from his hand (John 10:27-28).

In addition, every trouble that strikes a follower of the Lord Jesus will only serve to make that individual a better person, because God will always and ultimately, bring good out of evil (Rom. 8:28; James 1:2-4).

God has never promised that everything that happens to us will be fair. He has promised, however, that no matter what happens to us, we shall be victorious over it as long as we face it with him in our lives. Jesus demonstrated this in his own life. He turned the worst thing that ever happened to him—the Cross—into the best thing that ever happened in the whole world. ‘Good Friday’ was anything but good for Jesus, but what a blessing it has been for us who put our trust in him.

3. THE BUSH FIRES HAVE CAUSED UNTOLD GRIEF AND SUFFERING TO THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE. WHY DID HE ALLOW THIS TO HAPPEN?

Bush fires are natural and many conservationists would say, even necessary. Like earthquakes, we have to live with them and treat their probability more seriously than we have up till now.

People are killed in bushfires, or their homes are burned down, because they foolishly build their dwelling places beneath, or beside, incendiary trees. So obsessed have the authorities become with protecting trees that one family, which cut down gum trees to create a firebreak around their home, was fined \$50,000. After the Victorian bushfires had died down their home was the only one left standing within a radius of two kilometres. Will we learn from that? There are other trees that can be planted around buildings which do not emit explosive vapour when

weather conditions are extreme.

People are killed in earthquake zones because they build unsafe homes that become people crushers when the shaking starts. They are also killed when unscrupulous builders short-cut the building regulations, as they did in Italy. It has been well said that earthquakes don’t kill people; unsafe houses and buildings kill people. Homes or buildings can be built to withstand earthquakes.

And people are drowned and their houses washed away because they build their homes on flood plains. If we farm such land it should be with the understanding that the time will come when it will be required for mass water transit, and not get huffy with God when that happens. Just be thankful that a living can be made from it in between major natural events that will be inimical to our personal interests.

So even though we sympathise with those who suffered during the Victorian Bush-fires, or the earthquake in Italy, let’s not blame God for our failure to use the common sense that he gave us.

4. WHY ARE LITTLE CHILDREN ALLOWED TO SUFFER CANCER AND LOTS OF OTHER TERRIBLE THINGS? THEY HAVE DONE NO WRONG.

You can’t find a reason for why some things happen because sin is irrational, illogical, unreasonable, unfair, indiscriminate, hurtful and inexcusable. That’s what makes it sin, and that’s why God hates it. But God is not responsible for sin; it was our choice. He warned our forefather against going down that path, but he didn’t listen and so we all are now in this mess.

But we don’t have to stay there. If we blame God for all the bad things that happen to innocent people, but don’t reject those bad things ourselves, we are hypocrites. Life in this world is short at best and even shorter for many. We do well to take seriously Jesus’ counsel when the disciples talked to him about the eighteen people whose lives were cut short when the Tower of Siloam collapsed on them; he said, ‘I tell you ... unless you repent, you will all likewise perish’ (Luke 13:4-5).

In other words, in view of the diseases and disasters that take our lives prematurely, always be in a good relationship with the Lord. If you are, then no matter what happens to you, you are safe in the Saviour’s hands. Your death cannot rob you of eternal fellowship with him. Disease and disaster will be with us until the Lord comes, but no person need fear them if they have Christ in their life. Such trouble will be but a drop in the ocean of eternal joy and peace that is ours.

5. WHY DID JESUS GET NAILED TO THE CROSS TO SAVE US FROM OUR SINS? PEOPLE ARE STILL SINNING.

When everyone has been given the opportunity to accept or reject the free grace of the Lord Jesus—provided on the cross—the end shall come (Matt. 24:14) and we shall enter ‘the home of righteousness.’ Until then people will go on sinning.

6. WHY DO WE HAVE DROUGHTS, FIRES, FLOODS ETC.? THEY SERVE NO PURPOSE OTHER THAN MISERY.

Sure, droughts, fires and floods can be a problem, but I would envisage the greater problem to be a world where there were no droughts, fires and floods, where everything was so perfect there were no challenges for us. That would be an even greater misery. People were made to be stretched, to be overcomers.

If we are affected adversely by droughts, fires and floods, then we are either living in the wrong place, or we haven't yet modified our environment, or adapted our methods to cope with these natural events.

7. IF GOD LOVES EVERYBODY THEN WHY DOES HE ALLOW BAD THINGS TO HAPPEN?

God loved his Son dearly, but look at all the bad

things that happened to Jesus. Bad things will not make God's people bad; rather, bad things will make God's people better. There are two kinds of people in the world, those who become better when faced with challenges, and those who become bitter; one is positive and the other negative. The positive person, like the repentant thief on the cross, trusts that God will give him, or her, a blessed future beyond the pain of this world. The negative person, like the unrepentant thief on the cross, is only interested in living in the present. We manage much better when we focus our eyes on God's future world and not on this present evil age.

8. MURDER, RAPE AND STARVATION ETC. ARE EVERY DAY OCCURRENCES, WHY?

Sin is like a virus which spreads very quickly through a population that does not have the immunity provided by the cross of the Lord Jesus. The further the world is removed from faith in the sacrificial death of Jesus, the more sinful it will be. Either Jesus reigns in our hearts, or Satan does.

The one thing God promises us is that there will be no sin or sinners in our future home (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5; Rev. 21:7-8; 22:14-15). He has opened the door to that ‘home of righteousness’. It's up to us to step through that door and stay there. ☐

CELL PHONE vs. BIBLE

—Author Unknown

Ever wonder what would happen if we treated our Bible like we treat our cell phone?

What if we carried it around in our purses or pockets?
What if we flipped through it several times a day?
What if we turned back to get it if we forgot it?

What if we used it to receive messages from the text?
What if we treated it like we couldn't live without it?
What if we gave it to kids as gifts?
What if we used it when we travelled?
What if we used it in case of emergency?

Good News Unlimited
Saturday Bible School 9.30am
Morning tea will be provided.
Please bring your Bible

Further information contact Carolyn:
Phone 07 5524 5040,
email: carolyn@goodnewsunlimited.org.au

Bible study at the GNU office,
2/54-60 Industry Dr., South Tweed Heads NSW
Aug. 1 & 15, Sept. 5 & 19,
October: No meetings
July 18 GNU Bible Conference at Ballina
Nth NSW (see advertisement on page 6)

Narellan,
Sydney
Focus for Life
Christian Fellowship

Those living in or near Narellan are warmly invited to meet for Bible study and fellowship in the Salvation Army Worship Centre on the corner of Exchange Parade and Narellan Road in Narellan, every Saturday at 1:30pm. For further information, contact Pastor Santo Calarco on phone number: 0404 029822

SERVING GOD WITH ONE EYEBROW

Bob Gass


David Rabin was a professor of medicine at Vanderbilt University. When he was forty-six he was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's Disease.

