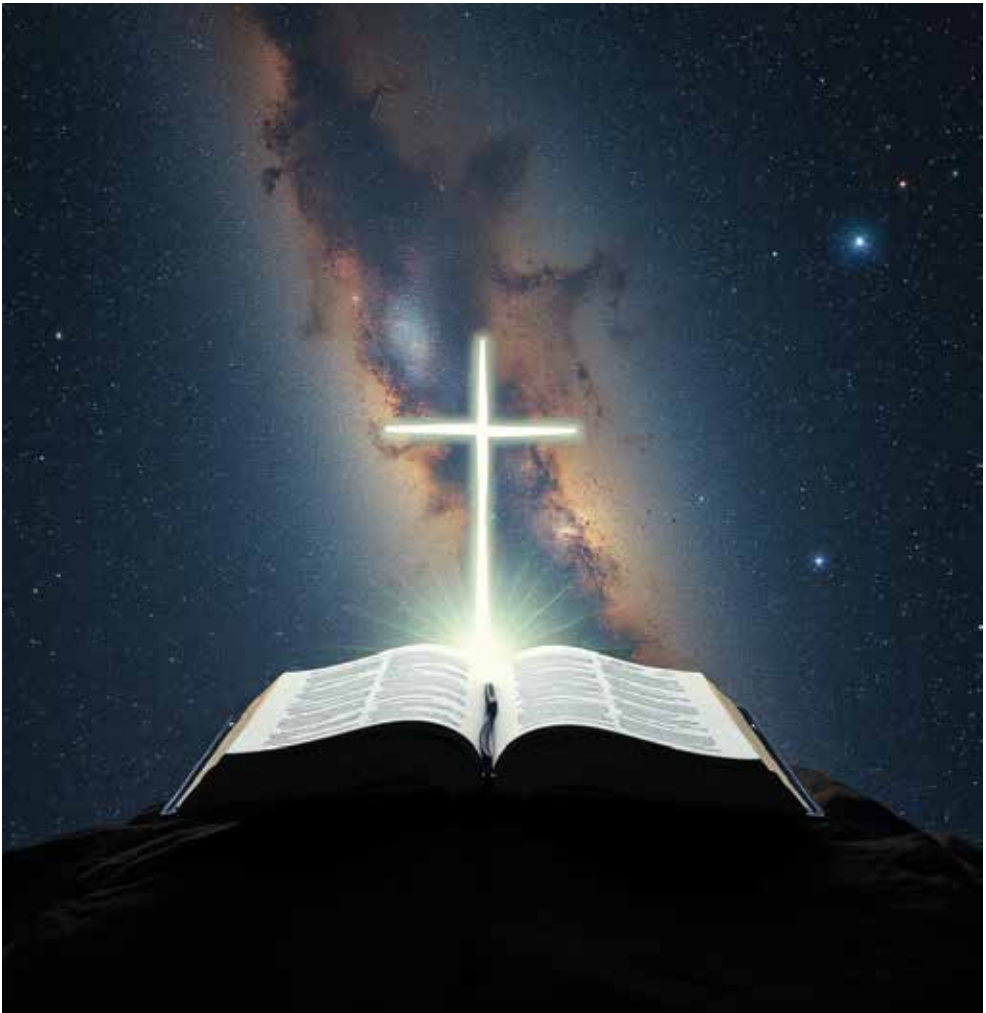


EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY & APOLOGETICS CHALLENGES



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Preface:

A central motivation amongst Evangelical Christians is proclamation of the Gospel message of salvation. However, many people who have been exposed to scientific discoveries are asking questions about how to relate these to the Bible.

My conviction is that people should be presented with more than one way of answering some of these questions, especially the questions relating to Genesis chapters 1 and 2.

The importance of presenting more than one approach can be illustrated by real life testimonies, such as the following.

For a number of years I have been presenting seminars and webpage articles on how I personally relate the Bible messages to my scientific training. On one of these occasions a leading pastor in an Evangelical Christian church made it known to me that he had a different understanding than mine.

My approach is based on my conviction that the universe and our earth are billions of years old. The pastor believed that scripture told us our earth was about 6000 years old. We agreed to differ and for several years remained in good Christian fellowship whenever we met.

However, a few years later he approached me for a copy of one of my books. I discovered that his views on Creation had not changed but his son was now at university studying scientific subjects and had told his father that if he expected him to accept his father's views on Creation then the Bible was no longer of any relevance to him.

This testimony highlights the Father's wisdom and his concern for his son. He was now prepared to tell his son that he did not have to accept his father's interpretations in order to be a Christian because he had a book for him from a fellow Evangelical Christian who presented a different interpretation that was more acceptable to some people who were scientists.

This example serves to illustrate why I am convinced that evangelists need to become familiarised with how fellow believers view some scriptures differently, especially the scriptures relating to Creation.

This flexibility enables us to interact more meaningfully with a multitude of scientifically impacted people in ways that they can relate to. This in turn can open minds to look further into the Bible message of Salvation.

One more testimony was from a New Zealand geologist. He came to faith in Jesus late in life and decided to join a local church. He was surprised to find that Christians in this church believed that the Earth was a few thousand years old, rather than the billions of years documented by scientific discoveries. He asked himself whether he had to abandon all his knowledge of geology in order to be a Bible accepting Christian. For him that would be like committing “Intellectual suicide”.

He wrote to me to say how relieved he was to discover my webpage and see that a Christian can accept the scientific understandings about the age of our universe and earth.

In addition to questions about Creation, there are other important subjects on which Christians sometimes disagree. This book raises some of these questions for serious consideration. Ways of answering questions is sometimes referred to as ‘Apologetics’.

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Chapter 1:

What is Evangelical Christianity?

A commonly held definition: Those who accept the Bible as their Supreme Authority in all matters of faith and morals.

1.1 The National Association of Evangelicals (www.nae.org)

The National Association of Evangelicals describes Evangelicals as ‘a vibrant and diverse group, including believers found in many churches, denominations and nations’. These churches include traditions classified as Reformed, Holiness, Anabaptist, Pentecostal, Charismatic and others. Core theological convictions provide unity in the midst of diversity.

Core convictions outlined by historian David Bebbington include:

- Conversionism:** The belief that lives need to be transformed through a “born again” experience and a life-long process of following Jesus.
- Biblicism:** A high regard and obedience to the Bible as the ultimate authority.
- Activism:** The expression and demonstration of the gospel in missionary and social reform efforts.
- Crucicentrism:** A stress on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as making possible the redemption of humanity.

Some of the Evangelical churches do not highlight their belonging to evangelical beliefs and may simply emphasise their core convictions of the triune God, the Bible, faith, Jesus, salvation, evangelism and discipleship. (Bebbington D.W. & Jones D.C. 2013. ISBN 0199664838. *Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism in the United Kingdom ...*)

1.2 The Lausanne Covenant (<https://lausanne.org>)

There are some important challenges facing all Evangelical Christians when trying to reconcile core beliefs with questions raised by many people, both within the churches and outside the churches. In many cases these questions relate to reconciling the Bible and Christian theology with the explosion of scientific

discovery and to reconcile teachings about the character of God with observed events in the world.

It follows that Evangelicals need to consider the factors that hinder outreach programmes from being maximally effective. This necessitates detailed evaluation of answers to questions that can support presentations of the Gospel message.

Questions with relevance to evangelism prompted convening the First International Congress on World Evangelisation, held in July 1974 in Lausanne. It was attended by 2,400 participants and key themes included the theological foundation for global mission, unreached people groups and a holistic approach that involves both evangelism and involvement with social justice concerns.

The conference also resulted in formulation of a document called 'The Lausanne Covenant'. The introduction reads: "We, members of the Church of Jesus Christ, from more than 150 nations, participants in the international Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne, praise God for his great salvation and rejoice in the fellowship he has given us with himself and with each other. We are deeply stirred by what God is doing in our day, moved to penitence by our failures and challenged by the unfinished task of evangelization. We believe the Gospel is God's good news for the whole world, and we are determined by his grace to obey Christ's commission to proclaim it to all mankind and to make disciples of every nation. We desire, therefore, to affirm our faith and our resolve, and to make public our covenant".

The document then considers the following topics:

The purpose of God; The authority and power of the Bible; The uniqueness and universality of Christ; The nature of evangelism; Christian social responsibility; The church and evangelism; Cooperation in evangelism; Churches in evangelistic partnership; The urgency of the evangelistic task; Evangelism and culture; Education and leadership; Spiritual conflict; Freedom and persecution; The power of the Holy Spirit; The return of Christ.

This full document can be downloaded from the internet. The conclusion reads: "Therefore, in the light of this our faith and our resolve, we enter into a solemn covenant with God and with each other, to pray, to plan and to work together for the evangelisation of the whole world. We call upon others to join us. May God help us by his grace and for his glory to be faithful to this our covenant! Amen, Alleluia!"

This First Lausanne gathering was followed by the Second International Congress held in Manila in 1989. The Third congress was held in 2010 in Cape Town and the Fourth congress is planned for September 2024 in Seoul, South Korea.

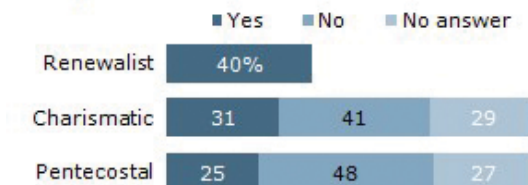
1.3 Pew survey at the Third Lausanne Congress in Cape Town

<https://www.pewforum.org/2011/06/22/global-survey-beliefs>

The survey was conducted on the 4000 delegates from 198 countries, who attended the Third Lausanne Congress in Cape Town.

The Pew survey resulted in the following statistics:

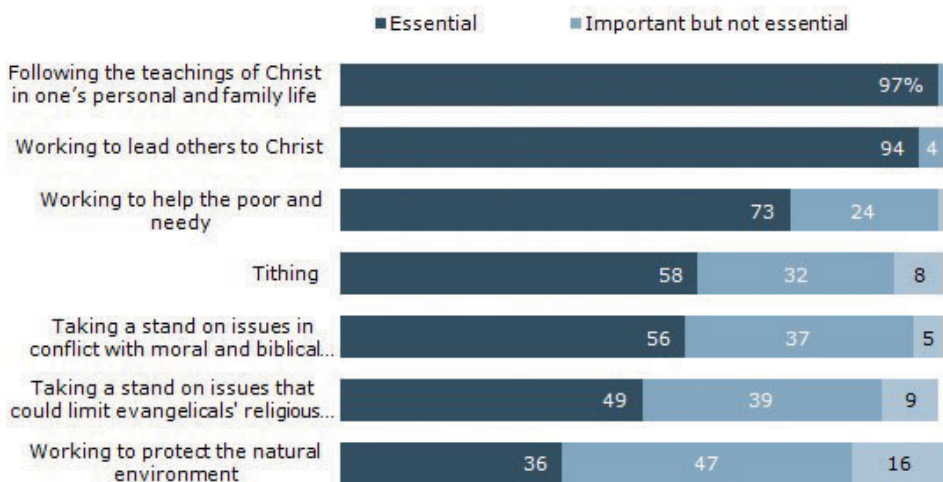
Religious Self-Identification



Q48a-b. Renewalists are those who describe themselves as either a "Pentecostal Christian" or a "Charismatic Christian."

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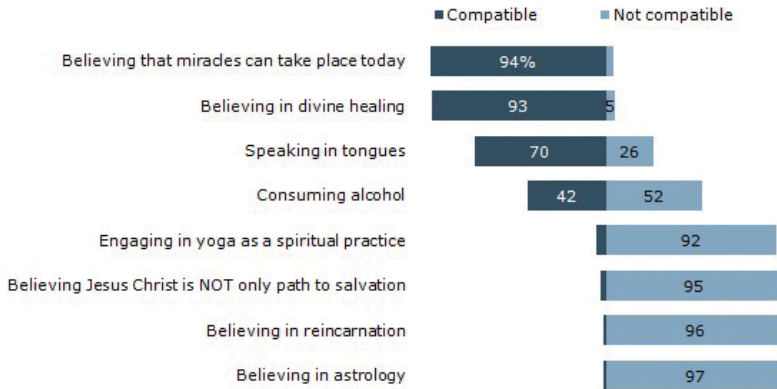
What Does it Take to Be a Good Evangelical?



Q17a-g. No answer responses not shown.

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What Is Compatible with Being a Good Evangelical?

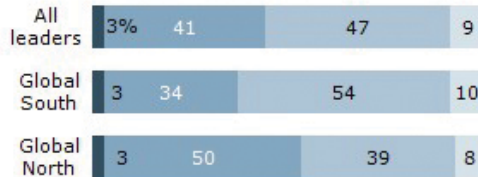


Q18a-h. No answer responses not shown.

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Evolution

- Evolution through natural selection
- Supreme being guided evolution
- Living things always existed as now
- No response



Q41.

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The Pew survey also looked at beliefs relating to creation and evolution. These have a direct bearing on some of the basic theology.

I will look in depth at beliefs about creation and evolution later in this book.

The survey analysis shows that only 3% of delegates accepted the purely scientific understanding of evolution through natural selection. Although 41% did accept God-guided evolution, while 47% still believed that living things always existed as seen today. **In other words the majority still reject the scientific evidence for evolutionary change over time.**

My personal experience has shown me that the group who accept God-guided evolution, have often not thought through how this must impact upon other theological beliefs, such as the origin of death, original sin, the significance of the Garden of Eden events in relation to the Gospel message and even in relation to the theology of healing.

Shared theological beliefs of most Evangelical Christians: A summary of the findings from the Pew research

Pew research: Summary of research findings.

- There was a high view of Scripture, meaning that the Bible is considered to be the ultimate authority for Christian theology and Christian conduct. Traditions and oral authority may exist in some of the churches but these must submit to scripture for determining theological significance.
- In the past most Evangelicals have relied on a literal interpretation of the Bible and some claimed that it is 'infallible' as originally written down. Also that its human authors were 'inspired' by God. However the Pew survey found that only 50% of evangelical church leaders now believe the entire Bible should be taken literally.
- Nearly all believe that the universe is the result of the creative activity of God.
- Nearly all accept the need for a personal conversion experience in which people are 'Born again'. This involves personally trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation.
- The sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross and his resurrection is the only basis for forgiveness of our sins and for reconciliation with God.
- Most Evangelical church leaders believe that there is no salvation except through the person and merit of Jesus Christ.
- Salvation cannot be earned. It is by faith alone. Good works are a response of gratitude for our salvation.
- Salvation means being rescued from spiritual death by personally accepting God's forgiveness of our rebellion against his authority and for our selfish behaviour. This leads to being 'Born again' spiritually and so entering into a personal relationship with God while here on earth and this continues into Eternal Life after death.
- Belief in a final Judgment Day for all who have ever lived.
- Belief that Jesus Christ will be the Judge.
- Belief that Jesus will determine the ultimate destiny of all people.
- Belief in a real Heaven and Hell.
- Belief that Hell was prepared by God for the ultimate destiny of the Devil and

his angels, as a place of separation from God's intimate presence, necessitated because angels are immortal beings and so cannot be destroyed.

- It is not God's desire that any of humanity land up in Hell.
- Belief that Jesus Christ will return to earth in visible form and the church will be gathered into his presence.
- There is an emphasis on publicly sharing the Gospel message.

1.4 Why look again at our theology?



The way that successive generations of Christians have interpreted parts of the Bible has changed over time. These changes have in part been the result of scientific discoveries about the universe and our world.

One famous example of Bible misinterpretation was the case of Galileo. In 1663 he was tried before the Inquisition of the Roman Catholic Church because his observations through the newly discovered telescope convinced him that the earth was not the centre of the universe.

The church believed that the scriptures said it was the centre. We now know that Galileo was correct in proposing that the earth and planets are in orbit around the sun. The important point to make is that there are a number of scriptures that can be interpreted in more than one way.

The church made the mistake, **also encountered in our days**, of trying to interpret and criticise the discoveries of science by quoting Bible passages. When this is done it is because theologians fail to understand that God's creation is another 'voice of God' telling us more about his creation and about the laws and processes he has used over long time-scales, in order to bring this creation into being.

In other words, it is wrong to formulate theology by only using the scriptures. **We need to allow some of God's revelations about himself in the scriptures to be**

amplified and better understood by listening to the revelations being exposed through scientific discoveries.

It is desirable to interpret some scriptures differently from how they have been interpreted prior to our scientific age. Scientific studies have included archaeological excavations, studies of ancient manuscripts, studies of the universe and of the evolutionary history of the earth.

How do we answer questions relating to our Christian Faith (Apologetics)?

The words of Paul to Timothy can be our motivation: *Do your best to present yourselves to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth* (2 Timothy 2:15).

I believe correctly handling the word of truth includes looking seriously at the issues raised in this book. In this way we can reach a balanced view of scripture that enables us to be un-ashamed to uphold its truths in this generation, who have been raised and surrounded by our scientific and technological discoveries. **It is a generation that has many questions that need to be answered** by us, if we are serious about bringing the Gospel message to those we meet.

Christians need to give **'Fact Based Answers'** to the many **'Fact Based Questions'**. Too often 'Faith Based Answers' are given to 'Fact Based Questions' that are asked by millions living in our generation. These 'Faith Based Answers' do not satisfy most people and can lead to many not taking the Bible seriously. Many people who we seek to evangelise do not initially believe in the Bible so giving them a quotation from the Bible as an answer to their Fact Based questions may be immediately dismissed by them.

For instance, one **'Fact Based Question'** can be: "How long ago was the earth created? "

A 'Faith Based Answer' might be: *The earth is about 6000 years old because the Bible says so.* (This is not what I would say but it is the sort of answer given by some Christians)

A 'Fact based answer' could be: *The earth is, according to scientific discoveries, at least 4.5 billion years old and fortunately the Bible can be reconciled with this conclusion, provided we are willing to look at **legitimate** alternative interpretations of the Genesis creation account.*

1.5 Definitions of heresy

Sometimes we may be tempted to classify as 'heresy' any theological viewpoint that does not match with the views that we currently hold. However, the history

of Christianity over the past 2000 years has shown that challenges to traditional interpretations have sometimes resulted in positive outcomes. For instance, when the German professor of theology Martin Luther challenged the theology of the Roman Catholic Church by pinning his 95 Theses to the church door on October 31 of 1517, this led to the formation of the protestant churches.

The King James Bible Dictionary defines Heresy as:

It derives from a Greek word signifying (1) a choice, (2) the opinion chosen, and (3) the sect holding the opinion. In the Acts of the Apostles (5:17; 15:5; 24:5, 14; 26:5) it denotes a sect, without reference to its character. However, in the New Testament it often has a different meaning attached to it. Paul ranks "heresies" with crimes and seditions (Galatians 5:29). This word also denotes divisions or schisms in the church (1 Corinthians 11:19). In Titus 3:10 a "heretical person" is one who follows his own self-willed "questions", and who is to be avoided. Heresies thus came to signify self-chosen doctrines not emanating from God (2 Peter 2:1).

To avoid being classified as "heretical" it is so important to discuss theological questions by considering all the scriptures with relevance to the subject, not merely selecting one or two that seem to support our preferred interpretations.

In our scientific age it also becomes essential to consider the "voice of God" speaking to us from his creation – *The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.* (Psalm 19: 1-2)

Scientific discoveries have vastly expanded the "voice of God" speaking to us from his creation. Not only does it expand our understanding of his power and glory, but also we are learning more about "how" God has created and how he is still operating within his creation. In other words, we are discovering more about scriptures like Colossians 1:16: *He is before all things, and in him **all things hold together**.* This highlighted reality is being dramatically expanded through the scientific discipline of Quantum Mechanics.