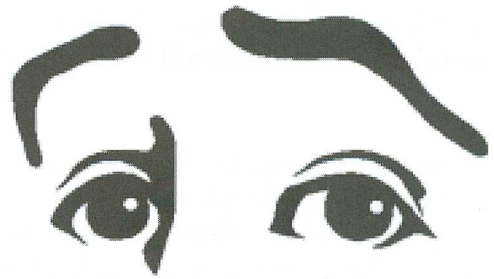
He knew what would happen. Stiffness in the legs, then weakness; paralysis of the lower limbs and then the upper. Eventually his body would no longer obey his commands. He could form words only with the greatest difficulty and eventually not at all. He lost his ability to treat patients and could no longer go to the hospital to work. He would have had a brilliant academic career; now he couldn't even turn the pages of a book. But there was one thing he would not surrender: his spirit!

One day he heard from a fellow physician, who also had Lou Gehrig's Disease, about a computer that could be operated by a single switch. That switch could be operated by anyone, however physically challenged, who retained the function of just

one muscle group. David Rabin still had enough strength in one part of his body—his eyebrow. So for the next four years he used it to speak to his family, tell jokes, write papers and review manuscripts. He carried on a medical consulting practice. He taught medical students.

He published a comprehensive textbook on endocrinology and achieved a prestigious award for his work. And he did it with the only thing he could control—a single eyebrow.

The Bible says: 'The strong Spirit of a man will sustain him in bodily pain or trouble' (Prov. 18:14 AMP). David Rabin proved that's true. With a Spirit that refused to give up, and one eyebrow, he served God and blessed the world around him! 



Good News Unlimited invites you to:

STAND FIRM!

*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.
Stand firm then and do not let yourselves
be burdened again by a yoke of slavery
(Galatians 5:1)*

**Considering Paul's letter
to the Galatians.
Celebrating joy and freedom
through Jesus Christ.**

**Register now for *STAND FIRM!*
Send \$5.00 for each person to *Good News Unlimited***

Enjoy a day of fellowship at Ballina, Nth. NSW

with
John Shaw
and

Ron Allen
Ballina Island Motor Inn
(Best Western, Pacific Highway)

Saturday July 18
10:00am-4:00pm

Programme:

10:00am Ron Allen. *A bad case of Righteousness.*

10:45am MORNING TEA.

11:15am John Shaw. *Understanding our freedom in Christ.*

12:15pm LUNCH (Food cannot be brought into Hotel).

2:00pm John Shaw. *Enjoying Our Freedom in Christ.*

3:00pm AFTERNOON TEA; informal fellowship.

4:00pm FINISH.

TOPSI-TURVI HORMONES

*What cats know
and people need to know.*

(The first of three parts)

Gillian Ford

TOPSI-TURVI WORLD

Topsi and Turvi, Gill's two cats, were asleep on the sofa in the velvet dark. They were wrapped around each other, their paws entwined and their heads lying close together. There had been a big storm earlier in the night and the power went off. The cats didn't care. They could see in the night anyway. Suddenly the power went on at 2:00 a.m. and the TV rebooted as the electricity surged. It startled the cats and they flew into the middle of the room with anticipation. They sat close together, on alert, their eyes scanning around them.

'Everything's all right, Turvi,' said Topsi, Turvi's big sister. She was the calm one. Turvi was highly strung, but Topsi was laid back. 'Come back to bed,' Topsi continued.

But Turvi couldn't sleep and kept moving restlessly around the room.

Topsi said, 'Stop fidgeting and come and lie down.'

Turvi replied, 'I can't settle down. I'm all a-quiver and my nerves are jingly. I got such a fright.'

Topsi said, 'That's **adrenaline**.'

Turvi said, 'What's adrenaline?'

Topsi replied, 'It's a hormone.'

Turvi then asked, 'What's a hormone?'



TOPSI-TURVI HORMONES

Topsi knew a lot about hormones. Hadn't she grown up at the office, and hadn't she listened when Gill was on the phone with the patients?

Turvi was there also, but he was scatterbrained and lively and hadn't listened very well. 'That's woman's stuff,' he said.

But Topsi was a girl so she was interested. She began to tell Turvi all about hormones. 'A hormone is a signal. It's like someone going down the street to take a message to a neighbour. The neighbour gets the message and he does whatever the message says. The neighbour is like one of your cells. Cells are largely run by what our hormones tell them to do. Everything in your body is run by hormones. There are hundreds of them—some we don't know much about yet. 'There are parts of your body called glands that

make different hormones. But, really, everything in the body makes hormones—cells, tissues, skin, bone, organs. For instance, **dentin** is a hormone made in your mouth that works on your teeth. These hormones are everywhere, and you, Turvi, are a hormone-making machine.'

'Fancy that,' said Turvi.

TURVI, THE HORMONE MACHINE

Topsi continued. 'Hormones form a huge signalling system—a messenger system that chemically controls all your body processes. Adrenaline is just one of the hormones. You got a very bad fright. Your adrenal glands sent a gush of adrenaline into the blood stream. Adrenaline is the fight and flight hormone. It increased your heart rate; made you alert and fearful so you could think and move faster if you needed to run away. Trouble is,' continued Topsi, 'it's now in your bloodstream. There wasn't really anything to be frightened about, but now you have to put up with the pounding heart and feeling scared and not being able to sleep until the adrenaline disappears.'

NERVI-TURVI

This made Turvi feel better. He was nervy Turvi. When visitors came to the house, he would disappear. One day Gill couldn't find him, but later she heard a clunk in the kitchen. Turvi had opened the food cupboard with his wonderfully clever paw and hidden inside while the people looked at the house. He sat there hiding behind the tomato soup and next to the lentils. When the visitors went, he came back out.

Topsi had a very different nature. She didn't run away when visitors came. She came up to people to be patted. She was friendly, not scared. She also slept more than Turvi. Turvi was a scaredy cat. When he knew it was because of adrenaline, he felt better. There was a reason why he was different.

Topsi said, 'When people get this overactive response without something scary happening, they are often **hyper-adrenergic**, which means they have an inappropriate adrenaline release. This often happens in the early hours of the morning (around 2:00 to 4:00 a.m.). They often wake up a lot. They may be fearful and have panic attacks and heart palpitations. They may have chest pain, and, sometimes, they have something called night terrors. They wake up terrified and they don't know why, or they just have nightmares.'

INTRODUCING CORTISOL

Topsi also told Turvi that when adrenaline was high, another adrenal hormone called **cortisol** was often high as well.

'Cortisol,' she said, 'is the stress hormone. It also helps prevent infection. It's a problem if you don't have much of it and it's a problem if you have too much. If you don't have enough, you'll get tired and sick a lot and have low blood sugar. If you have high levels, it can make you very depressed and agitated and fearful. Sometimes,' said Topsi,

‘people have little tumours (usually benign or harmless) that produce hormones. One example is a **pheochromacytoma**, an adrenal tumour that produces adrenaline. Another example is **Cushing’s disease**, mainly caused by pituitary, or adrenal tumours which cause an overproduction of cortisol.’

FAT CAT AND LEAN MACHINE

Topsi weighed over two pounds more than Turvi. She was fatter and bigger than Turvi who was skinny and a ball of muscle. Topsi ate a lot more than Turvi. In fact, she was *always* hungry. And when she was hungry, she had a horrible meow that demanded feeding. Gill couldn’t ignore it because Topsi just wouldn’t give up. If Gill tried to pretend she wasn’t there, Topsi would remind her by sticking a claw in her leg.

Turvi, by contrast, didn’t come crying for food. Food didn’t seem to matter much to him. Sometimes he seemed to be asking for food, but usually if you gave it to him, he would sniff it and walk away. He mainly wanted to be picked up and hugged or to go outside.

The cats mainly ate dried food. They also had two cans of Fancy Feast, one in the morning and one in the evening. Topsi was lucky that Turvi had a small appetite. He held back while she ate the Fancy Feast (he was a very polite young man). He only nibbled a little bit, which meant that Topsi had one and a half cans to his half can a day. Topsi would have liked three cans to herself.

Turvi was sleek and Topsi had a belly that drooped close to the floor.

‘Topsi, you are a bit of a pig,’ commented Turvi. Usually he was polite, but she was his sister. ‘You eat too much, and you are getting fat. See how your saddlebags nearly trail the ground.’ He didn’t mean to be unkind, but he was worried about her health.

‘I seem to be hungrier and I store energy more than you do,’ said Topsi sadly, ‘that’s why I am fat, and you are thin. You have always been different from birth. You eat less than me, but you seem to use it up faster than I do.’

‘It’s not fair, is it?’ said Turvi. ‘As a rule, it seems it’s easier for boys to lose weight than it is for girls.’

FAT CAT AND FAT MOUSE

‘It’s all right for you,’ said Topsi, ‘you are a man, and men’s metabolism is different to women’s because they don’t get pregnant. There’s a hormone called **leptin** made in fat. It reflects this difference. Women have more leptin because they have more fat. You are sensitive to it, but I am resistant to it [that means I have high levels of leptin, but they don’t work as well].’

‘What is leptin?’ asked Turvi.

‘Well,’ replied Topsi, ‘leptin is a hormone that was found in a fat mouse in 1994.’ Turvi’s ear’s pricked up. He was fond of mice, especially fat mice.

‘They knocked out a gene in a mouse,’ continued Topsi, ‘then they found this new hormone, leptin, that is produced in fat cells. It sends a message to the brain that there is enough fat for the creature to use energy. And it switches off the appetite.’ Turvi said,

‘Well, does that mean I have lots of leptin because I

have lots of energy?’

‘No,’ said Topsi. ‘It doesn’t work that way. You probably have normal levels of leptin and maybe you are sensitive to it, because you don’t have much of an appetite. My brain doesn’t get the message that I’ve got energy, so my leptin levels are probably high and I have a big appetite that doesn’t switch off. Leptin also controls puberty, the menstrual cycle and fertility. It sends the message that there’s enough energy stored in fat to enable one to get pregnant.’

It’s interesting that people who are sick, especially those with fatigue syndromes, have abnormal leptin levels. Usually they are too low (insufficient) or high but not working (resistant). With the latter, the brain doesn’t get the message that there is enough energy, so leptin is not switched off. Then they put on weight.’

HYPERTHYROID SQUIRREL OR HYPOTHYROID SLOTH

‘I saw a squirrel run up a tree the other day,’ said Topsi, ‘he made me think of you, because he ran so fast. You’re like a hyperthyroid squirrel.’

‘What do you mean?’ asked Turvi.

‘Well,’ replied Topsi, ‘when the **thyroid** gland overproduces, it speeds everything up. The thyroid gland looks like a butterfly, and it’s wrapped around your windpipe in your neck. It produces several types of thyroid hormone and another hormone called **calcitonin**, which I’ll tell you about later.

I don’t think we have thyroid problems, Turvi, but if we did, you would be hyperthyroid (everything speeds up) and I would tend to be hypothyroid (everything slows down). Thyroid hormone affects every cell in the body. If your thyroid fails you can die. It affects how your body responds to hot and cold. When someone has low thyroid levels, they feel the cold intensely. When someone has high thyroid, they feel the heat. Sometimes, when you are low thyroid, you just feel temperature changes, whether hot or cold.’

WORSE IN THE AUTUMN, THE SUN CONNECTION

‘Often you feel worse when the seasons change. The thyroid regulates your body’s thermostat. In the Autumn and Spring, it gets used up more because you have days where you can have cold nights but warm days. Your body doesn’t know how to react and calls for more thyroid. If you have low thyroid function already, you will get worse symptoms in the dark, cold weather, especially Spring and Autumn when the body thermostat is switching back and forth between hot and cold.


Thyroid affects your circulation. Fluids go through the body too slowly if thyroid is low and the fluids leach into the tissues. Then you tend to get water retention—puffy ankles, fingers, face and abdomen. Your skin gets dry because of poor circulation, and you can get all sorts of skin problems. And your hair can fall out. Thyroid affects the speed of your metabolism. You tend to put on weight when it is low and lose it when it’s high, though there are exceptions to this rule. You can be thin when you are low thyroid. Usually that’s when your brain has lost the ability to send signals to the thyroid.’

COMMON DIAGNOSIS OFTEN MISSED

'There's a lot to say about low thyroid. There are many symptoms, such as feeling tired, having dry skin and dry hair, feeling the cold, skin problems, easy infections, and so on. Hypothyroidism is more common than hyperthyroidism, and it's much more common in women than men,' continued Topsy.

'Thyroid medication is the most prescribed medicine in the US and yet, hypothyroidism is still often left undiagnosed. It happens especially in those families where there is a history of thyroid problems—some family members have normal thyroid function, but all the symptoms. Some folks are put on thyroid medication early in life and taken off when their values look 'normal.' Then they often feel awful for years and long for someone to give them thyroid medication again because they felt fine on it. Sometimes they can't get anyone to give it to them and their lives are pretty miserable.

Blood tests are helpful, but they don't tell you everything. You can have 'normal' levels in the blood, but the hormone may not work properly in some parts of the system. However, you have to be really careful not to overdose.

There are serious side effects, like heart attack and stroke if you overdose with thyroid medication.' 

(To be continued)

STANDING IN THE

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NEED OF PRAYER....