In this book I am attempting to challenge some theological views that are held by many fellow Evangelical Christians. I do this because a central feature of all evangelicals is proclamation of the Gospel message and this proclamation is often hindered if we fail to acknowledge the many legitimate questions that so many people are asking. If we do not give them answers then many will be kept away from taking the Bible seriously and so become blinded to the glorious Gospel of salvation.

Chapter 2: Theology and Science Questions

2.1 Age of our Earth

Before the scientific age many Bible scholars used scriptures to support their view that the earth is flat or that the sun and stars rotate around the earth or that the earth is about 6000 years old. However, the advance of scientific discoveries has forced most of us to look again at the scriptures we thought supported these views. Amazingly there is still a Flat Earth Society in America with hundreds of members!

Scientific discoveries have enabled many Christians to discover that scripture is flexible. The Bible is not a textbook of science but God is revealing much more about his power, wisdom and how he operates in his universe, through a study of his creation'

In this chapter I summarize some of the scientific evidence supporting the conclusion that our world is billions of years old. I aim to show that people who suggest our earth is only a few thousand years old, are ignorant of the enormous amount of evidence accumulated by scientific studies.

Evidence for an ancient world is given under the following headings:

- A. Continental drift caused by plate tectonics.
- B. Distribution of plants and animals around the world.
- C. The origin of oxygen in our atmosphere.
- D. Coal deposits and coal formation.
- E. Speed of mountain erosion and up-liftment.
- F. Ice cores drilled in Antarctica.
- G. Radiometric dating of rocks.
- H. The fossil record shows stages in life complexity over time.

A: CONTINENTAL DRIFT CAUSED BY PLATE TECTONICS



Gondwanaland reconstruction c.400 million years ago

About 400 million years ago all continents were joined together in a similar way as illustrated here. How do we know that this was the case? One way is to measure the movements of continents that are still taking place.

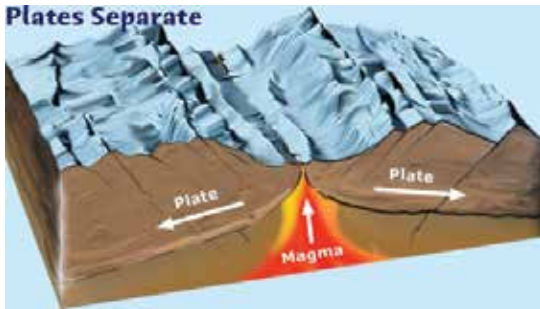
Satellites have enabled very accurate measurements that show continuing movement of whole continents.

For instance, Africa and South America are still moving apart at about 5cm per year. At this rate of movement it would have taken 160 million years for these two continents to reach their present positions.

It is interesting that the Bible account suggests that all land was initially in one place. We read: *"And God said, 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered in one place and let dry ground appear'"* (Genesis 1:9). The wording is very suggestive of a process.

Could the continents have moved apart more rapidly than suggested by present speeds of movement? In other words, could they have reached their present positions within thousands of years rather than millions?

Some people have even suggested that the continents suddenly moved to their present positions. There is no scientific support for this and such a sudden movement of all the continents would have destroyed all higher life through massive earthquakes and tsunamis.



To answer this question about speed of movements, studies of Plate Tectonics have shown the causes of continental movements. Basically, these are caused by molten magma welling up from deep within the earth and then spreading sideways, pushing the continents apart.

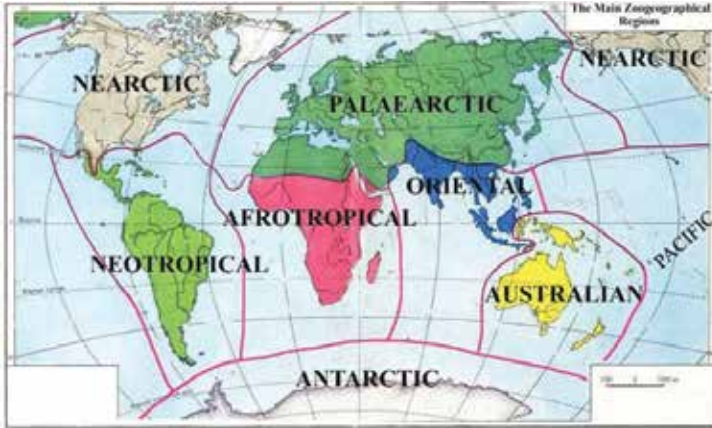


At about the midpoint between major continents this upwelling of magma has left vast under sea mountain ranges, such as the mid-Atlantic ridge, shown here.

These movements cause earthquakes and for continents to move apart more rapidly the earth would have experienced devastating earthquakes and tsunamis. In other words not the sort of world suitable for plant and animal life.

Evidence for slow continental drift is also shown by a study of animal and plant distribution around the world, as shown in the next image.

B: DISTRIBUTION OF PLANTS AND ANIMALS AROUND THE WORLD



Studies of the distribution of animals and plants reveal distinct regions. Each region has different animals. The most dramatic example is Australia. According to the studies of continental drift, Australia broke away from other land masses before the earth contained placental mammals.

Later in this article we look at how the complexity of life on our earth has changed over time.

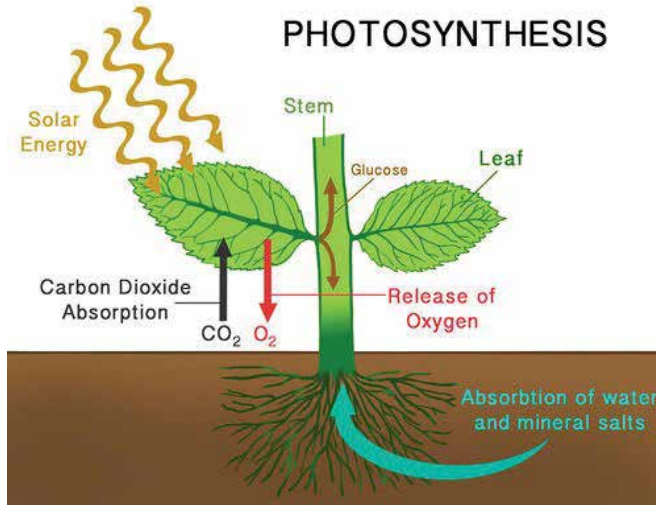


The most ancient rocks contain only single celled creatures. Younger rocks contain multicellular fossils. When we come to warm blooded mammals, the earliest were marsupials. Only in more recent rocks do we find fossils of placental mammals. Australia has its rich diversity of marsupial mammals such

as kangaroos, because this continent broke away from other land masses before placental mammals were on earth.

C: THE ORIGIN OF OXYGEN IN OUR ATMOSPHERE

The early earth's atmosphere contained very little oxygen. We know that nearly all of the oxygen was created by living organisms using the complex process that we call photosynthesis. This process has been described by some biologists as the most complex known to biology and yet it appeared in early life forms.



In the illustration we see that sunlight is used as an energy source enabling plants to absorb CO_2 from the atmosphere and in combination with water and mineral salts to create sugars within plants and as a by-product to release oxygen into the air.

We can calculate that, even if the world was totally covered with plants, it would have taken at least 300 million years for the oxygen to reach the levels needed for sustaining higher life forms such as humans.

Recently (Sweetman et al 2024: doi.org/10.1038/s41561-024-01480-8) it has been discovered that potato sized metallic nodules on some areas of the sea floor act like batteries splitting water into hydrogen and oxygen. Available evidence suggests that the oxygen released contributes only a little to the total oxygen in our atmosphere.

D: COAL DEPOSITS AND COAL FORMATION

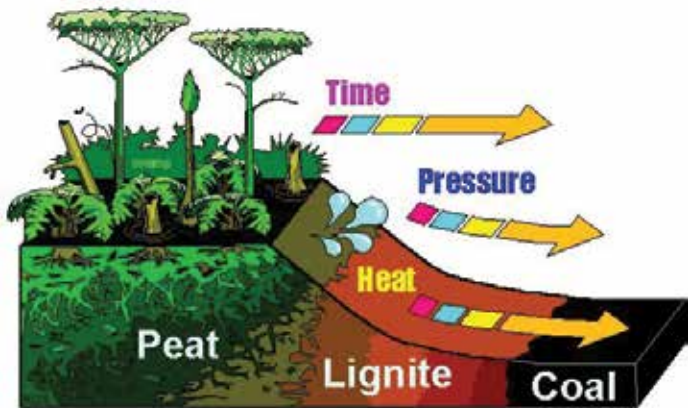


In these pictures we see a series of coal deposit layers separated by layers of hard rock. Furthermore, analysis of the various coal deposits shows that they were formed from vegetation that differed from deposit to deposit.

Some people have suggested that coal deposits were all formed during one vast world-wide flood event. The evidence clearly shows that this was not the case.

The process of coal formation takes long periods of time.

The process of coal formation involves creation of peat from dead vegetation. The early earth had vast forests of early types of trees. These forests supported the large dinosaurs that were the dominant land creatures of that time.



When peat layers became covered with other deposits they underwent extensive periods of heating and compression, finally resulting in coal.

E: SPEED OF MOUNTAIN EROSION AND UPLIFTMENT

Our continents are composed of solid materials floating on a molten magma. These solid materials are lighter than the more dense molten magma. In a similar way that boats on water have a portion of the hull under the water and a portion above the water, continents show this same characteristic.

In other words, a mountain such as shown here may extend thousands of meters above sea level but below such mountains the continent has a corresponding 'root' extending down into the molten magma.



As weather, wind and plant growth slowly wear away the rocks, the mountain rises very slowly, so as to balance the mass above with the mass of the 'root' below.

In addition, continental drift has caused some land masses to collide, such as India hitting Asia and producing the Himalayan mountain range. As a result some rocks that used to be at sea level have now landed up high above sea level. This is why we can find sea shells and other signs of sea life high up on some mountains.

Another way of looking at these very slow processes is to study how soils are formed. Nearly all our soils are the result of a long process of breaking down rocks, so as to release their trapped minerals and so make these available for growth of plants. In other words, even before continents could support the luxuriant growth that led to coal formation, there had to be a long process of soil formation.

F: ICE CORES DRILLED IN ANTARCTICA

In recent years it has been possible to drill deep into Antarctic ice that has accumulated over many years. Analysis of the ice cores extracted from these boreholes has revealed fascinating things.

This study has shown annual ice deposits going back at least 800,000 years. The deposits of snow from each winter are determined by changes in composition between summer and winter deposits. By counting the number of winter deposits scientists can say how many years are involved.

In addition, we have historical records of major volcanic eruptions in various places and each volcano emits ash with a characteristic mineral composition. This ash becomes distributed worldwide by wind and weather and some has reached Antarctica.

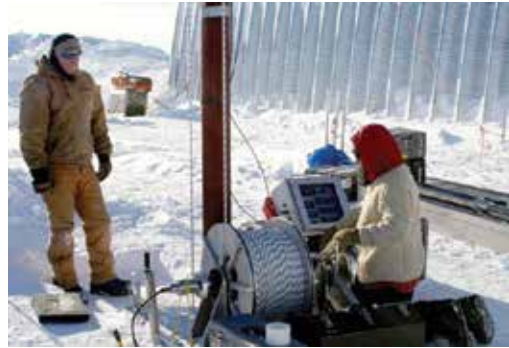
Volcanic ash within these ice cores has enabled the scientists to check their analysis of how many years of deposits they are looking at.

This study is not telling us the age of our earth but at least it should be telling us that it is more than 800,000 years old.

However, below this 800,000 year accumulation of ice we find rocks containing fossils, including amphibians and reptiles, as shown here and also fossilized forests.

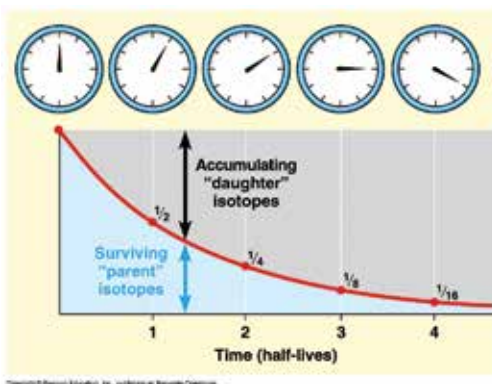
These Antarctic fossils also tell us that the Antarctic continent used to have a much warmer climate. In other words, these fossils add further evidence to the reality of continental drift.

The whole continent of Antarctica once existed much closer to the equator and enjoyed a mild climate suited for vegetation and animals.



G: RADIOMETRIC DATING OF ROCKS

I have left discussion of radiometric dating to after I outlined some of the other evidence for how ancient our world is. This is because those who hold to a theory of a young earth often claim that these dating techniques are faulty. They can point to a very few examples of where the dating was incorrect. However, the methods used have been shown to be reliable in most cases.



Radiometric dating utilizes the fact that radioactive elements periodically give off ‘particles’ of energy as radiation and this changes the structure of the parent element.

The rate that this radiation is given off is different for each radioactive element and the rates of ‘decay’ have now been studied in laboratories for over 100 years.

The time it takes for half of the ‘parent element’ to change to its new form is called the ‘half-life’ and these ‘half-life’s’ differ for each radioactive material. By measuring how much change has occurred (shown by the amount of ‘daughter isotopes formed), we can obtain an approximate length of time since the element was originally formed.

The table gives some of the radioactive elements and their ‘half-life’ in millions and billions of years and the dating range suitable for analysis of sample materials. Each method has known margin of error but some rocks can be dated accurately enough to show their great age.

In this way the formation of some rocks has been dated to about 3.5 billion years.

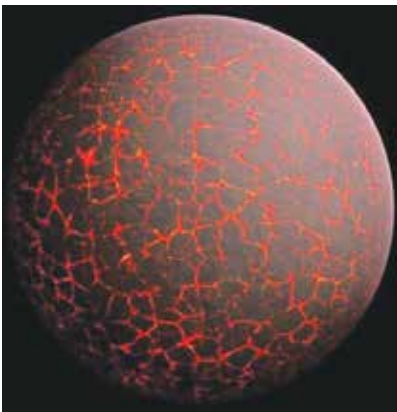
Elements Used in Radioactive Dating

Radioactive Element	Half-Life (years)	Dating Range (years)
Carbon –14	5,770	500-50,000
Potassium – 40	1.3 billion	50,000-4.6 billion
Rubidium –87	48.8 billion	10 mill – 4.6 bill
Thorium – 232	14 billion	10 mill – 4.6 bill
Uranium – 235	713 million	10 mill – 4.6 bill
Uranium – 238	4.5 billion	10 mill – 4.6 bill



These rocks in Greenland have been studied by using five different radiometric dating methods and all the methods give an age of about 3.5 billion years.

The skeptic may ask how sure are we that the rate of radiometric decay has not changed over time, resulting in us thinking rocks are much older than they are.

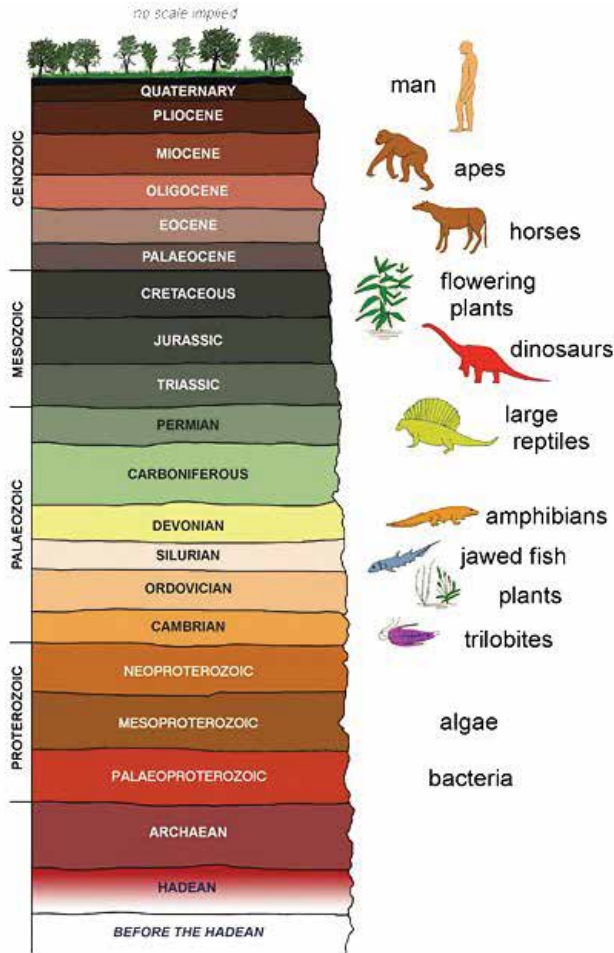


To reduce a 3.5 billion year old rock to a mere 6000 years would mean speeding up radiometric decay by at least 500,000 times. Since each decay event gives off radiation and radiation causes heating, such a massive speeding up of radioactive decay would have reduced our world to a ball of molten rock. This would certainly not be a planet suitable for life!

In other words, radiometric dating gives us another major means for studying the great age of our world.

H: THE FOSSIL RECORD SHOWS STAGES IN LIFE COMPLEXITY OVER TIME

Once science established that the rocks on Earth have varying ages, it became



possible for geologists to divide the earth's rocks into layers of differing ages.

This led to discovering that some rocks contain fossils of long dead creatures, many of which no longer exist alive in the world. This in turn has shown that all life forms did not appear on earth at the same time.

The fossils reveal that the oldest rocks contain only unicellular life forms. A bit later, some 500 million years ago, there was suddenly a great variety of multicellular life forms. This is referred to as the Cambrian Explosion.

However, most of the life forms seen in Cambrian fossils no longer exist on

Earth. More recent rocks contain more complex creatures and more complex plants.

In other words, the creation of life on Earth did not all take place at the same time. It was spread over millions of years!

Relationship between an ancient Earth and the Bible?

Some Evangelical Christians who still believe our Earth is only a few thousand years old, do so because they think that the Bible requires them to do so. In my opinion this is very unfortunate for the following main reasons:

1. The Bible is not a scientific textbook and so our interpretations of what it says about Creation should not overrule the evidence from nature of how God has created.

2. The Bible says that *'The heavens declare the glory of God'* (Psalm 19 and other passages). It is science that is revealing more about 'How' God operates in his universe. He uses the laws and processes he has created in order to continue his activities.
3. The Bible Genesis account of creation is open to various legitimate interpretations. A link to my own interpretation is given in chapters 2.2 and 2.3.
4. Some people fear that acceptance of evidence for an ancient universe, containing long processes, will conflict with the Christian Gospel message. There does not have to be any conflict.
5. When people cling to belief in a young earth and deny long processes of Creation, this results in the vast majority of our scientifically literate generation rejecting the relevance of the Bible. When the impression is given that this is the only way of looking at Creation, it places an enormous stumbling block in the way of reaching our generation with the truth about God, his Creation, the Bible and the relevance of the Christian Gospel message.

2.2 The 'DAYS' of the Genesis Creation account

There are various ways that authors have tried to interpret the Bible Genesis creation account.

In this article I am only looking at the approach that views the account as a description of actual events – the so-called '**Concordist Interpretation**'.

Within this general category are several variations. The one I am looking at in this article is the so-called '**Day-Age Interpretation**'. This interpretation suggests that creation occurred over billions of years. Each 'day' of the Genesis account corresponds to a long epoch. Events occurred in the order given in the text, but stretched out over a much longer time period.

This approach to understanding the Genesis account has to overcome several important questions.

1. Can we interpret the Hebrew word for day 'Yom' as meaning a long period of time?
2. Does the phrase '*the evening and the morning*' have to mean a single day of 24 hours?
3. How can we harmonise the characteristics of each creation 'Day' with the discoveries of science?
4. Where do Adam and Eve fit into the creation account?
5. What impact does all of this have on the meaning of Bible teachings about original sin and redemption through the person of Jesus Christ?



Origin of the Genesis account

Archaeology has discovered several creation accounts of ancient Near East religions and some similarities between them, but only the Bible account is monotheistic. We can ask the important question; which ancient creation account came first?

Archaeology has revealed documents in Cuneiform writing on clay tablets at the ancient city of Uruk, that date to about 3200BC. The Genesis account was written down much later, somewhere between 1446BC and 1400BC.

If we accept that Moses was the main influence determining the incorporation of the Genesis account into the Hebrew Scriptures, this has to lead us to the possibility that he had access to earlier documents. It is even possible that the libraries of ancient Egypt contained early creation accounts written close to the Bible date for Adam. Moses, as a Prince of Egypt would have had access to all the learning and libraries of ancient Egypt.

The Bible dates for major events are as follows:

Date of Adam: Approximately	4157 BC	(calculation on page 47: Adam and Eve)
Birth of Noah:	3056 BC	
Great flood:	2456 BC	
Israelites go to Egypt:	1876 BC	
Exodus from Egypt:	1446 BC	



Until very recently archaeologists thought that Cuneiform documents such as shown here, were merely simple means of basic accounting, such as tallying grain sales.

However, in 2016 it was reported that recently deciphered ancient clay tablets revealed Babylonian astronomers to be more sophisticated than previously thought. Reported in the journal *Archaeology* (Editors 2016

& in Ball 2016).

These cuneiform tablets showed that ancient Babylonian stargazers used geometric calculations to predict the complex motion of Jupiter!

Cuneiform documents from 3200 BC and possibly even earlier contain descriptions of historical events.

At left: Statue of a scribe dated to about 2400 BC.

It becomes increasingly probable that Moses was led by God to read the creation story on clay tablets dating from long before the other creation accounts that appeared in Near Eastern religions.



The Bible clearly states that **Moses used written accounts** detailing other information recorded in our Bible book of Genesis. For instance, chapter 5 starts with the words: *This is the **written account** of Adam's line.* Moses

probably had access to other early written accounts relating to creation, Adam and Eve and other Bible characters. The account of the flood of Noah's time (2456 BC) could have been written in Cuneiform by Noah himself.

If Moses used a creation account dating from 3200 BC or even earlier, possibly originally recorded by Adam, then the accounts of other religions are probably distortions of the original account. The other creation accounts, such as the Sumerian, are known from clay tablets and archaeologists believe these accounts originated between 1400 BC and 1800 BC. (Mark 2011 and Luckenbill 1921).

Suggestions by some scholars that Genesis chapters 1 to 3, was primarily written to counteract the polytheistic accounts in other religions, may only be part of the truth. **I believe Moses was enabled to write the Genesis account through his knowledge of a much earlier Cuneiform document.**

Suggestions by some scholars that Moses used oral traditions as his source for Genesis, is becoming increasingly unlikely. Oral traditions, passed on verbally from generation to generation, could not have maintained all the minute details of ancestors, including all of their ages at death and the other details we read about in Genesis. That is my conclusion about oral traditions and the need to reject that theory.

God's evolving revelations about himself

It is important to understand that God has progressively revealed aspects of himself in stages, during human history.

For instance:

1. Revelations about himself as Creator of all things (Genesis account).
2. Revelations about the meaning of sin, demonstrated in the Garden of Eden.
3. Revelations about his character and the importance of faith, given to Abraham.
4. Revelations given to Moses, including the sacrifice rituals that pointed to a future fulfilment in Jesus.
5. Revelations given to the other Old Testament prophets, including prophecies about future events.
6. Revelations given through the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. He changed some of the teachings given to Moses and he himself fulfilled prophecies. For instance, he changed the Mosaic teaching of *'eye for an eye'* to *'love your enemies'*.
7. Revelations given through inspiration of the Holy Spirit to Paul and other New Testament writers.
8. Revelations given about creation through the on-going discoveries of science. In other words, the expansion of scriptures such as *'The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the works of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge'* (Psalm 19:1-2 NIV).

This leads me to an explanation of how I approach this question of DAYS.

- Can we interpret the Hebrew word for day 'yom' as meaning a long period of time?
- Does the phrase "evening and the morning" have to mean a single day of 24 hours?
- Why look for an alternative understanding of Creation 'days'.

Can we interpret the Hebrew word for day 'Yom' as meaning a long period of time?

Our first question relates to the Hebrew word 'YOM' that is translated in several ways in various parts of the Bible. According to Bible concordances such as Young (1971), this word is translated in the following ways and number of times:

Day 1167 times; **Age** (plural) 6 times; **Time** (singular and plural) 65 times;

Season 3 times.

Other scriptures tell us that God operates independent from our time scales. For instance, "*For a thousand years in your sight are like a day (YOM) that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night*" (Psalm 90:4 NIV). This does not say God's 'days' are 1000 years long. It says that time is relative to God and he is independent from the limitations of time. In other places we are reminded that he exists from 'eternity to eternity' or 'timelessness to timelessness'

Other scriptures tell us that God sometimes compares our earth 'days' with longer timescales. For instance, in Ezekiel we read how he was told by God to lie continuously on his left side for 390 days and then on his right side for 40 days. Ezekiel was told by God that the 390 earth days represented 390 years that the nation of Israel had rebelled against their God. The 40 days represented 40 years of rebellion by the tribe of Judah (Ezekiel 4:1-6).



This prophetic act by Ezekiel is a good example of how a time period in our human experience can represent a much longer time period in relation to God.

The Ezekiel event helps us to understand that **when God spoke to Moses and told him that the Israelites must work for six days and rest on the seventh,**

we cannot assume he is saying that the 'creation days' are literal 24 hour

days. God is using the ‘creation days’ as an illustration of our human need for a day of rest but **it does not have to mean that the human days equal God’s creative days.**

Compare the various ways YOM is used in the Genesis account

We discover that this word ‘Yom’ is used in several different ways within Genesis chapters one and two:

- In chapter 1 verse 5, *God called the light “day” (Yom) and the darkness he called “night” (layelah).* **Here the light half of a day is called YOM.**
- After each creative ‘day’ (Yom) we read *‘and there was evening and there was morning’.* **Here a full ‘day’ is called YOM.**
- Chapter 2 records that on the seventh YOM God *rested from all his work.* However, unlike ‘days’ 1 to 6 this seventh day is not ended with the phrase *‘and there was evening and there was morning’.* We might conclude that **we are still living in the seventh YOM.**
- Chapter 2 starts off with a summary of creation. It is not meant to be a second creation account. **It is simply a summary that introduces us to the Garden of Eden account. The Garden of Eden events took place after the creative ‘days’.** The true significance of the chapter 2 account is lost in some modern Bible translations. The King James and some other Bibles translate the Hebrew correctly. It reads: *This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day (YOM) that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.*(New King James Bible).



This fourth use of YOM is very significant for the following reasons:

- Each ‘creation DAY’ in chapter 1 is introduced with the words **‘And God said’.** However, in Genesis 1:1 this phrase is not used. We were told that *‘in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth’.* This was **before** Day one of creation. We are not told how long it took to create the heavens and the earth.
- In the Chapter 2 summary of creation we are told that the ‘heavens and earth’ and also the events linked to watering the ground, **all took place in ONE YOM!**
- Watering of the ground could not have taken place until there was ground to water. We are told in chapter 1 that **land first appeared above the waters on Day 3 of creation.**

In other words, the creation of heaven and earth and the other creation events described during Day 1, Day 2 and Day 3 of chapter one, are all included in ONE YOM in the chapter 2 summary!

This means that **the YOM of chapter 2 is not limited by ‘an evening and a morning’** and it encompasses at least three creation ‘days’ plus an unlimited creative period described as *In the beginning God made the heavens and the earth*. **This YOM of chapter 2 covered ‘ages’ of time.**

This comparison of scripture with scripture should lead us to conclude that the word YOM for ‘day’ is not limited to 24 hour days and the chapter 2 summary of creation shows that YOM can include ‘ages of time’.

Does the phrase ‘*the evening and the morning*’ have to mean a single day of 24 hours?

The early Israelites naturally interpreted Genesis chapter 1 as speaking of creation in six literal days. This was long before the scientific age and so they had no inclination to look for other interpretations. Determining days as starting in the evening became the norm for Israel, based on their understanding of the Genesis days. Naturally, nearly all other Bible references to ‘evening and morning’ will refer to earth days of 24 hours because this definition of a day had been adopted by Israelites.

Although this term *evening and morning* normally refers to an earth day, there is one Bible passage where ‘evening and morning’ does not refer to a single day. This is in Daniel chapter 8. One of the visions given to Daniel included details of various empires that would rise and fall. Then in verse 26 Daniel is told: *"And the vision of the evening and morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision, for it shall be for many days"* (King James Version).

Unfortunately some Bible translations have wrongly changed the Hebrew ‘*evening and morning*’ to ‘*evenings and mornings*’. Some translations have even added words such as ‘*sacrifices*’ that are not in the original wording!

We may continue to investigate how to relate ‘*evenings and mornings*’ to the Genesis creation ‘days’ but we cannot exclude the clear evidence derived by comparing scripture with scripture, in relation to the meaning of the Hebrew word ‘Yom’. This comparison clearly shows that this word for ‘day’ is used as part of one day, as a whole day and as prolonged period of time including many days.

Are there other possible meanings of *evening and morning*?

There are other words that we normally associate with ‘evening’ and ‘morning’. For instance, Sunset and evening means the approaching ‘ending’ of a day. Dawn and early morning are associated with the ‘beginning’ of a new day.

I am suggesting that the Genesis days are saying that the ‘ending of a creative AGE also heralds the dawning of the next AGE.

Adopting an explanation such as this is needed if we are to take seriously **God’s voice** speaking to us from his creation, telling us that creation did not take place over six 24 hour days. For those of us who favour the so-called Concordist interpretation of Genesis, then reconciliation with scientific discovery compels us to accept that the meaning of YOM in the creative days is an extended period of time or an ‘age’.

Why look for an alternative understanding of Creation days?

Reasons for looking again at the creation days are as follows:

1. **We live in the age of scientific discovery** that clearly shows that our earth is billions of years old and that God’s creative actions have been spread over long time-scales.
2. **Reconciling the Genesis creation account with science is vitally important** if we are to help our scientifically literate generation take the Bible seriously.
3. We have seen that comparing the differing use of YOM in Genesis chapter 1 and 2, reveals that **YOM cannot be confined to meaning 24 hour days.**
4. We know that the rest of the Bible mainly links ‘evening and morning’ with earth days. This is totally understandable since **the Hebrew people had adopted this from their literal interpretation of Genesis, where earth days were taken to start at evening.**
5. **We should accept that God’s revelation of himself has taken place in stages.** It has been an ‘evolution of revelation’. Furthermore, we are told that we can learn more about God from his creation. Since we live in an age where scientific knowledge has exploded dramatically, it is logical to conclude that the correct interpretation of science can be another stage in God’s revelation of himself to man. Do we fight this evidence or do we accept that God is giving us these revelations, so as to better understand the Bible creation account? The universe reveals that God has used processes in creation and these were spread out over ‘ages of time’.
6. When we accept God’s revelation of himself through the discoveries of science, this can lead us to look again at traditional interpretations of the Genesis creation ‘days’ and to explore other meanings of the words *‘evening and morning’*.

A suggested translation of Genesis chapter 1:1-5

From the information presented in previous pages, I believe we can consider the 'days' of Genesis chapter 1 as being extended periods of time, representing major new developments during the history of creation. The major events recorded in each creative 'day' continue into the next creative 'day' but each successive 'day' also brings major new developments, in addition to the continuing events of the previous 'day'. For instance, the appearance of the light and dark portions of each earth day did not cease at the end of Day 1.

I suggest we can read Genesis chapter 1: 1-5 as follows:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

And God said, "Let there be light", and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day" and the darkness he called "night"

That was the ending of the first AGE and the promise of a new AGE.

Keep in mind that the original wording puts 'evening' before 'morning' and so it is suggesting that the first AGE (Yom) was ending and this was heralding the beginning of a new Age.

Conclusion about the meaning of 'Day' in Genesis chapters 1 and 2

As I mentioned earlier, the so-called 'Concordist day-age' interpretation of the Genesis creation account, is one of several different ways that Bible scholars have attempted to understand this very ancient document.

As a scientist I find it impossible to reconcile what science is revealing about our ancient earth, with an interpretation of Genesis that considers the creation days to be 24 hour days.

This potential conflict between science and Bible interpretation has led some contemporary scholars to view Genesis in ways that are not directly related to actual historical events, such as the sequential order of creation. However, I personally remain in the 'Concordist day-age' category because I believe that a careful analysis of the creation events described in the Genesis account **can be** reconciled with science.

How can this reconciliation with science be achieved?

This important question will be discussed next.

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2.3 Reconciling the Genesis creation account with science

In my previous section: 'The DAYS of Genesis creation account' I reasoned that the 'days' are in fact great creative periods, NOT 24 hour earth days. This leads us to consider several important questions. We will look at the Genesis account and discuss whether the described order of creative events can be reconciled with the discoveries of science.

I approach this subject in the following way.

1. I describe the major changes science tells us took place on our earth.
2. These major events are compared with the events described in the Bible Genesis account, as shown in most English language translations.
3. Apparent differences between the scientific account and Genesis account are listed.
4. Reconciling these apparent differences.

1. Major changes over time: according to science

Our earth was formed by many meteors and comets crashing together over millions of years. Science does not know how long this process took but there is evidence that the early earth was very hot due to these collisions.



However, by about 4.4 billion years ago it had cooled a lot and was covered by very hot and salty water. It was a water world and little if any land was above sea level. This hot sea resulted in an atmosphere of dense clouds due to water evaporation from the sea. The cloud layer was at first so dense that the sun's light did not penetrate to the ocean surface.



As the earth slowly cooled the processes of plate tectonics caused parts of the ocean floor to be pushed upwards and this resulted in a large continent called Pangaea about 335 million years ago. This initially barren land enabled fresh water to form in lakes and rivers, coming from rain and condensing mist. Before there was land all the earth's water was very salty like today's oceans.



The first life was unicellular and existed in water. Some scientists believe that the life was in the salty ocean but recently considerable evidence is suggesting it may have first appeared in fresh water on land (Mulkijanian, A, et al 2012).



The appearance of land and fresh water created an ideal environment for plant life. Genetic studies have shown that all plant life existing today on land originated from this filamentous chlorophyte alga that grew in fresh water.

Recent research by a team of geneticists suggests that land plants appeared much earlier than previously thought and possibly even before the Cambrian period when animal life first appeared in great abundance and variety in the sea.

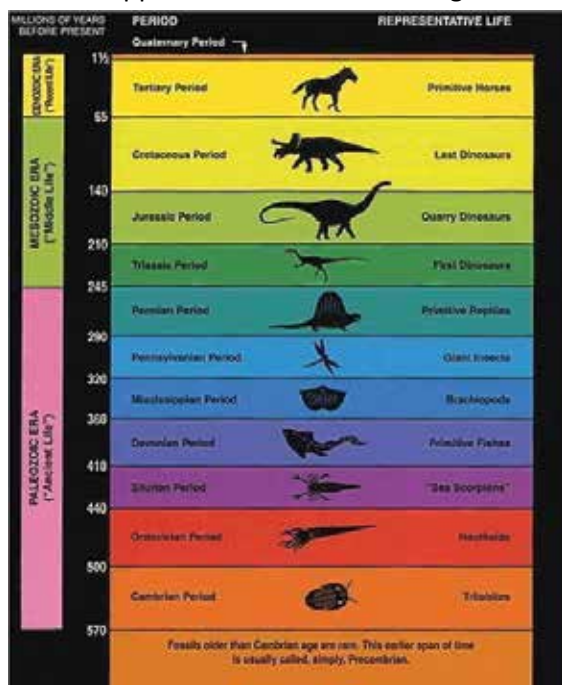
This extensive study by Morris and a team of researchers (2018) presents evidence that land plants first appeared in the Cambrian period.

According to science, the early earth atmosphere contained nearly no oxygen. However, over millions of years the complex biological process of photosynthesis produced most of the atmospheric oxygen needed by complex life forms. This process of oxygen formation started with some unicellular organisms in the sea but greatly accelerated once plants covered the land.

The appearance of abundant vegetation on earth not only led to increased

oxygen in the air but also to more dissolved oxygen in the sea. It is therefore not surprising that the fossil record shows a dramatic appearance of many different sea creatures at the same time when the land was first covered with vegetation, probably during the Cambrian geological period.

Once the earth contained multi-cellular creatures some of them became fossilised. These fossils have enabled science to determine sequences of increasing complexity of life.



The oldest rocks contain only relatively simple life fossils. More recent rocks contain fossils of more complex creatures.

The numbers shown at left on this diagram give ages in millions of years.

For instance, The Devonian period, often referred to as the age of fishes, took place between 410 and 360 million years ago.

The first flying creatures were insects. These appeared in great abundance during the Devonian period about **400 million years ago** (Misof et al 2014).



The first fossils of modern type birds come from about **35 million years ago**, although the fossil of *Archaeopteryx* (at right) comes from rocks dated at about 150 million years old.



We have several *Archaeopteryx* fossils that show they had feathered wings and other bird like features but also reptilian features like teeth. **Birds appear in the fossil record long after the existence of the first flying insects** and long after appearance of other large land animals (Chiappe 1995).

2. Comparing the scientific order of events with the Genesis creative stages

If we look at the order of events as seen in most English translations of Genesis, we encounter possible conflicts with science. The following table shows where apparent conflicts occur. After this we will look at the original Genesis text and see how legitimate alternative translations of the Hebrew can lead us to reconciling these apparent conflicts. Bible quotations from NIV version unless otherwise stated.

Major stages on earth According to science	Major stages on earth according to Genesis (NIV version)
Very hot beginning.	No comment on beginning process
No condensed water on surface	<i>‘God created the heavens and earth’.</i>
Later. Ocean over whole earth Thick cloud cover and darkness above the ocean.	<i>‘Spirit of God was hovering over the waters and ‘darkness was over the surface of the waters’</i>
As earth cooled further the cloud canopy thinned and sunlight started to penetrate down to the ocean.	And God said <i>“Let there be light” and he separated the light from the darkness He called the light “day” and the darkness he called “night” (Day 1).</i>
As the earth cooled further and the cloud cover became thinner, more often the clouds were higher and a space developed between the sea and clouds. The space was between water in the sea and water in the clouds.	And God said <i>“Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water”. And God called the expanse “sky” (Day 2).</i>
Plate tectonics resulted in parts of the ocean floor being pushed upwards to form land above the sea.	And God said <i>“Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place and let dry ground appear” God called the dry ground “land” and the gathered waters he called “seas” (Day 3).</i>

Soon after land appeared above the ocean this produced areas of fresh water and the stage was reached when plant life could thrive and rapidly diversify.

As the earth cooled further there were more frequent breaks in the cloud cover. Any observer on earth would have started to see the sun, moon and stars.

The first vertebrate creatures suddenly appeared in great diversity and abundance. This Cambrian period, between 570 and 500 million years ago.

A bit later insect life appeared in great diversity and led to many species of flying insects over the land.

Land based vertebrate creatures only appeared after the explosion of life that took place in the waters.

Then God said *“Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear Fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds” (Day 3).*

And God said *“Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, and let them be Lights in the Expanse of the sky to give light on the earth” And God made two great lights – the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars (Day 4).*

And God said *“Let the water teem with living creatures, and let ‘birds’ fly in the earth across the expanse of the sky” (Day 5).*

And God said *“Let the land produce Living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that Move along the ground and wild animals, each according to their kind”.*

Higher primates and mankind only appeared on earth after all the other animals.