HOPE HAS ITS REASONS

The search to satisfy our deepest longings

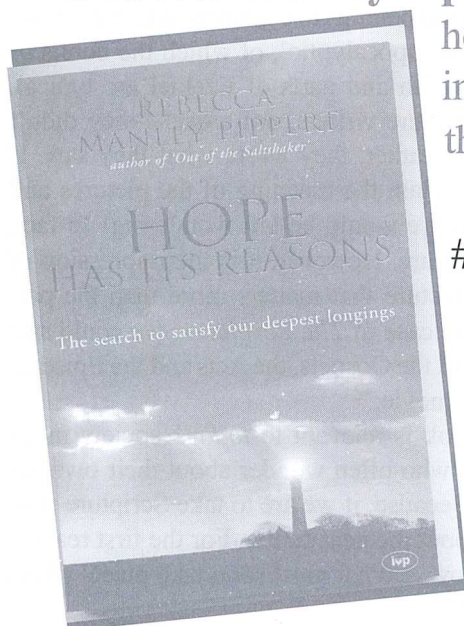
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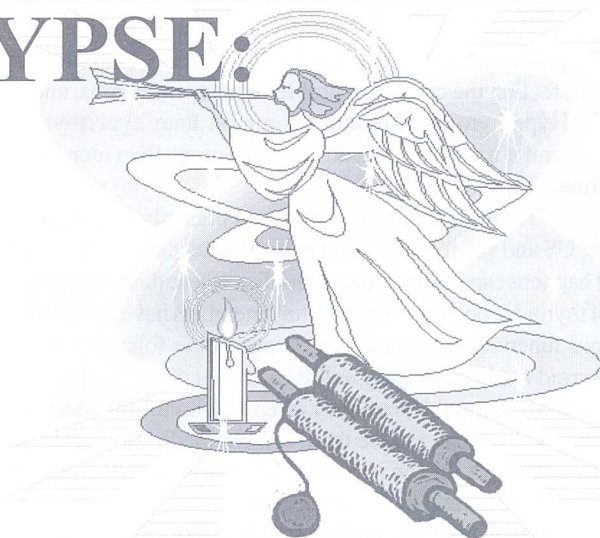


THE APOCALYPSE:

AN INTRODUCTION

*Part thirteen in a series on
Daniel & Revelation*

Angus McPhee



Interestingly, and curiously, many who are interested in Revelation do not read the book itself but, rather, books about Revelation. The reader will gather from verses 1, 3, 7 and 19 that, although written in the First Century by John, the Lord's 'scribe', the content is about the future, a future of which we might very well be, or become a part of. Consequently, it demands both our reading and our attention and a blessing for the reader (Rev. 1:3).

There is another reason: This book is 'the revelation of Jesus Christ.' It is a revelation which God gave Him and he is sharing it with any who care to read it. As a revelation of and from the Lord himself, can any afford to ignore it? While a knowledge of the future is attractive, a knowledge of Jesus is essential. The Gospels are the biographies of the Son of God while on earth. The Revelation acquaints us with the Son of Man's post-ascension cosmic role. Acquaintance with the first is indispensable to a study of the second.

While some Bibles call this last book in the Bible, *Revelation*, others call it *The Apocalypse*. Why? The earliest extant New Testament manuscripts were written in the Greek language of the day. The name 'Apocalypse' comes from a Greek word which means a disclosure, a revelation. The associated verb means to remove the cover, to reveal, so that we can see what we normally would not be able to.

Today, the word 'apocalypse' has become popular. In April 1993 we saw on TV the fiery end of property and the lives of more than seventy people at a place popularly called 'Ranch Apocalypse' near Waco, Texas. If you knew a little about The Apocalypse, you might have thought that that was a *very* appropriate name for a place owned by a group of people who were fasci-

nated with 'The End.' A movie buff might have even smelled a whiff of 'Apocalypse Now.'

What is there about The Apocalypse, a.k.a. Revelation, which prompts such thoughts? Take a look.

FEATURES

Notice a few of the word pictures:

1. A bleeding lamb (5:6)¹
2. Four horsemen riding coloured horses (6:2-8)
3. Cosmic signs (6:12-13)
4. A burning mountain (8:8)
5. A wild animal coming out of a bottomless pit (11:7)
6. A wild animal coming out of the sea (13:1)
7. A wild animal coming out of the land (13:11)
8. A city in the form of a cube (21:16).

APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

Revelation belongs to a genre of ancient Jewish writings called 'apocalyptic', of which the books of Daniel, Zechariah and parts of Ezekiel are typical. Their authors were writers, not artists—they didn't paint pictures, rather, they wrote what they saw. If they didn't explain the meaning of the pictures and their contents we would be left wondering! In fact, sometimes we are. However, it is the impression of the moving picture that matters more than the particulars. In the case of *The Revelation* we could say, 'You have read the Gospels, the Acts and the Epistles. Now see the movie.'²

This book is relevant to *today's* society made up of people who often wonder about their own future. Why? Because, if we are to take Scripture seriously, it is about the near future. For the first readers it was 'to show ... what must soon take place' (Revelation 1:1).³

It is for us to consider the forecasts that have

already been fulfilled and those which have yet to be.

THE AUTHOR

Revelations occurred in the early Christian communities. St Paul experienced them. They were one of the spiritual gifts in the church in Corinth (see 1 Cor. 1:7; 14:6, 26; 2 Cor. 12:1; Gal. 2:2). The last book of the Bible contains a revelation given to Jesus most likely after his ascension, because there is no reference to it *per se* in the Gospels.

'The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known [to us] by sending his angel to his servant John' (Revelation 1:1).

The message, then, originated with God, was given to his Son and shared with human beings through an angel who entrusted it to the apostle John, the scribe. Thus, John is able to write in chapter 1:4,

'John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, ...'

And again in 22:8

'I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things.'

According to John himself (1:9) and early church historians, John wrote it while in exile on the Aegean island of Patmos about A.D. 90. Victorinus, who died c. A.D. 303, says that John was 'condemned to the labour of the mines by Caesar Domitian,' and that while there 'he saw the Apocalypse.' Domitian ruled A.D. 81-96.⁴

While most readers are fascinated with the imagery and the action, we should take another look at John's opening words:

'The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant, John, who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.'

Although John had these visions about sixty years after Jesus' ascension to heaven, their messages are not only shared with us *by* Jesus, they are *about* Jesus. That's the point so often forgotten in the fascination with the weird, and in the scramble for interpretation of the minutiae. In these visions Jesus reveals challenges to his authority, the action he will take, and appeals to us to ally with him and enjoy the outcome.

SIX WINDOWS

To me, reading *The Apocalypse* is like looking through six windows, in turn. Care to join me? This is what I see:

1st window (chapter 1). Christ: The Son of Man is the Son of God.

2nd window (chapters 2-3). The Church: What Does Christ Think of His People?

3rd window (chapters 4:1-8:1). The Issues: What is Christ Doing in Heaven?

4th window (8:2-11:19). Witnessing against All Opposition: What is Christ Doing on Earth?

5th window (12:1-22:5). The Tale of Two Cities: The Rise and Fall of Babylon; the Rise and Rise of the New Jerusalem.

6th window (22:6-21). The Soon-coming of Jesus: A Promise is a Promise

What we see, though, is one thing; the meaning is another. And that's where there is so much difference of opinion.

Jesus' message to John and his contemporaries—people wondering about the future and particularly *the End*—comprised many concepts with which they were familiar. After all, John was on the Mount of Olives when the disciples questioned Jesus about the End. Accounts of his answer appear in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. John, however, did not see the need to catalogue his recollections of that event in his Gospel.

On Patmos the Lord returned to John in vision and elaborated on the prophecy he made on the Mt. of Olives, and in so-doing, he employed many Old Testament concepts. Here are just a few examples:

For 'Babylon,' see Isaiah 47 and Jeremiah 50-51.

For 'horsemen,' see Zechariah 6.

For 'Gog and Magog,' see Ezekiel 38-39.

For 'wild animals,' see Daniel 7.

If you use the marginal cross-references in your Bible you will locate others.

These images are used because their characteristics are often the same. For example, Ezekiel foresaw Gog and Magog, an ancient king and his army, assaulting Jerusalem. He described their terrible defeat and the disposal of their corpses. Jesus, in *The Apocalypse*, foresees an all-out assault on the New Jerusalem by the devil and his followers, identified as 'Gog,' the king, with 'Magog,' his army. The 'Gog and Magog' scenario, depicted by Ezekiel, is consummated in *The Apocalypse*.

Some interpreters of *The Apocalypse* have seen Nero, Israel, the Papacy, the Saracens, the First World War, Turkey and the Soviet Union (the Soviet what?) in *Revelation*; in fact, everything and everyone, except Jesus Christ—and themselves! The wise interpreter allows the Bible to interpret itself and also watches lest he sees himself behaving like the forces of the Antichrist.

And that raises this question: On what side will each of us be standing during that final confronta-

tion? The followers of Jesus are in the New Jerusalem. The rest are outside the holy city. The reason is revealed in chapters 21:27 and 22:14, 15.

'Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.'

'Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.'

The Apocalypse assures us, in one way or another, that the kingdom of Jesus Christ will, despite

all appearances to the contrary, conquer all others and that he will reign forever and ever.

'Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.'



Endnotes:

1. Scriptures are from *The Holy Bible, New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: The Zondervan Corporation, 1985).
2. Consider this note on Revelation 1:1 in the *New Living Translation's Life Application Study Bible*: 'Through graphic pictures we learn that . . .'
3. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* on this verse carefully explains that, here, 'soonness' means that events foretold by God in the Christian Age are 'possible any day, impossible no day.'
4. See *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary*, art. 'Revelation.'

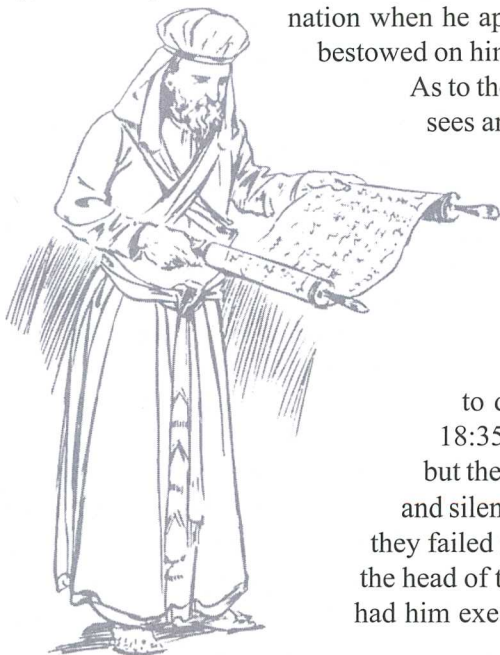
THE SADDUCEES

DID YOU KNOW?

The Sadducees, also known as 'the chief priests' were an aristocratic, high-priestly group who ran the Temple. Their lives were so intimately and completely involved with the Temple that after it was destroyed in AD 70 they disappeared from history.

The Sadducees were, by nature, highly critical people. The historian, Josephus, says that 'even towards each other [they] show a rather harsh spirit and they treat others like themselves as rudely as they do foreigners' (*War* 2.166). In another volume Josephus wrote they 'have the support of the rich only but no following among the masses' (*Antiq.* 13.298).

The Sadducees were very conservative and were far more interested in maintaining the status quo—which favoured them—than in seeking the good of the Jewish people. Because they were so satisfied with the present they were threatened by any messianic aspirations which could turn their world upside down. They, therefore, resented Jesus' action in cleansing the Temple (Mark 11:15-18), and were filled with indignation when he approved the messianic title, 'Son of David,' which the people bestowed on him: (Matt. 21:15-16).



As to their doctrines, the Sadducees rejected the traditions of the Pharisees and held only to the Word of God—some say just the five books of Moses. They did not believe in the resurrection or the future life (Acts 23:8), which is why they put to Jesus a question about a woman who had been married seven times: 'Which husband would she have in the resurrection?' Jesus answered them with a passage from the book of Moses (Luke 20:27-38).

The chief priests, Annas and Caiaphas, condemned Jesus to death (Mark 14:60-64), then handed him over to Pilate (John 18:35). Three days after his crucifixion Jesus rose from the dead, but the Sadducees did everything possible to cover up his resurrection and silence those who proclaimed it (Matt. 28:12-15; Acts 4:1-3). When they failed in this endeavour they arrested Jesus' brother, James, who was the head of the Christian Church in Jerusalem. According to Josephus they had him executed also (*Antiq.* 20.9.1).

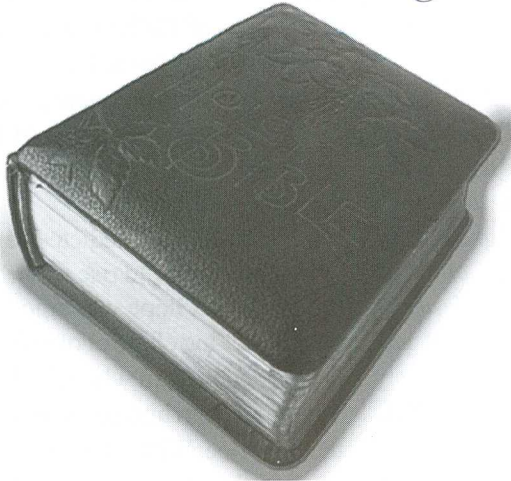


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THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Part 7

The Door to the Kingdom



Ritchie Way

This supplement to our series on the Gospel of John, provides a deeper look at John chapter three.

Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrin—the Jewish ruling Council—had been hearing fascinating stories about the young preacher from Nazareth called Jesus. The miracles that this Jesus had been quietly performing seemed to put him in the category of a prophet like Elisha. Might it be possible that this Jesus was the long promised Messiah?

Like most Jews, Nicodemus believed that the Messiah would restore the kingdom to Israel. No Jewish king had reigned over Israel since the Romans had annexed the country. Nicodemus believed that, under the promised Messiah, Israel would not only regain its independence and lost territories, it would become the centre of world government. Jerusalem—the place where the Messiah/king would reign—would become the capital of the world and the nations would bring their tribute into the city.