Then God said *"Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over the creatures that move along the ground"* (Day 6).

Possible differences between scientific and biblical accounts

In **'Day 2'** the Genesis account speaks of separating the waters above from the waters below. In the original Hebrew the wording is more like the Septuagint version of the Bible and also in some other translations. It says: *"Let there be a firmament in the midst of the water, and let it be a division between water and water, and it was so. And God made the firmament and God divided between the water which was under the firmament and the water which was above the firmament."* (Genesis 1:6-7).

Some commentaries have suggested that the writer of Genesis was expressing a view held by people at the time, that there was a solid dome over the earth above the air and that there was water above that solid dome (firmament). The idea was that the stars and sun were fixed in that firmament. We ask whether that was the understanding of the Genesis account? Some ancient cultures apparently thought rain came through holes in the firmament.

In **'Day 3'** of the Genesis account the described vegetation includes trees and flowering plants with fruit and seed. The scientific account tells us that the first vegetation was without flowers or fruit.

In **'Day 4'** the Genesis account seems to suggest that the sun, moon and stars were only created at this time but science tells us that the sun, moon and stars were created long before this time.

In **'Day 5'** the Genesis account seems to speak of birds just after the appearance of abundant sea creatures. Science tells us that birds only appeared much later in the history of life and the only flying creatures at that time were insects.

3. How to explain these possible differences?

Explaining Day 2

Archaeological discoveries confirm that some ancient cultures believed in a solid dome (firmament) above the sky and that rain came through holes in this solid dome. However, in most Bible references referring to rain it is clear that the writers understood that it came from clouds, not from holes in a firmament. For instance, passages such as Psalm 77:17, Proverbs 3:20, Isaiah 5:6 and numerous other scriptures.

In Genesis 1:8 we read *'God called the firmament heaven (Hebrew: shamayin)*. It is important to note that this word 'shamayin' is also associated with 'air'. The word is translated elsewhere in the Bible as 'heaven' (388 times) and as 'air' (21 times).

It is therefore acceptable to consider that Genesis Day 2 is describing creation of a space (air), between the ocean waters and the water in the thick cloud canopy. In other words the creation of an atmosphere in which flying creatures could fly. Day 2 is describing the time when the earth had cooled further and the clouds had thinned and they were no longer so thick and no longer extended right down to the surface of the ocean.

Explaining Day 3

The first important step towards understanding the Genesis creation 'days' is to accept that these can be understood to be 'ages of time', not 24 hour days.

The second important step is to understand that God has created life with the ability to change over time. Day 3 is describing the major events that led to earth becoming suitable for land vegetation. The diversification of plants after this time was only possible because of these major changes on earth. Day 3 is talking about the dramatic appearance of vegetation and this would inevitably lead to all the diversity that we see around us today.

This also tells us that the Genesis account is a combination of describing actual events and making prophetic pronouncements. The prophetic pronouncement tells us that these major creative 'ages' will inevitably lead to increasing complexity of vegetation and other changes during the next great creative 'ages', namely during the Genesis Days 4 to 6.

Explaining Day 4

The Genesis account tells us that 'God made two great lights', namely the sun and moon. However, the Hebrew word used here for 'made' is 'asah'. This word can be translated in many ways. For instance, 'asah' is translated elsewhere in the Bible

as 'bring forth' (10 times), ordain (5 times), and perform (18 times). Most often it refers to something made from pre-existing things. For instance 'Adam made (asah) fig leaf clothing to cover his nakedness (Genesis 3:7) and God 'made' (asah) coats of skins (Genesis 3:21).

In other words Day 4 is not describing the creation of the sun, moon and stars. It is describing the time on earth when thinning of the clouds enabled any creatures with eyes to see these heavenly bodies. They now became available for determining times and seasons. We know that many creatures use phases of the moon, seasonal changes and even star patterns to determine breeding seasons and to direct migrations. The sun, moon and stars were now '**appointed to a function**' in relation to life on earth.

In addition, the existence of the sun before Day 4 is clearly implied in the Day 1 account of separating the day from the night. The sun could not be seen at the early stages, due to the thick cloud cover, but as the cloud layer thinned over time some of its diffused light could penetrate the cloud cover and enable distinguishing between day and night.

Explaining Day 5

When some translations of the Genesis account describe 'birds flying above the earth across the expanse of the sky', the Hebrew word translated as 'birds' is OPH. In other places the same word is translated as 'flying creatures'.

The fact that it does not here describe birds is seen from the following three considerations:

- a. Elsewhere in Genesis chapters 1 to 3, **birds are always described in the original Hebrew as 'Fowl of the air'**. This description of birds is found in Genesis 1:26, 1:30, 2:19 and 2:20.
- b. The Genesis Day 5 mention of flying OPH does not describe them as 'fowl of the air' but merely as 'flying creatures' (not birds).
- c. Elsewhere in the Bible the word OPH is used to describe insects. For instance, in the Bible books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy we read, *all flying insects (oph) that walk on all fours are to be detestable to you. There are, however, some winged creatures (oph) that walk on all fours that you may eat, those that have jointed legs for hopping on the ground ... any kind of locusts, katydid, cricket or grasshopper* (Leviticus 11:21-23) and similar details given in Deuteronomy 14:19.

From the above considerations we can legitimately interpret the Day 5 reference to 'Flying creatures' (OPH) as referring to the first creatures that could fly, namely the insects. Therefore, no conflict here with science.

4. A new look at the Genesis creation account

In the following translation of Genesis chapter 1, I take note of the many times the wording includes phrases such as 'let the earth bring forth', 'let there be' 'let the land produce vegetation'. These **words are very suggestive of processes, not instantaneous events!**

Also bear in mind that the account includes **two Hebrew words for 'made' or 'create'** namely 'asah' and 'bara'. The word 'bara' relates to making things out of something that cannot be seen. It is used in Genesis 1:1: *In the beginning God created (Bara) the heavens and the earth.* This is also stated in Hebrews 11:3: *By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things that are visible.* Also in passages such as Isaiah 42:5: *This is what God the Lord says – he who created (bara) the heavens and stretched them out.* **What a great description of the Big Bang creative event and the following expansion of our universe!**

The creative word 'asah' refers to making things from pre-existing materials but the word has several other meanings that are used in various Bible passages.

The word BARA is only used in the creation account:

1. For the initial creation of heaven and earth.
2. Creation of great sea creatures and everything living that moves in the sea (Day 5)
3. In the creation of mankind. However, with mankind the account states that mankind were **made** (asah) and **created** (bara). This is a clear reference to God forming (asah) our bodies from pre-existing material (dust of the earth) and breathing into us his Holy Spirit (bara). Adam and Eve were the first creatures to receive the Holy Spirit. They became a New Creation, just as we all become New Creations in Christ Jesus when we are 'born again' by the Spirit of God (2 Corinthians 5:17).

We also look at the word '**good**' as used in Genesis chapter one. The Hebrew word is '**tob**' and in some Bible passages it is translated as 'better' (71 times). In the Genesis account God looked at his creation and said "*It is good*". I suggest that the account is saying 'it is good for its purpose', not meaning a moral 'goodness'. Each creative AGE is better than the previous ones because the earth is becoming closer to its main conclusion, namely the creation of mankind.

As a zoologist, I also know that God created life to be mortal. All creatures die, as revealed in the fossil record and the balance of nature is maintained by food chains with predators and prey. In other words, the 'goodness' spoken about in

Genesis chapter one is not saying that living creatures were created immortal. Physical death has been part of nature from the beginning. I discuss the 'Origin of death' in chapter 2.6.

In the following suggested translation of Genesis chapter one I have not continued into chapter 2 because that will be the subject for a following chapter. I look there at who was Adam and how does the Garden of Eden account relate to creation and how does it link with the rest of the Bible.

In the following translation of chapter 1, I have added some explanatory notes within brackets.

A suggested amplified version of Genesis Chapter 1

In the beginning God created (bara) the heavens and the earth. The earth was initially formless (without a variety of features) and empty (no life), darkness was over the surface of the deep ocean and the Spirit of God was brooding over the waters.

And God said, *“Allow light to appear on earth”, and light became visible. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light “day” and the darkness he called “night”.*

That was the ending of the first creative AGE and the promise of a new one.

And God said, “Let there be an open atmosphere between the waters to separate water from water” So God made (asah) the open atmosphere and separated the ocean water below from the water in the clouds above. And it came to be so. God called the open atmosphere “sky”.

That was the ending of the second creative AGE and the promise of a new one.

And God said, *“Allow the waters of the ocean to no longer cover the whole world and allow dry ground to appear above the waters” And it came to be so. God called the dry ground “land” and the gathered waters he called “seas”. And God saw that it was good (suited for its purpose).*

Then God said, *“Allow the land to bring forth vegetation: seed-bearing plants (with methods of reproduction) and trees on the land that bear fruit with seeds for reproduction, according to their various kinds”. And it came to be so. The land produced vegetation, plants bearing means of reproduction, according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.*

That was the ending of the third creative AGE and the promise of a new one.

And God said, *“Let there be lights in the heights of the sky to separate the daylight from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, and let them be lights in the heavens to give light on the earth” And it came to be so. God*

ordained (*asah*) two great lights – the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night.

He also ordained (*asah*) that the stars will be visible. God set them (sun & moon) in the heavens to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good.

That was the ending of the fourth creative AGE and the promise of a new one.

And God said, “Allow the water to teem with living creatures, and let flying creatures (insects) fly above the earth across the atmosphere”. So God created (*bara*) the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every insect according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in numbers and fill the water in the seas, and let the flying creatures increase on the earth”.

That was the ending of the fifth creative AGE and the promise of a new one.

And God said, “Allow the land to produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground and wild animals, each according to its kind”. And it came to be so. God made (*asah*) the wild animals, each according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, “Let us make (*asah*) mankind in our image, in our likeness, and allow them to rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over the creatures that move along the ground.

So God created (*bara*) mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created (***bara***) them; male and female he created (*bara*) them.

God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in numbers; fill the earth and subdue it (bring it under your control). Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground”.

Then God said, “Your food will come from seed-bearing plants on the face of the whole earth, and from trees that have fruit with seed in it. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all creatures that move on the ground—every creature that has the breath of life in it, I give every green plant as food”. And it was so.

God saw all that he had made (*asah*) and it was very good (ideally suited for its purposes).

That was the ending of the sixth creative AGE

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast variety. **By this seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing;** so on the seventh day he rested from all his creative work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it

holy (set apart for a special function or purpose) because on it he rested from all the Asah and Bara creating that he had done. The King James translation is closer to the full meaning. It reads 'he had created (bara) and made (Asah)'.

NOTE: This seventh 'day' was not closed off with 'An evening and a morning'. Some Bible scholars, including Andrew Murray, consider that we are still in the seventh day (age) when God handed to mankind the task of managing and subduing the earth (Genesis 1: 28).

The Earth was now ready for God's plans for humanity. It was now ready for mankind to be 'fast tracked' into their greater destiny. The fast tracking started with the Garden of Eden demonstration

Conclusions on reconciling Genesis Creation with science

The Genesis creation account is an amazing document that summarises the changes that took place on our world over millions of years. Although it was written long before our scientific age, it is in remarkable agreement with the order of events being revealed to us through the discoveries of science. How did the original human author gets the facts right?

The account has been relevant to people in all ages, but today we have to take note of what God is telling us through the discoveries of science. If we listen to this 'voice of God' speaking to us through his creation, then we discover the details given in Genesis can be fully reconciled with scientific discovery.

I believe Genesis chapter 1 is an excellent example of how the Creator at times inspires human authors to write truths that they do not themselves understand.

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2.4 The Garden of Eden

The Bible tells us that the Garden of Eden was situated at the head waters of four rivers.

Two of these rivers are clearly known today, namely the Tigris and Euphrates. They both arise in the same mountainous area in today's Eastern Turkey or Armenia.



Genetic studies of the first domesticated food crops trace the origin of all seven crops important to ancient civilisation, to a small area within a 200 km circle in the upper reaches of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers (Kleiner 2006)

More recent research by a team of four researchers (Killian et al 2010) confirms these conclusions.

This map is taken from the Killian paper and it identifies the core area (kk) where domestication seems to have taken place, circled within the blue line. This is the Karacadağ mountain range in South-eastern Turkey. In other words, **exactly where the Bible Genesis account places the Garden of Eden.**



The account specifically states that Adam was placed there for agricultural purposes, *"The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it"* (Genesis 2:15).

Some people believe that the Bible account of this garden is poetic, designed to illustrate spiritual truths about the nature of sin, and that the account is not literally true. They point out reference to 'God walking in the garden', the 'talking serpent', the 'Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil', the 'Tree of Life', and the 'flaming sword' that kept Adam and Eve from returning to the garden after they had sinned. Those who believe the account is largely poetic do however sometimes acknowledge that it is based on real history.

Personally I am convinced that there was a literal Garden of Eden. The details given about its location speak of a real place and the genetic studies show that this same locality is the origin of human food crops and its locality is the same

as identified by some linguistic studies, as the possible origin of the first Indo-European language.

I have no problem with the reference to God 'walking in the garden' because there are other events in the Bible where God has revealed himself in human form. For instance, one of the three 'people' who came to Abraham to announce the destruction of Sodom (Genesis 18: 16-33). Also, at Mount Sinai God revealed himself in the 'tent of meeting' as someone whom Moses spoke to 'face to face' and Moses could see him (Exodus 33:11 and Numbers 12: 6-8) and before the destruction of Jericho (Joshua 5:13-15). Joshua encountered the 'man' with a drawn sword, who identified himself as "the commander of the army of the Lord". Then, Joshua was told to take off his sandals. This request was never made by angels, only by God in the 'burning bush'. (Exodus 3: 4-6).

In our scientific age serious discussions have been held about the nature of 'time' and the possibility of time travel and going back in time. According to what we know of physics and time, it may be theoretically possible to 'time travel'. The Bible has spoken about this as a reality and that Jesus was present in past generations and at the creation and was actively involved in the creation (John 1: 4, John 8:57, Hebrews 1: 2-4 and other scriptures).

It is consistent with scripture that 'God walking in the Garden of Eden' was Jesus. Furthermore, God was involved with the Garden in a very 'hands on' practical way. We read that **the Garden of Eden was a special place, different from the surrounding areas.** God arranged that this garden would only contain trees good for sight and with fruit good to eat and without harmful things such as thorns. We read that God '*made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food*' (Genesis 2:9). **Note that these trees were not created instantly in the Garden. They grew (a process).**

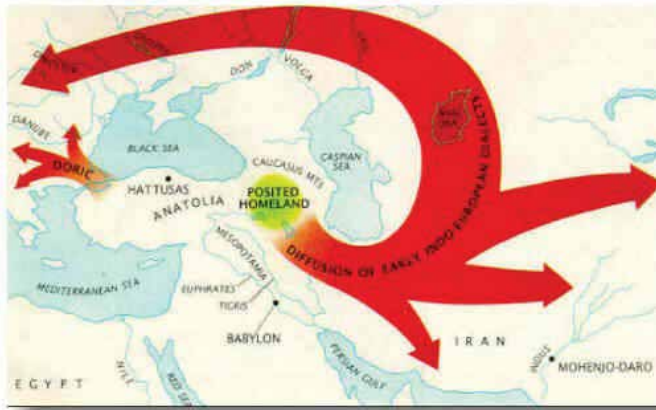
Harmful things and thorns existed in the surrounding areas because we read that God had finished his creation before the Garden of Eden events. The Bible also tells us that, *through him ALL THINGS were made; without him nothing was made that has been made* (John 1:3). Thorns were not created after Adam and Eve sinned! The ground was 'cursed' for them only because they were expelled from the special and unique Garden of Eden and then faced the realities found in the rest of creation, including thorns and other difficult things that God had instructed them to 'overcome or subdue'.

Did Satan really appear to Adam and Eve as a speaking serpent? In at least one other occasion in the Bible we read of an animal being used by God to speak in human language, when Balaam's donkey spoke (Numbers 22: 21-31). Can we question that Satan could speak through a real serpent?

Why was the Garden of Eden important?

Scientific research has shown that mankind experienced a dramatic advance in civilisation about 4000 BC, with appearance of the first true cities and complex human activities such as mining, social structures and organised religion. Before that time there were groups of simple buildings but no evidence of writing, mining or complex social structures. This dramatic advance in humanity took place at approximately the time that the Bible says Adam and Eve existed.

Studies of human language suggest that complex language also arose suddenly and that the origin of all Indo-European languages could have originated in the Middle East Anatolian region (Bouckaert 2012). This is one of two leading scientific



theories formulated by researchers into the origin of languages. It is very interesting that this suggests the appearance of the first complex proto-language could have been at the approximate time and locality that the Bible places Adam and Eve.

We are told that God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden, *to work it and take care of it* (Genesis 2:15).

God also instructed Adam to name all the animals. This process would have taken many days. Clearly, there was a long period of interaction and instruction between God and Adam before God made Eve. We are told that Eve was only made after Adam had named all the animals (Genesis 2: 20-22).

I personally believe that **God gave Adam new knowledge that was needed to 'fast track' humanity into a path that would lead to God's ultimate plan for humanity and human history.** Anatomically modern humanity had all the attributes needed for the technological advances required if they were to fulfil God's mandate: *'To subdue the earth and bring it under their control'*. They were created 'in the image of God' but to enable expression of the Godly attributes of self-awareness, creativity, appreciation of beauty, spiritual awareness and other God given qualities, mankind needed a complex language and instruction from God himself.

We know that when anatomically modern people are raised without contact with other humans, such as the rare cases where abandoned infants have been raised by wild animals, they cannot communicate in a human language. We are not born with a complex language! A child needs instruction from people who already speak. In like manner, anatomically modern humanity, with the brain capacity and voice box structure suited for speech, would be restricted to communicating mainly through signs and vocalisations similar to what we see in chimpanzees, **until they were exposed to a language speaking teacher who could instruct them in a complex language.**

It is probable that Adam was the one who was taught the first complex language, advanced agriculture, mining of minerals, other advanced knowledge and teachings about God.

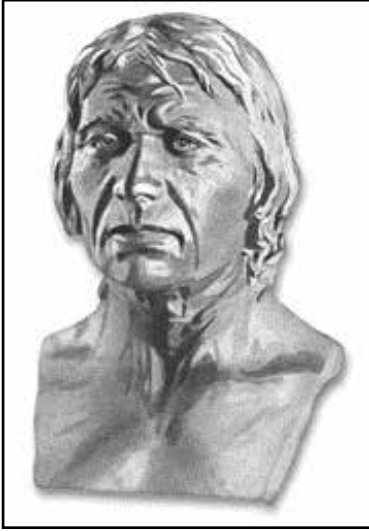
Another important question relating to the Garden of Eden is; who were Adam and Eve?

I will discuss this important question in my next section 2.5. We will consider the scientific evidence for humanity before the time of Adam and Eve. We will also look at what the genesis account says about other humanity existing at the time of Adam and Eve.

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2.5 Adam and Eve and the Nephilim



Various Bible passages refer to Adam as a real person. For instance, Genesis chapter 5 gives a family tree, starting with Adam.

The genealogy in Luke chapter 3 takes us generation by generation back to Adam. Paul refers to Adam as a real person in Romans 5:14 and in 1 Timothy 2:13.

If we accept that Adam and Eve were real people who according to the Bible lived about 4,157 BC, we also need to ask whether they were the first human man and women.

Before I comment on whether Adam and Eve were the first humans, I first clarify how I have

calculated the dates for major events recorded in the Bible.

How to calculate dates for key Bible characters?