Nicodemus decided to check out this extraordinary man for himself, so he spent some time seeing if he fitted the specifications. The Scriptures taught that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2). That seemed to be a problem because Jesus came from Nazareth, but, on asking around he discovered that Jesus had indeed been born in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:3-12). The Scriptures taught that the Messiah would be a descendant of King David (Psalm 132:11). Jesus checked out on that one too, for he was a descendant of David as well (Matt. 1:1-16; see John 7:41-42). The Scriptures foretold that the Messiah would be born into the Tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10) and, yes, Jesus had been born into the tribe of Judah (Heb. 7:14). Furthermore, the miracles that Jesus worked attested to God's power at work in him (John 3:2). In every way Jesus measured up to what the Scriptures said the Messiah would be.

There was one thing, however, that Nicodemus did not know; *when* would God's kingdom be established on Earth? He decided to visit Jesus to sound him out on this very matter. As both Jesus and Nicodemus were busy men the evening would be the best time to visit for they would then be free to talk without interruption.

Nicodemus knocked on the door and as he entered the lamp-lit room, Jesus, without introductions, declared, 'I tell you the truth [Nicodemus], *no-one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again*' (John 3:3).

It not only astonished Nicodemus that Jesus knew what he had on his mind, but the revolutionary nature of Jesus' statement set him back on his heels. Evidences for the kingdom of Rome could be plainly seen everywhere. The tower of Antonia—a castle in Jerusalem which housed a legion of Roman soldiers—was plainly visible to all. Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator who lived on the coast in Caesarea Maritima, visited Jerusalem regularly on government business. Roman tax collectors abounded everywhere. All these things could be seen with the natural eye. So what did Jesus mean when he said, '*No-one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.*'

Jesus seemed to be indicating that his kingdom belonged, not to this world, but to another dimension, and the only way into that dimension was to be born into it.

Just as the children in C.S. Lewis's book, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, could only see the world of the other dimension by passing through the wardrobe, so the only way anyone could see Christ's kingdom was to pass through the 'wardrobe' of the new birth.

(Continued on page 16)

Discussion Point

GNU is a meeting of minds from a wide range of church affiliations and therefore, opinions expressed in our articles may differ from that of many of our readers. Recognising that opinions can differ and we all have much to learn and unlearn, we encourage our readers to participate in this forum.

WHAT KIND OF DEATH?

Dear Ritchie

I am writing to strongly object and point out an error in your editorial for March 2009. What you say is not biblical.

*As I understand the God-head, Jesus Christ, my Saviour, is God the Son and he never believed himself incapable in anything, for which reason I was aghast at your comments in the editorial for March, 2009 where you said: 'He died believing that his whole future would be annihilated forever with his death on the cross.' This is so **not true, Ritchie**. This is EGW re-visited! What about Mark 10:34 where Jesus described what they would do with him, ending in his death, and stating that 'three days later he will rise'?*

*The Bible is clear; Jesus knew who he was and spoke clearly and boldly to his hearers. For example John 14:9 says, 'If you have seen me you have seen the Father.' Jesus told his disciples he would be arrested, humiliated, spat upon and killed, but declared he would come back from the dead. Can you imagine our Almighty God saying that Jesus' whole future would be annihilated etc. No, Ritchie, not on your life! Jesus was the Holy Child of God who came to earth to **give** his life as an atonement for the sins of the world, knowing that*

he would accomplish his act of mercy and people like me, in the depth of sin, would one day read of this supreme act of grace and accept it and become a 'child of God'. So please don't put Jesus in the category of one who was uncertain in anything whatsoever.

P. J.

Dear P

I think I can understand where you are coming from, but I am not teaching that Jesus lacked certainty, rather, I am defending the most certain thing he ever did. Romans 4:25 says, Christ 'was delivered over to death for our sins.' And Romans 5:8 says he 'died for us.' That means Jesus, as my substitute, died the death that I, as a sinner, should die.

What death would I eventually die had Jesus not died in my place? According to Paul it would ultimately be 'everlasting destruction'—'shut out from the presence of the Lord' (2 Thes. 1:8-9). This means that if Jesus did not experience that very same death when he died in my place, then his sacrifice for me would have been insufficient, as it would have fallen light years short of the penalty that would have been demanded of me.

There are only two choices, eternal life or eternal death (Rom. 6:23). Those who have God have life, those who do not have God do not have life (John 3:36; 1 John 5:11-12). Jesus had eternal life right up to the time he was 'shut out from the presence of the Lord'—aban-

doned by God (Matt. 27:46 NCB). At that point he became 'sin for us' (2 Cor. 5:21) and paid the price that all sin will pay, which is total annihilation—eternal death.

Jesus was never uncertain about the price he would have to pay for our sins. He knew the cost all too well, which is why he went through a life-and-death struggle in the garden of Gethsemane, pleading with the Father to take that awful cup from him if it were possible. (It is unlikely that he would have sweated great drops of blood over three days in the grave.)

While Jesus predicted several times that he would rise again from the dead, that hope was smothered by the choking cloud of our sins that descended on him when the Father withdrew from him so he could pay the full price. Without the Lifegiver, he died the same hopeless, futureless death that every sinner without God will also die. Christ, of his own choice, descended from the very highest place to the very lowest place for us (Phil. 2: 6-8). For our sakes he 'made himself nothing' in the most absolute sense.

But Jesus, who gave himself fully for us, was raised from the dead three days later, because our sins were *on* him, but not *in* him. He paid the penalty for our sins, but because they did not stain his character, as they have stained ours, God was able to raise him from the dead.

Ritchie.

FACT OR FICTION

Hi Ritchie

Should Christians read fiction?

T. R.

Hi T

That is a difficult question to answer because fiction is a broad category that covers many genres which include works such as *Pooh Bear*, *Wind in the Willows*, *Vegetables*, *Pilgrims Progress*, and *The Shack*.

Even Jesus used a popular fic-

tional story to make a point (Luke 16:19-31). (I don't think anyone today would want to defend the reality of a place under the earth called Hades, where rewards are given to the righteous and unrighteous immediately after death—particularly when Jesus made it clear that rewards would be given, not after death, but at his Second Coming [Rev. 22:12] when the dead are raised [Luke 14:14]).

Some fiction does have a redeeming factor that positively influences the thinking of many people who don't read the Bible. Fiction author David Baldacci put it this way: 'Fiction is a sort of way to set the record straight and let people at least believe that justice can be achieved and the right outcomes can occur.'

Having said that, there is much in the world of fiction writing that discerning Christians would refuse to contaminate themselves with. Be careful what you read because, as Dr. Ford has said, 'There is not enough time to read good books, so choose only the best.'

Ritchie.

ERROR

Good morning Ritchie

The Easter issue of GNU arrived here duly yesterday. Thank you for the fine work that you have put into this. One small matter: The Michael Ireland page took me by surprise. While I warmed to the overall thrust of the article, I wondered where he (or was it Ron Kitching?) found authority for the sentence in the second column, 'He [Fred Hoyle] subsequently became a Christian.' Someone else's website? (This can be risky!) An excerpt from Hoyle's diary? A biography of Hoyle? A newspaper report at the time of Hoyle's death?

T. L.

Hi T

Thanks for pointing out that embarrassing oversight. I'm not

sure how it slipped past my guard. While Fred Hoyle opposed Darwinian evolution there is no evidence, that I know of, that he became a Christian.

Ritchie.

SAVED BY HIS LIFE

Dear Ritchie

Both you and Desmond Ford have stated, 'I'm saved by the death of the Son of God,' or similar wording. That is not entirely correct, because the Bible says we are reconciled to God through the death of his Son, but we are saved through his life (Rom 5:10).

M. P.

Dear M

The death of Jesus, which atoned for our sins, saved us from the wrath of God which Jesus experienced on the cross—a wrath that results in eternal death (Rom. 5:9; James. 5:10). The life of Jesus, on the other hand, saves those who have been reconciled through his death (Rom. 5:10b). What does Jesus save them from, or for? He saves them from a sinful life so they can live a sanctified life for God.

Ritchie.

BIBLICAL VIEW OF CREATION

Dear Editor

All around the world people have been celebrating the 150th anniversary of Darwin's Theory of Evolution. I read where a statue of Charles Darwin was unveiled at Cambridge University. There seems to be overwhelming support for Darwinian evolution among the intelligentsia. What does the Bible teach about the biblical view of creation?

E. C.

Dear E

Apart from the fact that the Bible tells us very clearly that it was through Jesus that God 'made the universe' (Heb. 1:2), there is no 'biblical view of creation.'

No doubt you will ask, 'What about the first chapter of Genesis? It reveals that God made the world

in six days and rested on the seventh.' To that I would reply: 'Genesis 1 needs to be understood in the context in which it was given. It was written to counter the pagan influence of the Akkadian *Enuma Elish*, and it was written for the Hebrew slaves who had been emancipated from Egypt, where almost anything from the Nile to the sun was worshipped as a god. These Hebrews, who had been corrupted by Egyptian worship (Eze. 20:5-12), needed to be taught about the nature of the God who had redeemed them. Was he another god like the gods of Egypt, or was he different?

So Moses, under inspiration, wrote Genesis 1 which teaches that Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews, was radically different from the gods of Egypt. The gods of Egypt were all created things like frogs, jackals and the sky, whereas the God of Israel was the *Creator* of all these things. In Genesis 1 God says, in effect, 'Do you see the sky and all the creatures that fly in the sky? None of these is a god. They were all created by me. Do you see the sea and all the creatures that live in it? None of these is a god. They were all created by me. Do you see the land and all the plants and creatures that live on it? None of these is a god. They were all created by me. I AM the Creator and they are the created. If you want to be in a covenant relationship with me, the Creator, you will signify this by observing the seventh day as the Sabbath.'

So what is the biblical view of creation? The biblical view is that 'by the Word of the Lord were the heavens made' (Psalm 33:6). The New Testament reveals that 'Word' was the living Word, Jesus (John 1:1-3). But nowhere in Scripture are we told how he made 'all things'. That is a mystery which he has left us to discover, because it is his glory to conceal a matter, but man's to search it out.

Ritchie.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN



The Door to the Kingdom

(Continued from page 13)

Nicodemus found that concept confusing and difficult to come to grips with, because it conflicted with his personal belief that God's kingdom would be like David's kingdom, only grander. When he questioned Jesus' statement about the new birth, Jesus added, *'Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, "You must be born again."'*

'How can this be?' asked Nicodemus.

Jesus replied in effect, 'There are two worlds, Nicodemus, this world and God's world. You are born into this world by the flesh; you are born into God's world by the Spirit. Just as your earthly father brought you into this kingdom, so only your heavenly Father can bring you into his.'

ADAM BORN OF THE SPIRIT

Let me take you back to the beginning: Do you remember the story about the creation of Adam? It is written in Genesis 2:7: *'The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.'*

God didn't breathe the breath of life into the animals when he gave them life (Gen. 1:24), so why did he do it to man? What was the significance of God filling man with his breath? The answer is found in Job 33:4. It says there, *'The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life.'*

In English poetry we have parallel sounds, e.g.

'Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater;

Had a wife and couldn't keep her.'

Or

'Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall.

Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.'

Hebrew poetry, on the other hand, has parallels of ideas. In Job 33:4 the phrase, *'the Spirit of God,'* parallels *'the breath of the Almighty.'* In other words, God's breath and God's Spirit are the same. They are the same because the Hebrew word, 'breath' (*ruah* or *neshemah*) may also be translated 'spirit.'

The Greek work, 'breath' (*pneuma*), can also be translated 'spirit'. In John 20:22 Jesus breathed on his disciples and said, *'Receive the Holy Spirit.'* So when God breathed his Spirit into Adam, Adam became a union of the human and the divine. He was

the first living temple for God's Spirit. No animal ever became a temple for God's Spirit, for God didn't breathe his Spirit into any of them. That privilege was reserved solely for human beings.

So what was the very next thing that God did with Adam after he had breathed his Spirit into him? The Bible says he put him in the Garden of Eden. Genesis 2:8 says, *'Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed.'*

As soon as man had become a union of the human and the divine, God took him out of the world and put him in Eden—his kingdom—the land of eternal life. And man would remain in God's kingdom as long as God's Spirit was within him. Inside the walls of Eden lived those who were a union of flesh and Spirit; outside the walls lived those that were only flesh.

But because God had created man as a free creature having the power of choice, he told man that as long as he signified his allegiance to the Lord by eating from the tree of life he could stay in Paradise, the land of eternal life. But should he chose not to have God in his life, all he had to do was eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. While God cautioned Adam against making such a devastating choice, he would nevertheless respect Adam's decision if that's what he wanted.

When Adam and Eve trusted the devil's words rather than God's, and ate the forbidden fruit, the Holy Spirit departed from them, leaving them naked of his Shekinah glory that had covered them like a robe of light (Gen. 3:7).

Now here is the crux, because Adam and Eve no longer had the Holy Spirit dwelling within them, they were cast out of the land of eternal life into the land of flesh. And because Adam and Eve were no longer a union of the human and the divine, they were unable to pass on to their offspring what they didn't have to give. As descendants of the first couple we are born naked of the Spirit. That is our inheritance; that is the legacy of original sin.

Original sin is not what Adam and Eve gave us; it is what they took from us. We were all born without the Spirit, and, consequently, we have all been sinners from birth.

THE LAST ADAM

Did I say we have all been sinners from birth? There is one who wasn't a sinner from birth—and that was Jesus. The Bible calls him *'the last Adam'* (1 Cor. 15:45). Why was he called 'the last Adam'? Because, like the first Adam he was born of the Spirit of God. Matthew 1:18 says Mary was *'found to be of child through the Holy Spirit.'* Like Adam, Jesus

was born of the Holy Spirit at his first birth. And the Holy Spirit kept him from sin so he could die as an unblemished and unspotted sacrifice for the sins of the world.