In the following table I show how it is possible to use scriptures in order to determine the approximate dates for major events. The table lists the names of Bible characters, together with their firstborn male descendants and the age of father when these children were born.

This record is used to obtain a timeline from Adam until the birth of Jesus by adding all the father ages when their first sons were born.

Also by noting the age of Jacob when he and family moved to Egypt and the fact that the Israelites were then in Egypt for 430 years.

There is good evidence for the dates of King Solomon's reign (971-931 BC), both from biblical records and from Assyrian chronological records based on archaeological findings. This gives us a more recent reference date since we read that the building of the temple in Jerusalem was started in the fourth year of King Solomon's reign, namely c 966 BC (1 Kings 6:1 and 2 Chronicles 3:2).

Bible timescales since the dawn of civilisation

Name of Bible Character	Next generation name	Age of father when son born	Life span of father	Bible reference
Adam	Seth	130	930	Genesis 5:3-4
Seth	Enosh	150	912	5:6-8
Enosh	Kenan	90	905	5:9-11
Kenan	Mahalel	70	910	5:12-14
Mahalel	Jared	65	895	5:15-17
Jared	Enoch	162	962	5:18-20
Enoch	Methuselah	65	300	5:21-24
Methuselah	Lamech 187		969	5:25-27
Lamech	Noah	182	777	5:28-31
Noah	Shem	500	950	5:28-29
The floodwaters came when Noah was 600 years old				7:6
Shem	Arphaxad	100	600	11:11
Arphaxad	Shelah	35	438	11:12-13
Shelah	Eber	30	433	11:14-15
Eber	Peleg	34	464	11:16-17
Peleg	Reu	30	239	11:15-19
Reu	Serug	32	239	11:20-21
Serug	Nahor	30	230	11:22-23
Nahor	Terah	29	148	11:24-25
Terah	Abram	70	205	11:26
Abram	Isaac	100	175	17:1
				17:17
				25:7
Isaac	Jacob	60	180	25:26
				35:2
Jacob (Israel) and his family went down to settle in Egypt when he was 130 years old				47:9
The Israelites remained in Egypt for 430 years				Exodus 12:40
The Exodus took place 480 years before Solomon started building the Temple				1 Kings 6:1

Key Bible dates calculated from the previous table

Event	Bible date
'Birth' of Adam	4157 BC.
Birth of Noah	3056 BC
Great flood	2456 BC.
Birth of Abram (Abraham)	2166 BC.
Israelites go to Egypt	1876 BC.
Exodus from Egypt	1446 BC.

It is interesting that **the Jewish calendar also claims to date back to Adam.** However, the original compiler of this Jewish dating system obtained a figure of 3760 BC for the creation of the world and for creation of Adam.

As an example, in September 2007 the Jewish date was the month of Tishrei 5768. In other words, according to our Gregorian calendar, we calculate the date of Adam by adding $4157 + 2007 = 6164$ years back. However, according to the Jewish calendar this should give 5768 years, a difference of 396 years.

In the light of the biblical references listed in my table, it is not clear how this discrepancy arose. Personally I believe the 4157 BC date for Adam is correct, or nearly correct if we use the current Gregorian calendar and its presumed date for the birth of Jesus. However Jesus was actually born in 7 BC. See my webpage article titled "*Update: Birth and crucifixion dates of Jesus*". Therefore the dates given above may be out by up to 7 years.

Were Adam and Eve the first anatomically modern people?

We need to ask about the Genesis chapter 1:27 reference to, "*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them*". (NIV translation)

Was this statement referring to the creation of Adam and Eve or was it referring to the creation of humanity in general and is the Garden of Eden account referring to a later event when one individual man Adam and one individual woman Eve were placed in a special garden? **Scientific research has discovered many skeletons that are anatomically indistinguishable from modern people, but are dated from long before the Bible date for Adam and Eve. It is therefore very significant that the Bible creation account also speaks of other humans existing at the same time as Adam and Eve.**

The Bible record has the following details:

1. When Cain killed Abel his punishment was to be driven from the Garden of Eden. He replied, *I will be a restless wanderer on the earth and **whoever finds me will kill me*** (Genesis 4:14 NIV translation).
2. We read, *Cain lay with **his wife**, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch* (Genesis 4:17).
3. We read, *Cain was then **building a city** and he named it after his son Enoch* (Genesis 4:17).
4. We read: *The **Nephilim** were on the earth in those days – and also afterwards – when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown* (Genesis 4:4). In Numbers 13:31-33 they are spoken of as people of large stature.

These Bible passages suggest that Cain obtained his wife from the surrounding humanity outside the Garden of Eden. He initially feared hostility from these surrounding people but apparently overcame this fear and was instrumental in ‘building a city’ with their help. People do not build a city just for themselves, their wife and one son!

Some have suggested that Cain obtained his wife from other children of Adam and Eve. However, this is not acceptable because we read, *Adam lay with his wife again and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, saying, “God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him”... **After Seth was born**, Adam had other sons and daughters* (Genesis 4:25 and 5:4).

Clearly, according to the Bible account, Adam and Eve did not have other children until after the birth of Seth who was born after Cain had left the Garden of Eden. The logical conclusion is that Cain’s wife came from people existing outside the Garden of Eden.

Who were the Nephilim?

The Nephilim are not only mentioned at the time of Adam and Eve. They are also spoken of when the Israelites were conquering Canaan, many hundreds of years after the Garden of Eden events.



This picture is one example of several recent forgeries claiming to show discovery of giants. In fact the giant head is a handmade skull that has been skilfully added to a genuine picture of scientists excavating a fossilised pre-historic animal.

From time to time claims emerge that skeletons of giants have

been discovered. Unfortunately, up till now each of these claims has been shown to be a forgery.

Suggestions that scientists are hiding these discoveries is completely untrue since each new genuine discovery, such as the skeletons of minute people, recently discovered on Flores island in Indonesia, immediately receive major coverage in scientific journals. So why would science hide discoveries of giant skeletons?

Bible scholars have reached a variety of conclusions relating to the biblical 'giants', referred to in the Genesis account as the Nephilim. These conclusions have at times revealed an ignorance of what the Bible actually says about these people. So, let us look at the biblical evidence and then relate this to what science has revealed about the origins of modern humanity.

Were the 'sons of God' angels?

In Genesis we read: *The Nephilim were on the earth in those days – and also afterwards – when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.* (Genesis 6:4 N.I.V translation). Elsewhere in the Bible the Nephilim (Hebrew word means 'fallen ones') are referred to as giants.

Some Christians have suggested that these 'sons of God' were angels, referred to in the New Testament book of Jude. In verse six of Jude there is reference to *angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home*. The suggestion that this refers to the Genesis account is doubtful since there are other legitimate interpretations, such as the angels who followed Satan in his rebellion and who are already *'kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day'*. We understand that Satan and his fallen angels are already 'bound', in the sense that they are now limited by time and are restricted to

Earth instead of their previous freedoms within the timeless dimensions in which God dwells and they are destined to judgment on the final Day of Judgment.

The title ‘sons of God’ is not clearly used for angels anywhere else in the Bible, except possibly in the book of Job (1:6 and 2:1). Even here there are various possible interpretations. It is also very significant that in the first five Bible books there are 15 references to angels and in each case they are called angels, not ‘sons of God’. There are also other Old Testament references that clearly link the term ‘sons of God’ with humans. For instance, Hosea 1:10, Hosea 11:1, Deuteronomy 14:1, Deuteronomy 32:5-6, Isaiah 43:6 and Psalm 82:6.

Furthermore angels are spoken of in a sexless way and we are expressly told that marriage is unknown among them (Matthew 22:30).

Also, in the New Testament book of Hebrews chapter 1 we are told that Jesus is given the title ‘Son of God’, and in verse 4 it specifically states that, *he became as much superior to the angels as the name SON he has inherited is superior to theirs. For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father?”* (N.I.V.)

In many places in the Bible **people in relationship with God are called ‘sons of God’** and in Luke’s Gospel Adam is specifically called *‘the son of God’* (Luke 3:27). In 1 John 3:1-2 we read: *How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!* (NIV).

In other words, when the Genesis account refers to *the ‘sons of God’ went to the ‘daughters of men’ and had children by them’*, **the explanation that is most consistent with scripture is that these ‘sons of God’ are the Adamic family.** These had received the Garden of Eden revelations from God and, as descendants of Adam and Eve, they inherited these revelations and had become part of God’s long-term plans leading to Calvary. Therefore, in this Genesis account the ‘sons of God’ are probably being contrasted with others of mankind who were not part of the Adamic family.

Before we look at who the ‘daughters of men’ were, it is essential to detail other Bible references to the Nephilim as people, not crosses between people and angels!

Other Bible references to Nephilim as people

The Nephilim are again mentioned in the Bible when the Israelite nation was entering the promised land of Canaan many centuries later. Again they are referred to as giants. In these passages the Nephilim were definitely not ‘spiritual’ beings or crosses between angels and humans. This is emphasised where the Nephilim are spoken of as giants and compared to the Nephilim of long ago, and are spoken of as **descendants of a man called Anak.**

For instance, in Numbers 13:33 we read, *'we saw the **Nephilim there (descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim)**. We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them'* (NIV).

From the context of this passage in Numbers, it is clear that these later Nephilim were of large stature. The passage links these people, present in Canaan at the time of the Israelite conquest, with the pre-flood union of 'sons of God' and 'daughters of men'.

We may ask; if all mankind, except for Noah's family, were destroyed in the flood – according to one common interpretation of the flood being world-wide – how is it that there were still Nephilim on the earth long after the flood?

If this flood did eliminate all of mankind within the first complex Middle East civilisation, except for those in the Ark, where did the Nephilim (**sons of Anak**) come from at the time that the Israelites were conquering the land of Canaan, many hundreds of years after the flood?

To answer this question, we first need to widen the study a bit more. We need to look at other names associated in the Bible with the **Anakites** (descendants of Anak) and the Nephilim.

Numbers 13:33 links the Anakites with the Nephilim, and Deuteronomy 2:10 adds a further name to people like the Anakites. We read, *'The **Emites** used to live there - a people strong and numerous, and as tall as the Anakites. Like the Anakites, they too were considered **Rephites** but the Moabites called them Emites'*.

In Deuteronomy 2:20 we read, *'That too was considered a land of the Rephites who used to live there, but the Ammonites called them Zamzummites. They were a people strong and numerous and as tall as the Anakites.*

In 2 Samuel 21: 15-22 we are told that giants were the sons of Rapha of Gath. It is likely that the Rephites were Rapha's descendants.

In Joshua 15:13 we read, *'In accordance with the Lord's command to him, Joshua gave Caleb son of Jephunneh, a portion of Judah-Kiriath Arba, that is Hebron (**Arba was the forefather of Anak**). From Hebron Caleb drove out the three Anakites - Sheshai, Ahiman and Talmai-descendants of Anak'* (NIV).

So we see that the Nephilim are associated with the following names, amongst others: **Arba, Anak, Emites, Rephaites, and Rapha**.

Now, if we go back much further in history to the times of Abraham, over 1000 years before Joshua, in Genesis 14:5, *'in the fourteenth year, Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him went out and defeated the **Rephaites** in Ashteroth Karnaim, the Zuzites in Ham, the **Emites** in Shaveh Kiriathaim and the Horites in the hill country of Seir'* (NIV).

Another biblical reference is Amos 2:9. He records God saying, *“I destroyed the Amorite before them, though he was tall as the cedars and strong as the oaks”*. This is also a reference to the Israelite invasion of Canaan. Here the name **‘Amorite’** is linked with the giants. Who were the Amorites? In Genesis 10:15 we read, *Canaan was the father of Sidon his firstborn, and Heth, the Jebusites, the Amorites and the Gergashite, the Hivite, the Arkite and the Sinites:* (New King James Version). The NIV version refers to Heth as the **Hittite**. This is unfortunate because it was only much later that descendants of Heth became the Hittite nation.

If we return to the connection between the Nephilim, the Anakites and their originating father called Arba, we can trace Arba back to ‘one of the sons of Heth’, via a process of associations.

For instance, at the time of Abraham we read that he bought a field from the **sons of Heth** who lived at Hebron (Genesis 23:3 KJV). Hebron was formerly called **Kiriath Arba**.

Much later, in the times of Joshua and the Israelite conquest of Canaan the **descendants of Arba (who built Kiriath Arba)** are clearly still in control of that area. So we read in the New King James translation: *‘and unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh he gave a part among the children of Judah, according to the commandment of the Lord to Joshua, even the city of Arba, the father of Anak, which city is Hebron. And Caleb drove thence the three sons of Anak, Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai, the children of Anak* (Joshua 15:13-14).



The King James translation brings out the true meaning of the original Hebrew much better than some more modern translations.

Clearly, at Joshua’s time and the Israelite conquest of Canaan, the Anakites still controlled the city of Kiriath Arba (later called Hebron) just as they had done in the earlier times of Abraham.

In Abraham’s time these people were referred to as ‘sons of Heth’. We read, *‘so Sarah died in Kirjath Arba (that is Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. Then Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spoke to **the sons of Heth**, saying, “I am a foreigner and a visitor among you. Give me property for a burial place among you”*. (Genesis 23:2-4. New King James Version).

Modern scholarship clearly links the 'sons of Heth' with the Hittite nation, which was a powerful empire for a considerable period, and reached its peak under Suppiluliumas 1 in c.1380-1350 BC. This was much more recent than the time of Abraham (c1813-1638) and that is why the original Bible text refers to them as 'sons of Heth', rather than Hittites. Unfortunately the NIV translation has missed this fact.

There is also **an association between the Philistines and some of the Nephilim, known as the Anakites**. We read that the Philistines came from their founding father Mizraim (Genesis 10:13-14), and he was one of the sons of Ham. (Genesis 10:6). A bit later in this chapter we see that the Nephilim are also linked with their ancestor Canaan, who was a son of Ham, who was a son of Noah.

We read in Joshua 11:21, *Joshua went and destroyed the Anakites from the hill country...only in Gaza, Gath and Ashdod did any survive* (NIV).

It is significant that the giant Goliath, who was killed by David, came from amongst the Philistines and was from Gath (1 Samuel 17:4).

The account of Goliath reads, *'A champion named **Goliath, who was from Gath**, came out of the Philistine camp. He was over nine feet tall. He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of scale armour of bronze weighing 57 kilograms, on his legs he wore bronze greaves, and a bronze javelin was slung on his back. The spear shaft was like a weaver's rod, and its iron point weighed 7 kilograms* (1 Samuel 17: 4-7 NIV).

Another passage that shows the size of these people is in Deuteronomy 3: 11, *'Only Og king of Bashan was left of the remnant of the Rephaites. His bed was made of iron and was more than thirteen feet long and six feet wide*.

So, the races of 'giants' in Canaan in Joshua's time came from their founding father Arba and his son Anak . We have traced them back to Heth and his father Canaan, who was a son of Ham and his father was Noah.

We read, in Genesis 10:15, *'And Canaan begat Sidon his firstborn, and Heth'*. We have already seen that Canaan was one of the grandsons of Noah. We read, *'The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan). These were the three sons of Noah, and from them came the people who were scattered over the earth.* (Genesis 9:18-19 NIV).

In summary: The link between the Nephilim of Adam's time, and those of the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites nearly 3000 years after Adam, is as follows:

1. Noah was a descendant of Adam's family line (Genesis chapter 5)
2. Noah's sons were Shem, Ham and Japheth (Genesis 9: 18).
3. Ham was the father of Canaan (Genesis 10:6).
4. Canaan was the father of Heth (Genesis 10:15)

5. Heth was the father of Arba (Genesis 23:3 and Joshua 15:13-14).
 6. Arba was the father of Anak (Joshua 15:13)
 7. The later generations of Nephilim were descendants of Anak (Numbers 13:33).
- Thus, Arba and the Nephilim have an ancestry traced back to Ham, a son of Noah

This survey of associated names and descriptions of these people is given to show:

Firstly: The Nephilim are associated with men who were exceptionally large, not with spiritual beings or crosses between humans and angels.

Secondly: the post-flood appearances of them were linked with some of the descendants of Noah. This suggests that, within the genetics of Noah or his sons or his son's wives was an ancestry that included 'Nephilim' genes. Because of this, the descendants of Noah, through one of his grandsons, Canaan, included some 'Nephilim' genetics. Some descendants with this genetics produced exceptionally large people and these gave rise to the races of giants referred to in the Bible accounts at the time that the Israelites were conquering Canaan.

Clearly, these later generations of 'Nephilim' were human, not crosses between fallen angels and humans, as has been suggested by some. Therefore, we have no grounds to conclude that the Nephilim of Adam's time were hybrids between angelic beings and humans. Clearly the 'sons of God' were human and the 'daughters of men' were human.

I find these associations, hidden within the pages of the Bible, a fascinating commentary on the historicity of the Bible records. Clearly the writers had no intention of making a clear case on the Nephilim. However, we can build up interesting links from details that were mentioned in passing, scattered in various books of the Bible and which could hardly have seemed particularly significant to the human writers.

What was the origin of the Nephilim in Adam's time?

So, where did the Nephilim come from in the times of Adam? I suggest the evidence indicates that they were crosses between the 'sons of God' (Adamic line) and other man-like people (daughters of men).

The fact that these crosses produced exceptionally large people, may possibly suggest that Adam's DNA (genetics) was slightly different from that of the women referred to as 'daughters of men'. In biology we know that relatively slight differences in genetics can still result in fertile offspring, but these offspring often have what is termed 'hybrid vigour'. This can show itself through the offspring being of bigger size than the parents.

If there was a slight difference in genetics between the Adamic family line and other pre-Adamic mankind, then intercourse between the Adamic line (sons of God) and pre-Adamic women (daughters of men) could have resulted in 'genetic hybrids' of large size (Nephilim).

The Adamic family ('sons of God') may have had much longer life spans than in pre-Adamic humanity. This is suggested by the recorded life spans in the Genesis account. Early biblical characters are recorded to have lived very long lives and then after the flood event, progressively shorter lives as generations passed. From these recorded ages we can see that life spans shortened with each generation but only after the flood was there a marked drop in life spans seen, but people still lived hundreds of years. By the time of Joseph in Egypt it was considered that 110 years was a good age to reach but by King David's time a good life span was only 70 years. This progressive shortening of life spans could have been due to interbreeding of the Adamic family line with women from the rest of humanity who may possibly have had genetics for much shorter life spans, thus causing a dilution of the Adamic genetics (see graph on page 63).

Other possible contributing factors for decreasing life spans could have been changes in climate and increasing effects of human sinful behaviour. Certainly we can see that the climate changed dramatically after the biblical flood. For the first time mankind saw a rainbow in the sky! I discuss this as part of my chapter 2.6 on 'The origin of death'.

Science has found many skeletons of anatomically modern humans who lived in Europe from at least 60,000 years back, long before the biblical date for Adam. We also know from scientific excavations that Neanderthal people, who looked similar to modern humanity but generally had shorter anatomy and slightly larger brains than modern people, existed side by side with modern humans. There is now genetic evidence that some interbreeding took place. Could this type of interbreeding between modern people and Neanderthals have produced Nephilim?

Important conclusions about the Nephilim

- A. The scriptures referring to the Nephilim call them men who were exceptionally large, **not spiritual beings** or crosses between humans and angels.
- B. The post flood appearances of them were linked with some of the **descendants of Noah**. This suggests that within the genetics of Noah or his sons or their wives was an ancestry that included Nephilim genes.
- C. Clearly these later generations of Nephilim were human. Therefore, we have no grounds for concluding that the Nephilim of Adam's time were hybrids between angelic beings and humans. **They were crosses between the Adamic family line and other humans.**

Biologists know that interbreeding between creatures that are genetically slightly different can produce offspring that are larger due to 'hybrid vigour'. It is therefore possible that the descendants of Adam and Eve (sons of God) interbred with other humans who had genetics that was significantly different from theirs. This could account for the Nephilim who were described as being very large in stature. In other words, these references within the Bible do allow for the existence of anatomically modern people before Adam and Eve.

Scientific discovery has shown that another race of mankind existed even earlier than the first appearance of modern mankind. Science calls these people Neanderthals. Furthermore, excavations in some caves have shown that Neanderthals existed alongside the early appearance of modern humans (Hershkovitz et al 2015)

Genetic analysis of human DNA and DNA extracted from a Neanderthal bone also show that we have traces of Neanderthal DNA in our modern humanity. This has been revealed in two separate genetic studies (Vernot & Akey 2014 and Sankararaman et al 2014).

SUMMARY: who was Adam and the Nephilim?

My understanding of the biblical account is that Adam and Eve were created mortal, but were the first of humanity to be given an Eternal Life relationship with their Creator. This was something totally new to mankind. They were a 'New Creation' in the same way that all who have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ are referred to in the New Testament section of our Bible as a NEW CREATION (2 Corinthians 5:17) and this New Creation status is described in the Bible as resulting from 'knowing God' (John 17:3 & other references).

Adam and Eve lost this Eternal Life relationship through disobedience. However, the person described in the Bible as the '**Second Adam**', namely Jesus Christ, regained for mankind the way to return to the original Garden of Eden relationship. We are told that, through what Jesus accomplished on Calvary's cross, by bearing upon himself the sins of humanity, he opened up a new and living way of restoration. Now humanity can return to that 'New Creation' status, of being 'sons and daughters of God' and to experiencing the same 'Eternal Life' relationship with their Creator.

I am not insisting that my understanding of pre-Adamic man is correct in every detail relating to all the biblical and scientific facts. However, Christians need to be flexible in their attitude towards these scientific discoveries and admit that there is very strong evidence for the existence of man-like creatures, before the biblical date of Adam. Since this evidence exists, it is possible to accept that the reasoning given in this article comes to the correct conclusions relating to the Bible references about the Nephilim.

If you are a Bible-believing person, who also accepts the major discoveries of science, these arguments seem to lead to the conclusion that God acted as follows:

At a point in time, about 6000 years back, God decided to interact with anatomically modern humanity in a new and special way. **He decided to ‘jump start’ humanity in a way that would enable them to move into the destiny he had planned for them.**

A basic requirement for this advance was a complex language. Adam was created by God, possibly by using genetics from a pre-Adamic man, in a similar way that Eve was formed by using genetics from the living Adam (Genesis 2: 20-23). When the account says that God *formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being* (Genesis 2: 7). This does not have to mean that God made a clay model and then brought it to life. It can equally be a statement saying that we are made from dust. The same is said of *all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air* (Genesis 2: 19). The only difference between man and the beasts and birds is that God also *breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and this enabled the man to become a living being*. I believe this is a commentary on Adam being given spiritual life?

I comment later on the creation of Eve. They were both given instruction in new knowledge and a new spiritual capacity. This man became a ‘son of God’ and his wife a ‘daughter of God’. The genealogy up to Jesus, given in Luke’s gospel, lists Adam as ‘The son of God’. They had a new capacity for relationship with God.

Adam was in a very real sense a New Creation. He had a new God given spiritual capacity. This, together with a harmonious and close relationship with his Creator and with his newly taught language (the first complex proto-language?), enabled Adam and Eve to be taught advanced agriculture and other learning. This was the stimulus that was needed, in order for them, and following generations, to fit into God’s long-term agenda for humanity, both historically and eternally.

Adam and Eve were then put through a specific test that formed the foundation for all subsequent interactions between God and mankind. Those interactions have unfolded step-by-step down through the centuries since Adam, through God interacting with other selected individuals, such as Abraham, Moses and others.

In addition, the Genesis account clearly states that a profound ‘spiritual’ lesson was being demonstrated in the specially planted Garden of Eden. This demonstration showed that mankind, even when given idealistic surroundings, were nevertheless not able to obey commands given to them by God. It also demonstrated that mankind have been given a ‘free will’ that enables them to make moral and eternal choices. The account also introduces us to a personified Satan, the origin of rebellion and deception in the Universe.

The creation of Eve?

We may ask why God created Eve in the Garden of Eden, rather than finding Adam a mate from amongst the surrounding humanity? One reason could be that both Adam and Eve should not to be influenced by any things happening in the world outside of the Garden of Eden. They had to make their choice freely, within the context of ideal surroundings and an intimate relationship with their Creator. We are not told where Adam had come from. Maybe God took him as a small child or maybe he genetically engineered him from the genetics of an existing human? We can only speculate about Adam, but for Eve we are given detailed information.

Was the description of forming Eve from something taken out of Adam merely a picture of the differences between man and woman and their need to become 'one flesh', or did God literally remove something from an anaesthetised Adam (maybe a strand of his DNA) and then genetically engineer Eve from that genetic material?

We live in an age when mankind are able to genetically engineer living organisms from other existing organisms. The Bible tells us that mankind were created in the image and likeness of God. This surely means that we have been given the characteristics of self-awareness, creativity, moral awareness, appreciation of beauty and the ability to '*subdue the earth and bring it under our control*'. If mankind has been enabled by God to develop technology and to tame the harmful things around us, through technology and medicine and genetic engineering, then this is a reflection of the abilities of the Creator. **Or maybe we find it difficult to accept such a 'hands on' Creator?**

It is also significant that the Garden of Eden account says there was a considerable period between the creation of Adam and the creation of Eve. However, in the Genesis chapter one account of creation we read: *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them* (Genesis 1:27). This was during the Sixth Creative Day'.

Those Bible scholars who suggest that the Genesis creative 'days' were literal earth days of 24 hours must explain the Genesis chapter 2 account that states there were many days between the creation of Adam and Eve (Genesis 2: 20-22). This is just one further clear reason why the creative 'days' of Genesis chapter one should not be taken to refer to 24 hour days. They refer to great creative ages, as explained in my previous chapter: 'The 'days' of the Genesis creation account'.

Eve was specially engineered to be a suitable mate for Adam and a suitable candidate for the great Garden of Eden demonstration. This demonstration formed the first building block in God's plan that led to Calvary.

The events that took place in the Garden of Eden explain the nature of 'sin' and form the foundation for understanding the further revelations that God has progressively given to humanity, through Abraham, Moses, the prophets, through Jesus, and through the Holy Spirit inspired New Testament writings. This has been an evolution of revelation.

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2.6 The origin of death



Fossils of Trilobites from rocks 500 million years old (Cambrian period).

Scientists do not need convincing that physical death has been a fundamental feature of life on earth right from the dawn of life. We see clear evidence of this in the fossil record. We know about the earliest life forms from their fossilised remains. Fossils tell us that these creatures

died. They died long before the Bible date for the great flood of Noah's time!

If you have been exposed to the theory that all fossils came from a world-wide flood, I discuss this in chapter 2.8. I outline the scientific evidence refuting a world-wide flood, while at the same time accepting evidence for a great flood in the area where the Garden of Eden was located. The article also gives the Bible evidence, if correctly interpreted, that speaks against the flood being world-wide.

The study of ecology reveals that nature maintains its overall balance, within a limited variability, through the **intricate interrelations between predators and prey**. Nature is full of examples of food chains, starting from plants and leading to plant eaters, eaters of plant eaters and so on up to higher forms of life. This complex web of interactions leads to what we call the 'balance of nature'.

Every single living organism is part of one or more intricate food chain that contributes towards the **overall balance in nature** and to a world that is habitable for humanity.

Some people struggle to accept that predators are an integral part of how nature works. The fossil record shows that this has always been how life on earth has maintained its balance and overall harmony.

This reality understandably presents a problem for those who have understood the scriptures to say that physical death only entered the world when Adam and Eve sinned.

The realities of life on earth may also lead us to ask why God created it this way? We probably cannot come to a final answer to this question but we should consider what is meant by stating that God is Almighty. My understanding is that this means he has total control over all possible outcomes. However, possible outcomes may be limited and can be determined by initial conditions and by final desired outcomes. Only God knows all of these possible limitations and how they interact with his goals for humanity.

God ordered this world in a way that includes physical mortality. We read, *For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but **by the will of the one who subjected it**, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God* (Romans 8:20-21 NIV translation). Who was the one who subjected creation to decay? It can be none other than the Creator himself.

Maybe our world is for now the only possible option for the final goals of the Creator. Our present questions will be answered when we experience what is promised in the **Creator's next creative stage**, summarised in the book of Revelation. We read: *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. **He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away**". He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"* (Revelation 21: 3-5 NIV translation).

Note that this scripture talks of our present world as 'the old **ORDER**'. It has been ordered to be this way by its Creator. However, the present reality will ultimately lead to the **NEW ORDER**, as described in this passage in the book of Revelation.

Were Adam and Eve created immortal?

Some Christians have suggested that Adam and Eve could have been created immortal, even if the rest of nature was locked into mortality. However, such a view cannot be supported from the Genesis accounts, nor from the writings of the apostle Paul.

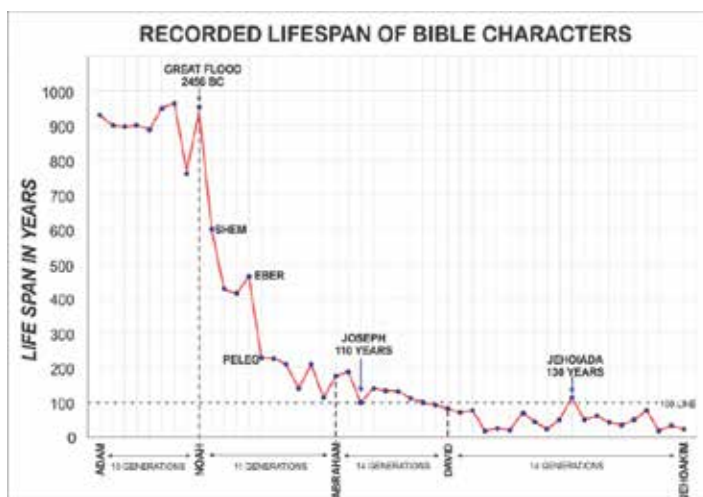
The Genesis account makes it clear that Adam and Eve were made of 'dust', and from our scientific age knowledge we know all the minerals that make up this 'dust'. We can analyse them from cremation ashes. When Adam and Eve were expelled from the unique Garden of Eden and exposed to the harsh realities existing in the rest of Creation, they were told, *By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you **return to the ground**, since from it you were taken; for **dust you are** and to dust you will return* (Genesis 3:19 NIV).

When they ate of the forbidden fruit they died spiritually, not physically. Physical death did not come into the world through sin. We read, *But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day (yom) that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die* (Genesis 2: 17 King James translation). **Some modern translations confuse the issue by not mentioning the word 'day' but just use the word 'when'**. However, the original text uses 'yom' (Hebrew for day). Here the context implies that a single earth day is being spoken of.

The important conclusion from this passage is that Adam and Eve DIED on the very day that they ate the fruit. However, they did not die physically on that day. **Clearly physical death is not spoken of here but spiritual death.** Other places in the Bible speak of 'spiritual death' as separation from a close relationship with God.

What about the long initial life spans?

Some people have suggested that the very long lifespans of early people in the Genesis account is evidence of a recently lost immortality. According to this suggestion the shorter lifespans of later generations are due to the progressive effects of human sin.



However, if we look at the first 9 recorded lifespans they are all, except one, over 900 years long, if we exclude Enoch who was 'taken' by God when 365 years old. These first people cover a total period of 1656 years, up to when Noah entered the Ark.

This 1656 years is calculated from the age when each mentioned man had his first son.

For instance we read, *When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son... Seth* (Genesis 5:3). Then we are told, *When Seth had lived 105 years, he became the father of Enosh* (Genesis 5:6). For each of the next generations we read the father's age when the son was born. By adding up 130 + 105 + + + + +, this gives a total up to Noah. We are told that Noah was 600 years old when the flood came (Genesis 7:11 NIV). **During this long period there was no decline in lifespans.**

It was only after the flood of Noah's time that lifespans started to decline rapidly. The graph clearly shows that the flood event and associated climatic changes on earth, led to a progressive and rapid decline in lifespans. However, for a further 18 generations all the recorded lifespans were still over 100 years.

Life span records for Bible characters

Name	Age at death	Bible reference	
Adam	930	Genesis	5:5
Seth	912		5:8
Enosh	905		5:11
Kenan	910		5:14
Mahalel	895		5:17
Jared	962		5:20
Enoch	365 +		5:23
Methusalah	969		5:27
Lamech	777		5:31
Noah	950		9:29
Shem	600		11:10-11
Arpachshad	438		11:12-13
Shelah	433		11:14-15
Eber	464		11:16-17
Peleg	239		11:18-19
Reu	239		11:20-21
Serug	230		11:22-23
Nahor	148		11:34-25
Terah	205		11:32
Sarah	127		23:1
Abraham	175		25:7-8
Isaac	180		35:28
Joseph	110		50:22
Levi	137	Exodus	7:16
Kohath	133		7:18
Amrah	137		7:20
Moses	120	Deuteronomy	34:7
Joshua	110	Joshua	24:29
		Judges	2:8
Eli	98	1 Samuel	4:15
David	70	2 Samuel	5:4

In other words, if the decline was only related to sinfulness we would expect to see a declining trend within the first 1656 years between Adam and Noah. Instead of a declining trend we see consistently long lifespans until the flood.

By the time Israel entered the Promised Land most life spans were well below 100. One exception was Jehoiada who died aged 130 (2 Chronicles 24:15).

According to scientific evidence, the last Ice Age began to thaw out between 13,000 and 10,000 BC. A characteristic of Ice Ages is that very little rain falls, due to most of the earth's water vapour becoming trapped in

ice. Ice Ages were characterised by vast arid regions and many places experienced little or no rain (Mithen. 2004).

The change from Ice Age to milder climates was a relatively slow process but included some abrupt changes (Alley 2000 & 2003) and some details still remain unknown to science (Schmidt et al 2011). From the Genesis account we read that *The Lord God had not sent rain on the earth...but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground* (Genesis 2: 5-6 NIV).

It was only at the time of Noah's flood that rain was seen by Noah. This is suggested from the observation that he then saw a rainbow for the first time. We read that God said to Noah, *"I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth"* (Genesis 9: 13 NIV).

Although the flood was not world-wide (see explanation later) the events recorded in the Bible suggest major climatic changes and these are in harmony with possible scenarios that science indicates could occur as the Ice Age gave way to climates similar to those we experience today.

The changes in lifespans after the flood strongly suggest that these were primarily caused by major changes in the world's climate. A warmer world would also cause many potential human diseases to multiply dramatically. During the cold and dry Ice Ages most potential human pathogens would be inactive.

Another probable contributing cause for the rapidly declining lifespans was the development of cities and increased spreading of diseases through close human contacts.

Adam and Eve were created mortal. When they sinned they died 'spiritually'.

What does the Bible say about death?

The apostle Paul made it clear that: *If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: The first man Adam became a living being, the last Adam (Jesus) a life-giving Spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. **The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth, and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven. I declare to you brothers that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable*** (1 Corinthians 15:44 NIV).

Paul is reminding us that creatures made from the minerals of our earth are mortal and are destined to die and return to 'dust'. Adam and Eve were mortal creatures who had to eat to survive and **the reality lost when they sinned was the spiritual reality called 'Eternal Life'**. Throughout the Bible 'Eternal Life' is described as a spiritual reality that comes from 'knowing God'. For instance we read, *Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent* (John 17:3 NIV).

Paul had a clear understanding that humanity and the 'New Creation' humanity represented by Adam and Eve, were created mortal, but they had a close Eternal Life relationship with their Creator. When Jesus made it possible for humanity to be restored to the condition enjoyed by Adam and Eve before they sinned, he did not restore us to immortality of our physical bodies because humanity and Adam and Eve never were physically immortal!

When we look at other writings of Paul it becomes clear that he often speaks of living people as being 'dead'. He is clearly referring to the spiritual truth that **we can be spiritually 'dead' while physically 'alive'**. Other biblical writers also contrast **life and death** in living people. For instance, John wrote: *We know that we have passed from **death to life**, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in **death*** (1 John 3:14 NIV).

In other words, when we read passages such as Romans 5:12-14, we need to clearly distinguish between physical death and spiritual death. This passage is actually speaking of the origin of spiritual death.

We read, *Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and **death** through sin, and in like manner **death** came to all men, because all sinned – for before the law was given, sin was in the world, but sin is not taken into account (by God) when there is no law. Nevertheless, **death** reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam.*

Here Paul is speaking about **spiritual death** and he is saying that sin existed before God gave Moses the detailed laws. Disobedience and breaking of God given standards, either written or in our consciences, existed from the time of Adam. He was the first to break a God given Law and so committed the 'first sin'. The result was **spiritual death**, namely a loss of close relationship with God.

2.7 Doctrine of 'Original Sin'?



There certainly was a first sin, namely the action taken by Adam and Eve when they disobeyed the first command ever given by God to humanity. **However, many Christians are taught that this 'original sin' means that we are all born guilty of sin and even babies deserve the judgment of God!**

Some Christians believe it was the first sin of Adam and Eve that

led to physical death. They then go on to argue that a **baby is born guilty of sin because it is born mortal!**

It is true from the scriptures and from personal experiences, that we all are born with a nature that makes it inevitable that we sin. However, it is helpful to define what we mean by a 'sinful nature'.

Does having a sinful nature mean that we are born guilty of sin, or does it mean that we are born with an inbuilt selfishness and this often leads to actions that are wrong?

The scriptures sometimes quoted in support of concluding that we are born guilty of sin are as follows:

The Psalmist wrote: *Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me* (Psalm 51:5 NIV). We certainly cannot build a doctrine of 'original sin' on this one verse in a poetic section of the Old Testament. We should especially be cautious since the wording could equally suggest that we are born with a 'sinful nature' and born into a world that is full of sinful behaviour. Being born with a sinful nature is not the same as being born guilty of sin.

Another often quoted scripture is, *Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward and speak lies* (Psalm 58:3 NIV). The King James version says: *The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they are born, **speaking lies***. The emphasis here is strongly on actions taken after birth and certainly a new born baby cannot 'speak lies'. They cannot even speak at all until older!

In Ephesians and in other scriptures, we read about the reality of our 'sinful nature'. For instance, *All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts* (Ephesians 2:3 NIV). Such passages speak the truth that we all have an inbuilt tendency to

selfishness and all of us definitely do sin. However, we are wrong to conclude that this automatically means we are born guilty of sin.

Selfishness is not in itself 'sinful'. It is part of our God-given survival kit for a hostile world. It is a fundamental behaviour pattern in nature, ensuring that creatures survive within a competitive ecological system. However, this basic instinct can be overruled by choice, such as when individuals endanger themselves for the good of the group. Furthermore, mankind are specifically instructed by God to resist selfish tendencies and learn to 'love one another'.

The first Christians did not consider the origin of sin to be such a vital issue, requiring formulation of a 'doctrine' about it. One possible exception might be Paul in Romans chapter 5, but we will look closely at this a bit later in this article.

The doctrine of 'original sin' was only formulated in the 5th century by Augustine. This was needed in order to support the new role given to baptism. Many in the church had adopted an understanding of baptism that made it into a 'sacrament' that imparts salvation and the immediate removal of the guilt of sin and guarantees Eternal Life. This, combined with the belief that babies are born 'guilty' of sin, led to the practice of baptising infants so that they could be 'saved' from their guilt.