So Jesus is in God's kingdom because he was the perfect union of the human and the divine. He came to earth to set up his kingdom here—a kingdom that would be filled with citizens who were a union of the human and the divine. But how would Jesus get citizens for his kingdom when none of us were born of the Holy Spirit when we came into this world? There is only one way; we have to be born again. Jesus said, *'I tell you the truth, no-one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit ... you should not be surprised at my saying, You must be born again.'*

Our first birth got us into the kingdom of this world; our second birth gets us into God's kingdom. This is the birth that occurs when God enters the living temples of our bodies and takes up residence there as our Lord and Saviour.

Let's look at four texts that reinforce the teaching that we are only citizens of Christ's kingdom if we have the Lord in our hearts:

2 Corinthians 13:5

*'Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realise that **Christ Jesus is in you**—unless, of course, you fail the test?'*

Here the apostle Paul writes about a personal examination we should all make to see whether or not we are in the faith. If Jesus Christ is in us, we pass the test; if he isn't, we fail.

Romans 8:9-10

*'You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, **if the Spirit lives in you**. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.'* Here the apostle says all who belong to Christ have the Spirit living in them; if they don't they do not belong to Christ.

1 John 5:11-12

'And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.'

Here the apostle John reveals that eternal life is found, not in us, but in Jesus. The only way to have eternal life, therefore, is to have Jesus. If we don't have Jesus we don't have eternal life.

Matthew 25:1-8

This is the parable about the wise and foolish virgins. The wise virgins, the ones **with the Holy Spirit** in the lamp of their lives, go in to be with Christ, while those without the Holy Spirit are kept outside.

WHAT DO WE HAVE TO DO TO BE BORN AGAIN?

Jesus said that those who are born again are born of water and the Spirit. What does it mean to be *'born of water'*? Being *'born of water'* is a *double entendre*—it has two meanings. At our first birth we are born of water when the bag of waters breaks and we experience our first 'baptism' which marks our entrance into this world. At our second birth we experience our second baptism, which portrays our entry into Christ's kingdom through faith in Jesus. Through baptism we show our faith in Jesus who died for our sins, and was buried, and who rose again from the dead for us. Jesus died for our sins and rose again from the dead to show that he had conquered our greatest enemy—death. If we die with him, we shall also rise with him.

Nicodemus turned to Jesus and asked: *'What, then, is the key to the new birth? What do I have to do to be born again?'*

Jesus replied, *'Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life'* (John 3:9, 14-16).

In saying this, Jesus pointed Nicodemus back to an event in Israel's history when the children of Israel were travelling through the desert from Egypt to Canaan and many folk died when they were bitten by poisonous snakes (Num. 21:4-9). The Lord told Moses to make a bronze snake and lift it up on a pole so that people with snake-bite could look at it by faith and live. Jesus told Nicodemus that just as Moses lifted up the snake, so he (Jesus) would be lifted up that everyone who had faith in him would live.

Nicodemus didn't really understand what Jesus was talking about when he said he would be lifted up, but, three years later, when Jesus *was* lifted up on the cross, the Saviour's words came back sharply to him. While still not understanding why Jesus had to die in this manner, Nicodemus realised that Jesus had known all along what his fate would be, so he put his trust in him. He and Joseph of Arimathea came out into the open in their support of the One whom the Jewish leaders had totally rejected.

Our rebirth also comes about when we see Jesus as the full and complete sacrifice for all our sins, and, like Nicodemus, stand up for the One whom the world rejects.

Prior to my new birth I had an empty space within me that I tried to fill with all kinds of pleasure, but none of them worked; none of them satisfied.

The reason why none of these things worked, is because the blank space in you and me is a God-shaped blank and only God can fill it perfectly. When God came into my life I felt complete for the first time ever. Christ took me and put me in his kingdom and heaven began. He wiped away my tears and filled my heart with hope, joy and peace. And I had eternal life—life that would never, ever end. Death would have no more impact upon me than a good night's sleep.

Now how we are born again varies from person to person because we are all different. Some, like Paul and the Philippian jailer have dramatic, almost instantaneous, born-again experiences. Others, like John Mark and Timothy, are born again over a period of time. It doesn't really matter *how* you are born again; the only thing that matters is that you *are* born again.


Just be aware that being born again is quite different from being a cultural Christian. A cultural Christian goes to church, mixes with other Christians,

serves as an elder or deacon or whatever, calls himself/herself a Christian, knows quite a bit about the Bible, doesn't swear, smoke or drink alcohol, but is *not* born again; Christ does not dwell within. That person is an empty temple because they have not been born again of the Holy Spirit.

HOW CAN I BE BORN AGAIN?

If you sincerely want to be born again, thank Jesus that he died for you and willingly ask him to come and live in your heart. It often helps if you invite a friend, or pastor, or Home Group, to pray with you as you open the door for Jesus to come in. It's that simple.

Jesus is saying to you: *'Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me'* (Rev 3:20).

Will you open the door and invite him in? 

A QUIZ ON BEGINNINGS

In the space on the left enter the name of the book of the Bible that begins with the words in the adjacent block. The correct answers are given below, *but not in the correct order.*

1		That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen ...
2		In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem ...
3		In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways ...
4		In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
5		The LORD called to Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting.
6		The LORD spoke to Moses in the Tent of Meeting.
7		When king David was old and well advanced in years, he could not keep warm, even when they put covers over him.
8		In the days when the Judges ruled there was a famine in the land.
9		In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
10		In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach ...
11		The words of the Teacher ...
12		A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ ...

**Daniel; Acts; Leviticus; 1 Kings; Matthew; 1 John;
Genesis; John; Numbers; Ecclesiastes; Hebrews; Ruth.**

—(Answers on page 19)

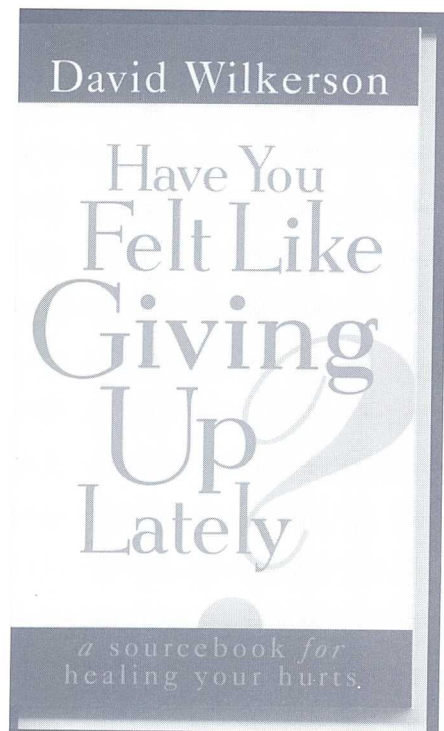
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10-12 Brilliant, 8-10 Commendable, 6-8 Ohoo!, 0-6 Ahem!

(1) 1 John (2) Daniel (3) Hebrews (4) Genesis (5) Leviticus (6) Numbers (7) 1 Kings (8) Ruth (9) John (10) Acts (11) Ecclesiastes (12) Matthew

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