I personally cannot accept that an infant is born guilty. Furthermore, salvation in the New Testament is clearly linked to faith and the grace and forgiveness of God. I therefore go further and believe that a person can be 'saved' from the consequences of sin, through the saving merit of Jesus Christ, even if he or she has never been baptised, or has never received any of the other 'sacraments' of the 'church'.

My understanding of the Bible is that an infant is born with a 'sinful nature' but is not guilty of sin until he or she understands the meaning of right and wrong. From that point onwards, God keeps the 'book of records' for each and every life. Our responses to the light given to us will be judged. Once we have received the knowledge of the love of God shown towards us at Calvary, then our response to this revelation is crucially important.

When that revelation is received, faith should lead to repentance from our self-centred life-styles and a desire to know this God, who *so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son.* (John 3:16).

A baby is not guilty of sin until it deliberately breaks a God-given commandment or deliberately breaks its God-given conscience. This most definitely does not occur at birth. Furthermore, in the light of the scriptures that speak of God's justice and how Jesus will judge on Judgment Day, a small child is not held to be legally responsible for



wrongdoing until it reaches an age of adult rationality. In Jewish society this was considered to be at about 12 years of age. God judges what we do in the light of what we knew we should have done.

Yes, all of mankind are born into a sin-filled world, but are not born guilty of sin. The newly born baby is not yet sinful, but he has the potential to sin and in time he definitely will sin. God takes into account the small child's ignorance and immaturity. Even when it starts to sin, he does not hold it fully responsible until reaching an age of adult understanding. We follow this same principle in our human courts of law.

In my book 'Big Bang Christianity' (freely downloadable from my webpage) I have chapters on, 'A God of justice' and 'A God of love', where I cover biblical teachings on these characteristics of God. **These point out truths that argue powerfully against any doctrine or interpretation of Original Sin that suggest a baby is born with an automatic sentence of damnation, unless 'processed' through some 'sacrament' of the church.**

Jesus Christ and Original Sin!

If all mankind since Adam are born guilty of sin, this creates an enormous problem with the sinless nature of Jesus Christ. We read about Jesus, *who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin* (Hebrews 4:15 NIV). The whole Gospel message centres on the sinless nature of Christ, enabling him to be a guiltless substitute for mankind. He was enabled to achieve this: *For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors* (Isaiah 53:12 NIV). We are also told in scripture that Jesus was fully man. Thus, if Jesus was born with 'original sin', he could not have been sinless. **This fact alone should be enough to argue away the whole concept of babies having original sin.**

Maybe this realisation only came to some theologians sometime around AD1854. This led to the papal pronouncement that Mary shared in no taint of original sin. (The pronouncement of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary). This new doctrine probably became necessary, in order to try and explain why 'original sin' was not passed on to Jesus.

The scriptures make it clear that Jesus did no sin, even though he could have done so. We read that he was tempted in every way as we are. His temptation by Satan in the wilderness shows us his own struggle. As we read in Hebrews, *During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from 'death', and he was heard because of his reverent submission* (Hebrews 5:7 NIV).

We may ask what 'death' Jesus was saved from? He certainly was not saved from death on the cross. However, he was saved from the 'spiritual death' that

would have resulted had he given in to the temptations to sin. That is the same 'spiritual death' that Adam and Eve experienced when they rebelled against a clear command from God.

Clearly Jesus did not sin through disobedience, nor was he guilty of sin at birth. Scripture tells us that he was fully man, through his mother Mary and fully God through conception by the Holy Spirit. We can understand that he inherited no sin from his Father's side. However, **if all of humanity are born 'guilty of sin' as is taught us in the theology often associated with 'original sin', then Jesus would have been born guilty of sin through his mother.** Since we are told in scripture that Jesus was not guilty of any sin, this speaks powerfully against the doctrine of 'Original Sin' as it is sometimes formulated.

What was the 'curse' pronounced on Adam and Eve?

The doctrine of Original Sin causing physical death is further undermined once we come to accept the scientific evidence for death right from the first life. Physical death is not the result of the original sin of Adam and Eve. In addition, a careful analysis of what scripture says gives us no basis to link physical death with the events that took place in the Garden of Eden.

The '**curse**' spoken about after Adam and Eve sinned was the curse resulting from expulsion from the unique Garden of Eden that contained no 'thorns' and exposure to the harsh realities already existing in the rest of creation. These harsh realities were the ones that God had instructed humanity to 'subdue'. We read, *be fruitful and increase in numbers; fill the earth and **subdue it*** (Genesis 1:28 NIV). The Hebrew for subdue is '**kabash**' meaning to 'keep under', 'bring into bondage', 'make subservient', 'dominate', 'tread down'. It is often used in the context of war. In other words, nature contains potentially harmful things that mankind must subdue.

This instruction to mankind was given by God on the sixth creative 'day' and then we have the words, *God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.* In other words, whatever mankind were tasked with **subduing** was included in a creation that God pronounced to be **very good**. Clearly we are not at liberty to say that all the potentially harmful things around us in nature were the result of the sin of Adam and Eve.

However, **once Adam and Eve had been expelled from the Garden of Eden** they no longer had that close and guiding relationship with their Creator. This was certainly part of the 'curse'. In addition they faced the 'curse' of facing realities brought across their paths by Satan. Jesus said Satan was the Father of lies and deception and a murderer. He delights in bringing problems across our paths and is constantly scheming to bring about wars and disasters, designed to hinder our God given mission to subdue the earth.

We are still operating under that instruction to ‘subdue the earth’. Mankind have done much towards reaching this goal, through agriculture, science, education, technology and medicine. However, at the same time Satan is constantly trying to undermine progress and one of his favoured tools is to create dissention leading to strife and wars. These inevitable set the ‘subduing of the earth’ agenda backwards and much progress is so often lost!

During Christian revivals, when nations have turned to God in repentance and faith, this has been accompanied by **times of great progress with ‘subduing the earth’.**



The Wesley revival greatly impacted the British nation. Preachers went to where the people were.

The Christian revival, resulting from the preaching of John Wesley and others preachers between AD 1700 and AD 1800, resulted in dramatic advances in ‘subduing the earth’. **British society was transformed** from a state many considered hopeless and the nation became a leader in many vital areas. It led to the abolition of slavery, many other social reforms and it led to Britain becoming the dominant world power, introducing the rule of law, medical technology, education and democracy to many parts of the world and enabled a great missionary movement that took the Gospel message to many nations.

Understanding the Bible passage in Romans chapter 5: 12-19

One Bible passage that may, at first sight, give support to the doctrine of ‘original sin’ and its relationship to physical death is Romans 5:12-20.

It is very important to carefully study this chapter in the Bible book of Romans because, if it does not link ‘original sin’ to physical death, **then we are left with a doctrine that is based on very flimsy scriptural foundations.** It is not surprising that it was only formulated into a church doctrine four centuries after the death of Jesus Christ.

I suggest an alternative understanding of Romans 5:12-19. **This is based on the NIV translation of the Bible, shown below in italic script.**

My EXPLANATORY COMMENTS are written in bold script within brackets.

*Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death (**spiritual death**) through sin, and in this way death (**spiritual death**) came to all men, because all sinned – for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. Nevertheless, death (**spiritual death**) reigned*

from the time of Adam (**as the first man to disobey a God-given command**) to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam (**Although they did not break the same command as Adam they nevertheless failed to obey God's commands and so all fell into the same category of sinners**), who was a pattern of the one to come (**The Second Adam Jesus was also a Son of Man**).

But the gift (**of Jesus Christ**) is not like the trespass. For if the many died (**spiritually**) by the trespass of the one man (**causing estrangement from God for all mankind**), how much more did God's grace and the gift (**of reconciliation**) that came by the grace of one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!

Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation (**When Adam and Eve sinned it showed that mankind were not able to obey God and so mankind all entered a time of estrangement from God. They had given Satan a legal right over humanity because they had joined him in his rebellion against God**). But the gift (**redemption through Jesus**) followed many trespasses and brought justification (**through the redemptive plan of God in the second Adam, Jesus**).

For, if, by the trespass of the one man (**Adam**) death (**spiritual death**) reigned (**over all humanity**) through that one man (**the first man to sin**), how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

Consequently, just as the result of one trespass (**the first sin**) was condemnation for all men (**because Adam and Eve showed that all mankind would also sin and therefore all mankind became condemned to be subjected to the rebellion of Satan and his sentence of separation from the intimate presence of God**) so also the result of one act of righteousness (**Jesus on the cross took our place and experienced the reality of spiritual death and physical death as he took upon himself the sins of all humanity**) was justification that brings life (**eternal life**) for all men (**mankind**).

For just as through the disobedience of the one man (**actually Adam and Eve**) the many were made sinners (**because Adam was a perfect representative of mankind and he demonstrated that all of us would have failed like he and Eve failed**). So also through the obedience of the one man (**Jesus Christ**) the many will be made righteous (**restored to an intimate relationship with God through the merit of Jesus Christ as our substitute and redeemer**).

Some concluding thoughts

In the final analysis, it does not change the Gospel message if Adam and Eve were initially mortal or immortal. **We know that we are all most definitely mortal today and the Gospel message is directed to us mortals.**

The words of Jesus ring out loud and clear, ***Whoever lives and believes in me will never die*** (John 11: 25 NIV). We all, like those who heard these words of Jesus spoken to them, are destined to die physically, unless Jesus returns soon. Yes, our mortal Adamic bodies are destined for corruption, but we have a treasure hidden in these 'jars of clay'.

That great treasure is this, God has chosen to make known among the gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you the hope of Glory (Colossians 1:25). In Romans 8:14 we read: *Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba" (Daddy) Father. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now, if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.*

I hope my readers can understand that an Eternal Life relationship with God is not dependant on a baptismal 'sacrament' said over us, to remove some 'original sin'. It is a gift of God to whoever he chooses to give it to. It can be experienced here and now through our personal repentance and faith in God. It can also be experienced by any whom Jesus gives it to as HIS decision at Judgment Day. The scriptures make it very clear that he will be the judge and his judgment will be just and fair.

What happens to babies who die? The Bible does not say, but we can rest in the revealed love and justice of our God, as revealed through the words of Jesus Christ.

What lies ahead for every human being? Jesus contrasted physical death and spiritual life. This is why Jesus could say, *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and **whoever lives and believes in me will never die**"* (John 11:25 NIV). Clearly, those who were living at that time and believed in Jesus still died physically. Jesus is clearly talking about the Eternal Life that can start here on earth for believers and that continues without interruption into eternity.

How can we trust these words of Jesus? It was his resurrection that put God's stamp of authority on all the amazing words that he spoke. It was his resurrection and the Holy Spirit empowering of his disciples that turned a small group of frightened followers into bold preachers of the Gospel message. It was a message of forgiveness and reconciliation between God and mankind. **It was a message about the WAY to return people to the same relationship with God that Adam and Eve had experienced in the Garden of Eden!**

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2.8 A world-wide flood?

I am looking at this subject in two ways.

Firstly, from a scientific evidence viewpoint.

Secondly, to show that the Bible account actually suggests a limited flood.

Proponents of the Young Earth Theory suggest that our earth is about 6000 years old and that the fossil record can largely be explained by a world-wide flood. Even some who accept the



scientific evidence for our earth being billions of years old, still try to explain the fossil record as being the result of such a flood.

It is therefore very important to establish whether or not such a flood actually took place.

To many millions of people, who have been raised in our scientific generation, an insistence that our earth is a mere 6000 years old is un-acceptable. In addition, when some Christians insist that this is the only possible understanding from biblical accounts, such a viewpoint often results in people concluding that the Bible must be wrong. This conclusion can result in them discarding the rest of the Bible and so fail to discover the central theme, summarized in the life and teachings of Jesus.

Regarding the suggestion of a world-wide flood, this idea is based on a widely held understanding of the biblical account of a great flood in the times of Noah. However, this suggestion can be investigated logically by taking into account scientific discoveries and by looking again at our understanding of the Bible account.

We can look at this question of a flood under several headings

A world-wide flood and biodiversity

If, for arguments sake, we initially leave the Noah's Ark Bible account out of our investigation, then clearly, any world-wide flood that covered all land surfaces would have wiped out most life forms. Since nearly all of the earth's water is saline like the sea, any such flood would also be saline (Only 2.75 % of the earth's water is fresh). As a result, only sea creatures could have survived a world-wide flood that covered all land surfaces. Land creatures, such as mammals, reptiles, birds, insects, and fresh water fishes and other fresh water organisms, would all have died. Also the majority of the earth's plants.

Fresh water organisms, such as these fish, would have died in a world-wide flood.



The zoo-geographical regions with unique life forms in each region

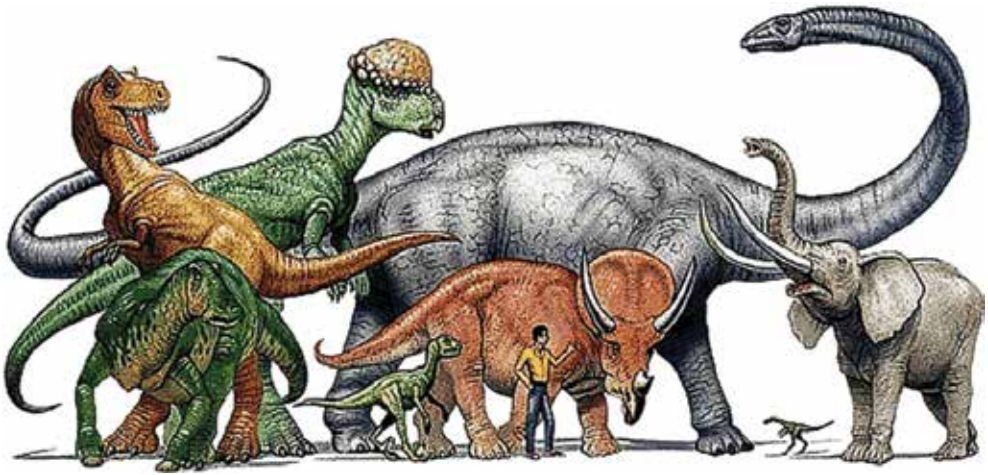
Today we know that the millions of life forms are divided into ‘zoo-geographical regions’.



Science explains this by compiling evidence showing that continents have moved and are still moving and that some land masses broke from one single continent called Pangaea.

This later split again and the large southern portion was called Gondwana. Australia broke free from this land mass while the earth was dominated by marsupial mammals (such as kangaroos, whose young are born at a very early stage and mature in an external pouch) In other parts of the world placental mammals (young develop internally, nourished by the placenta) replaced marsupials and we find marsupial fossils to show they once existed throughout the world. However, placental mammals never reached Australia. As a result we have the many species of unique marsupial animals characteristic of Australia.

Regarding life forms on land, we now know that our earth contains many millions of species, including about 3200 species of mammals, 8000 types of birds, not to mention reptiles and amphibians, all with very specific habitat and food requirements. Insects are by far the most abundant life forms, numbering at least 5 million species and nearly all of these would have been killed in a world-wide flood. In addition, most species of land plants would not have survived a world-wide flood that lasted, according to the Bible account, for just over one year.



Some types of dinosaurs, shown in comparison to the size of man and elephants

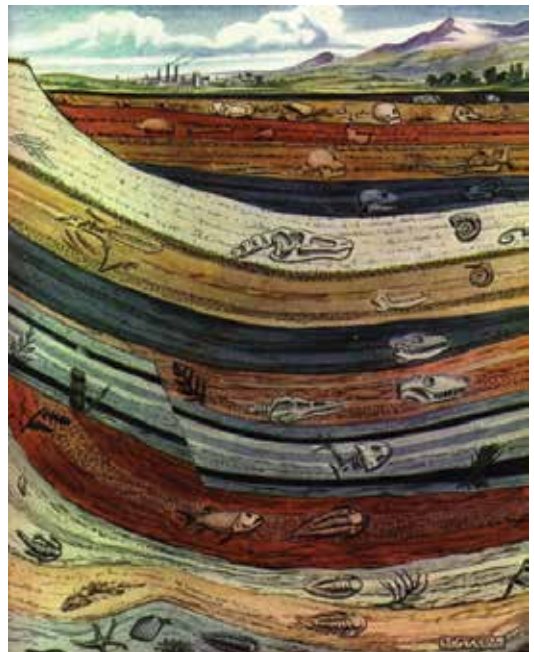
The fossil record

We also need to consider more than 500 different types of dinosaurs that have been found in the fossil record and many other animals only known from the fossils. Some of the dinosaurs weighed up to 100 tons, at least five times heavier than the largest land animals alive today, namely African elephants. According to some Young Earth Theories all of these animals were still alive at the time of the world-wide flood and should have been in Noah's Ark.

When we study fossils in the rocks, there is abundant scientific evidence that these date back millions of years. Furthermore, in spite of claims made by some, the oldest rocks contain only primitive animals and more recent rocks more advanced animals. Very occasionally, movements within the earth's crust have mixed up these layers, but the clear overall picture is one of increasing complexity of life over time.

The overall picture from the fossil record shows increasing complexity over time.

If nearly all the fossils were created by a world-wide flood event, we would expect primitive and more advanced creatures to all be found mixed up within the same layers of rocks. We may ask why we do not find fossils of



modern animals mixed up with fossils of dinosaurs and many other extinct species of animals?

Unfortunately, many proponents of Young Earth Theories present selected items of information that, when viewed on their own, might fit into a Young Earth Theory. However, the quoted examples are controversial and are open to a variety of interpretations and, of even greater significance; they simply distract our attention from the vast volume of evidence for our earth being billions of years old.

One such controversial example is the layers of rock in the Grand Canyon in America. Some suggest that one flood event laid down all the layers of rock. Geologists will point out that such a suggestion fails to take into account well established dating procedures and knowledge of how successive layers of water-borne deposits are laid down. Furthermore, we can show other examples of deposited



layers that cannot, by any stretch of imagination, be due to one flood event. For instance, in the case of the formation of coal.

Layers of coal, separated by other deposits, indicating a series of coal forming periods.

Young Earth Theory suggests that coal deposits were laid down by the world-wide flood. This overlooks the scientific evidence for how coal is formed. Geologists will look at a situation such as this, of a series of coal deposits, and will find significant differences in the chemical composition of each layer of coal. This shows that different types of vegetation contributed to each layer of coal and also that there are differences in the way the coal was formed in each layer. Furthermore, each coal formation period was separated by other deposits of sediment that became compressed over time into rock.

There is, to my understanding, absolutely no way that a trained geologist or biologist can come to the conclusion that all these coal layers were deposited at the same time.

Nor is there any way to conclude that layers, such as shown in the picture, do not represent deposits laid down over vast periods of geological time.

Other lines of scientific evidence that support the case AGAINST a world-wide flood, are mentioned in the following parts of this article.

Fitting the Bible account into all this evidence

The Bible gives dimensions of a very large boat, built by Noah, with instructions from God. A reconstruction shows that it was a very large boat, about half the size of an average sized modern cargo vessel, and its dimensions were exactly those needed for the greatest stability, not for forward movement.

A reconstruction of Noah’s Ark



According to dates given in the Bible, we can calculate that the flood event took place about 2456 BC. It is probable that Noah wrote the account himself since archaeology has shown that cuneiform writing on clay tablets existed from at least 3000 BC.

I believe that Moses, who wrote much of the first four Bible books, may well have had access to Noah’s account or a copy of it, when he was a prince of Egypt and schooled in all the wisdom of ancient Egypt.

So, what does the Bible account say about this flood? If we read the account in Genesis chapters 6 to 8, we find that Bible translators have written the word ‘earth’ or ‘world’ from only two Hebrew words used in the original text. These words are ‘Adamah’ and ‘Erets’. According to Bible concordances, these two words are translated elsewhere in the Bible in several different ways. For instance:

ADAMAH	Frequency	ERETS	Frequency
Country	1	Country	140 times
Earth	53	Earth	very frequent
Ground	43	Ground	96
Land	125	land	very frequent
World	0	world	4

We can see that these words are hardly ever translated as WORLD in other parts of the Bible. **The account of the flood could just as well be translated as covering the entire land, ground or country.**

Regarding the animals that Noah took into the Ark, these could legitimately be considered to be those animals he knew about in his area. Certainly, although the Ark was large, with a total floor space on three decks of about 8,800 square meters, it could not have accommodated all the millions of life forms that we now know exist. In addition, the Young Earth Theory says that the dinosaurs and other animals, now only found as fossils, would all be candidates for the Ark.

Some proponents of the Young Earth Theory suggest that Noah only took on board some 'key' or 'type' species, and that after the flood these diversified into the many species seen today. Such a suggestion would require some exceptionally fast evolutionary processes, in order to explain the millions of species alive today, and Young Earth Theory does not like any suggestion that God could have used processes such as evolution to bring about His creation. Furthermore, if these theorists claim that there was such a rapid post-flood evolution, then we are entitled to ask why they are so vigorous in their denial of God having used long evolutionary processes throughout the history of the universe and of life on earth.

Another consideration, for those trying to justify their interpretation of the Genesis account, is that this account specifically states that God's creative activity ended on the sixth creative 'day'. The clear implication is that thereafter the Creator used the laws and mechanisms he had brought into existence, in order to guide future changes on earth.

Another important consideration relating to the animals Noah took into the Ark, would have been the need to provide enough feed for all these animals for just over one year. The Bible record says Noah entered the Ark on the 17th day of the second month and left it on the 27th day of the second month of the following year.

Furthermore, Noah would have had to take on board enough fresh water for all these animals for a year. This is because a world-wide flood would definitely have been saline like the sea. If we estimate the fresh water requirements for the mammals and birds alone, at a conservative one liter per day, this means a total of 4,200 metric tons of water. This amount of fresh water would have taken up 4,200 cubic meters of Ark space, representing about half of the available floor space!

Some people have suggested that the fresh water was supplied from rain falling on the Ark. However, if we stick to the Bible account we find no evidence for this. In fact we are told that the rain fell for 40 days. In chapter 8, verse 2 we read: *Now the springs of the deep and the floodgates of the heavens had been closed, and the rain had stopped falling from the sky.* The account indicates that the flood lasted a total of 150 days before the waters started to recede (Chapter 7:24). However, Noah then remained in the Ark for a further six months before he was able to come out. So, the Bible account does not support this theory of rainwater supplying the drinking water.

Some have suggested that melting of trapped ice from the last Ice Age could have had two results. Firstly, to provide much of the flood water. Secondly, to make the oceans much less saline and therefore drinkable. However, we can learn a lesson from our present world's water supply. Only 2.5 % of the world's water is fresh and about 98 % of this is locked into polar ice or is in ground water. At the height of the last Ice Age, even if all of the world's fresh water had been locked

into ice, this would have represented only a fraction of the saline water contained in the vast oceans. Furthermore, if the salinity of the oceans had been significantly reduced this would have caused the extinction of most oceanic life forms. This would conflict with the biblical account since it is clear from this that Noah could not have taken sea life forms into the Ark. They presumably survived because their oceanic environment was not dramatically changed.

Logic demands that the Ark floated on fresh water and Noah and his sons obtained drinking water from the water around them. This is another strong argument for a limited flood since a world-wide flood would have been saline.

It is also worth mention that the most elementary physics tells us that water always finds its level. In other words the level in one part of the world's ocean is the same as another. Now, if the flood had covered the entire globe and every land mass and mountain, where could this water drain away to?

In order to cover the entire world's land, the water would have had to rise by thousands of meters. Everest is over 8000 m above sea level. If we leave out the tallest mountains we still need a sea level rise of at least 6000 m to cover all the major land masses. If we multiply this height of water with the total surface area of the world, namely 510,072,000 square kilometers, we arrive at a water volume of about 3 billion (3 thousand million) cubic kilometers. **This represents a volume of water about three times greater than is within all the earth's oceans today!!!**

Another strong argument against a world-wide flood is the previously mentioned diversity of life in various parts of the world. How could Noah have gathered a representative sample of life forms from all parts of the world, such as Australia, and then, after the flood, have got them back to Australia and other parts of the world?

Some have suggested that the Pangaea and Gondwana land masses only broke up after the flood. This would defy all that we know about continental drift and the well understood forces causing the very slow movements of continents. Furthermore, if such massive theoretical movements could have taken place in so short a time, this would have rocked the earth in gigantic earthquakes and tsunamis kilometers high. Any fossils formed by such hypothetical events would have become thoroughly mixed up. A world-wide flood would have produced fossil beds with every conceivable type of animal and plant all within the same rock deposits. This we do not find.

In addition, if for arguments sake we consider the suggestion that the continents only broke up at the time of the flood and initially, after the flood receded, there was still a land bridge between Asia and Australia. This theory of a land bridge is proposed to try and explain how the animals released from the Ark

got to Australia. Even if this theory had any geological support, it still fails to explain the unique animals of Australia.

If these Australian animals multiplied from the animals released from the Ark, they would have included Marsupial mammals (like the many species of kangaroo) and Placental mammals (like the majority of mammals existing today, including mankind). How can the Young Earth Theory explain why no placental mammals arrived in Australia across this hypothetical land bridge? In the rest of the world the existence of placental mammals resulted in the virtual extinction of marsupial mammals.

Where was the flood of Noah's time?

Archaeology confirms that the first complex civilization came about in the Middle East. Only later did this start to spread to other parts of the world around 2000 BC. This led to the first complex civilization in China in about 1700 BC (Shang dynasty) and even later migrations took it to America, with the first complex civilization in about 250 BC (Mayas).

In other words, at the time that the Bible suggests this great flood took place, archaeology has revealed that all of advanced civilization, such as the Sumerian and others that led to the Sumerian, was still concentrated somewhere in the Middle East. It is therefore fascinating that **recent surveys under the Black Sea have revealed ancient buildings**. Could these have been where the first civilization was situated?



A look at the map of this region shows a vast area of lowland, stretching from west of the Black Sea, through the Black Sea, Caspian Sea and even further east. To the south of this vast lowland we find a continuous ridge of high ground, except for the lower area between Greece and Turkey (seen in the top left corner of this map).

The Middle East, showing the Black Sea area where the first complex civilization may have been situated and where ruins of buildings have been found under the sea.

From a scientific viewpoint, the last Ice Age ended about 10,000 years ago. However, for a long time after the melting began, much of the earth's water was confined within ice sheets. This meant that little or no rain fell over large areas. This may explain the biblical account where it states that, prior to this flood no rain had fallen on the land. It would also explain why Noah saw a rainbow for the first time after the flood.

Scientific studies in this area do confirm that large floods have occurred. We can suggest that sudden torrential rain (possibly initiated by a comet explosion in the atmosphere) plus catastrophic release of trapped water under ice sheets, could have led to a very rapid flooding of this entire lowland area.

The only relatively lower land elevation, in the long belt of higher ground to the south, is at the present day straits between Greece and Turkey (linking the Black Sea to the Mediterranean). If this was originally not a strait then the flood waters could have built up to the north. However, at some point the accumulated waters could have caused a rush of water out into the Mediterranean Sea. The erosion of this passage (the present day Bosphorus Strait) would have allowed the flood waters to slowly recede.

This scenario is actually suggested in the Bible account. We read, *But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark, and he sent a wind over the earth, and the waters receded.* As mentioned earlier, we can ask where the waters could have receded to if the flood covered the whole earth. However, if the waters were receding through a newly formed Bosphorus Strait, this could explain how the flood waters finally dropped enough to enable the Ark to rest on dry ground.



Water always finds its level. If the whole earth was covered, where could the water recede to?

One further biblical indication that the flood was not world-wide is the account of Noah planting a vineyard when he emerged from

the Ark. If the ground had been covered for a year with the salt water of a world-wide flood then the soil would not have been suitable for a vineyard.

Spread of flood stories around the world

Since the first complex civilization started in the Middle East around 4000 BC (according to archaeology at sites such as Tel Brak and Ebla), and the later Sumerian civilization only spread out across the world after 2000 BC, it makes sense that all civilized groups carried with them a story of a great flood. This took place, according to Bible chronology, around 2456 BC. As migrating peoples moved out across the world, the story of a great flood was carried with them, often distorted by time. Even by about 2000 BC the story had become very distorted and exaggerated in the Epic of Gilgamesh.

Conclusions

The Bible account is, I believe, firmly based in real history. Furthermore, if we allow for **legitimate** alternative translations of some sections of the account, it can be reconciled with scientific discovery. I am convinced that Noah's original account, written within the limitations of his own knowledge, was a very accurate account of very real events that he experienced.

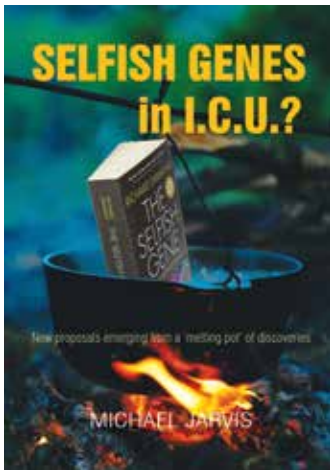
In past generations it really did not matter if our understanding of Noah's flood was unscientific. However, in our generation, that is rooted and grounded in the most spectacular advances in knowledge, **I believe that God does not require us to commit what I call 'intellectual suicide', in order to cling to one narrow and un-necessary interpretation of the Bible account.** The same applies to our understanding of the age of earth. Why cling to an un-scientific viewpoint when it is possible to fully reconcile the God of Creation and the Bible, with the discoveries of science?

2.9 God guided Evolution and the Gospel message

The Pew questionnaire given to delegates at the 3rd Lausanne Congress, showed that a significant number of Evangelicals accept that creation has been brought about by God, via laws and mechanisms that he set in place and which uses to guide the universe and our world towards pre-ordained outcomes.

A prominent and very vocal atheist is Dr Richard Dawkins. He has written many books, including one in 1976 titled 'The Selfish Gene'. His book has promoted a theory that all life has evolved via competition between genes.

In 2016 he wrote a follow-up on the 40th anniversary of his 1976 book. I have undertaken an analysis of his theory and show how scientific discoveries now reveal that his suggested mechanism of evolution is seriously challenged.



My book is titled '**Selfish Genes in I.C.U?**' In this book I show that, in addition to his basic theory being severely challenged within scientific faculties, a wealth of information has now accumulated showing multitudes of structures and mechanisms within living things, best described by me as 'Intricate Complexities'.

Of even greater significance is the discovery that life processes only function through intimate association with the weird sub-atomic energy that are being discovered by Quantum Mechanics. This so-called 'quantum energy' behaves in ways that show it operates independently from the limitations of time.

There are instantaneous interactions across vast distances and quantum 'particles' can be in more than one place at the same time.

In other words, there is an intimate relationship between life processes, such as photosynthesis, and an energy matrix that operates outside of time.

Furthermore, we know that everything we can see, including our human bodies, are made up from quantum energy. In a real sense this Timeless Dimension energy is 'in all things, through all things and by its interactions all things are held together'. Hopefully that reminds us of the Bible book of Colossians: *For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together* (Colossians 1: 16 – 17).

In addition, evidence is accumulating within biological research, that evolutionary changes are not chance events. Within biological research we

are moving closer to understanding that life and its evolution is guided and this guidance relates in mysterious ways to what I call the "Timeless Quantum energy Dimension".

The scientific studies of life, its origin and evolution over billions of years, have led many Evangelical Christians to believe that their faith in God as Creator is being undermined. This view has been strengthened by the fact that many atheists and agnostics have promoted evolution as an **excuse for not believing in God**.

Many of the most vocal Evangelical Christian contributions to this debate have knowingly or unknowingly presented distortions of science and given very narrow interpretations of scripture, as reasons why they reject the evidence for evolution. These presentations have confused many Christians who have been trained in one or other scientific discipline.

Many Christians have rebelled against the whole concept of God using long evolutionary processes to bring about his creation. They point to the evolution processes within life that seem to involve chance mutations and mass extinctions and this may suggest a Creator who conducts many experiments before arriving at mankind.

It is vital that we do not create God in our image, or at least not create God to be what we think he should be like. We need to try to understand God as he really is and accept whatever processes he has used to bring about his creation.

In my articles on this subject (obtainable on my webpage www.FactandFaith.co.za) I point out that **our concept of God is often far TOO SMALL**. I believe he is much greater than the one who simply speaks a word and instantly all things appear. Once we accept the evidence showing God to be a **'hands on' Creator**, who has created over long time-scales, then he has to be so great that he is aware of all details in the universe simultaneously and he continually upholds and guides all evolutionary processes, so as to achieve his pre-ordained end goals.

This is my very brief commentary of some exciting discoveries taking place within the biological disciplines. In fact new faculties are being formed at many universities to study this rapidly developing field of Quantum Biology.

If these brief remarks have excited you, please consider looking at my book *Selfish Genes in I.C.U?* It is available on Amazon and Kindle and information can be viewed on the webpage www.quantumevolutiontheory.co.za.

How does evolution impact the Gospel message?

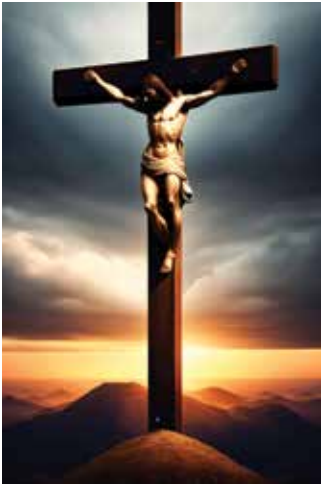
If Evangelical Christianity is serious about promoting the Gospel message to our scientific and technological generation and serious about confronting the challenges facing Christianity in an honest way, then I am convinced we need to accept the **urgent need** to accept the following:

- We live in a world that is billions of years old.
- God has chosen to bring about his creation in various ways, including through his guiding of the mechanisms and long processes that are an integral part of the way he has planned the universe.
- Life on earth has increased in complexity over long timescales, not just 6000 years.
- The fine-tuning of all the fundamental forces in nature and the existence of countless examples of 'Intricate Complexity' within living organisms, show believers that God is intimately involved in guiding the processes that science is now progressively discovering.
- Science has no way of detecting the guiding 'finger of God' but at the same time science cannot deny this reality.
- Science has clearly revealed that death has been a fundamental part of all life on earth from the dawn of life. The complexity of living systems requires food chains and intricate interactions that are revealed through the scientific study of ecology.
- Fossils are not the result of a world-wide flood. We must accept the scientific and scriptural evidence showing the flood of Noah's time was not world-wide.
- Adam and Eve, as representatives of the human race, were mortal but in the Garden of Eden they had a Spiritual Life relationship with their Creator.
- The Garden of Eden and Adam and Eve events are essential for our understanding of the nature of sin and our need for forgiveness, in order for us to be Born Again into an intimate Spiritual Life relationship with God.
- We all know today that we are mortal and so the Gospel message is not changed by varying understandings about the Genesis creation account and origin of death.
- Our acceptance that physical death did not start in the Garden of Eden means that some Evangelical Christians need to change their understanding of Original Sin and teachings about healing of sicknesses.
- Our acceptance of the long history of life on earth requires us to look again at how the Genesis Creation account can be reconciled with scientific discovery.

- **Christians are challenged to accept** that the Creator has used evolutionary processes as part of his creative activity. We are told this truth by the ‘Voice of God’ speaking to us from creation. Scientific discoveries are vastly amplifying this voice in our scientific generation.

A most important question: Are we serious about presenting the Gospel message to our generation or are we determined to cling to our traditional interpretations of scripture and so spend time and energy fighting the ‘Voice of God’ speaking to us from his creation?

The GOOD NEWS GOSPEL MESSAGE



THE Second ADAM - JESUS

- *Restored us to state of sinlessness before God
- *Restored us to sons and daughters of God
- *Restored us to Eternal Life relationship with God
- Did NOT restore us to physical immortality
- Humanity never were immortal

The Bible calls Jesus Christ the SECOND ADAM. We are told that he came to reverse the losses suffered in the Garden of Eden.

Evangelical Christians believe:

- Jesus made a way to restore humanity to a state of sinless-ness before God.
- He restored us to being ‘sons and daughters of God’.
- He restored us to being able to experience an Eternal Life relationship with God.

If the Second Adam came to restore all that was lost by the first Adam and Eve, why did he not restore us to physical immortality? He made a way for us to be restored to everything else that was lost in the Garden of Eden! Surely, this reality is also a powerful statement that humanity never were physically immortal.

The gospel message is relevant and important to all of us, irrespective of our discussions around the origin of death. We are all today most definitely mortal and it is to us mortals that the gospel is such an important message of salvation.

Chapter 3:

Theological Questions

3.1 Meaning of 'Only One Way'?

Most Evangelical Christians believe there is **no other way to God except through Jesus Christ**. Jesus himself said, *"I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* (John 14:6).

It is true that many Christians repeat these and other similar statements, but the words are frequently misunderstood because they are often **taken out of context of the whole Gospel message**.

The uniqueness of Jesus Christ does mean the following:

1. **It is his death for and on behalf of the wrongdoing of all mankind that** is taken into consideration by God as the basis for forgiving mankind their wrongs.
2. **As the appointed judge of all mankind**, Jesus has been given a unique position of authority. Scripture tells us that all men and women who have ever lived will stand before Him as judge. **It will be His decision** that will determine who will receive mercy and eternal life and who will not.

Therefore, in these two respects, the Christian is stating that he believes nobody will obtain acceptance by God in the life to come, except through the mediation of Jesus Christ. **This is through him as the only one who has the authority to forgive sins, and also through him as Judge of everyone who has ever lived. However, the Christian message does NOT state that all people who have not accepted Jesus during their mortal lives are automatically lost** and destined to separation from God.

The crucial question to consider here is **how will Jesus judge?**

In the Bible there are at least three clear categories into which we all can fall:

First, there are those people who have heard the message about God's love and forgiveness shown to us through Jesus Christ, have responded positively and have invited God into their lives through acceptance of Jesus Christ as Saviour from the penalty of sin and accepted him as Lord in their lives. These people will still stand before the judgement seat of Jesus Christ and will be judged according to what they have done with the gifts and talents God has given them during this mortal life. However, the Bible is clear that these people need not fear separation from God.

Jesus told his followers, “*In my Father’s house are many mansions and I am going to prepare a place for you*” (John 14:2).

Second, there are people who have clearly heard and understood the message about Jesus and yet have rejected it. To this group the Bible seems to clearly state that they have rejected such a great offer of pardon and forgiveness from God that they have chosen to exclude themselves from His presence.

Third, there is a broad group of people who have never heard the Christian message about Jesus, or have heard it in such a distorted manner that he was never clearly revealed to them. To this group Jesus offers us some clear insights into how he will judge them at the final Judgment Day. **Many of those who have never heard of Jesus in an honest and fair way will still find mercy from him at Judgment Day.**

The words of Jesus, and elsewhere in the Bible, make it abundantly clear that all will be judged according to what they have done or failed to do, **but** this will be judged in the light of what they knew they should have done. The greatest revelation given to mankind is the ‘Gospel of Jesus Christ’. Those who have heard and understood this correctly will first and foremost be judged on their response to this message.

Those who have not heard the Gospel Message, or only heard it in a distorted version, will be judged by Jesus Christ according to the light they had been given. One of the many scriptures on this truth is when Jesus said that the men of Sodom would be judged more leniently than the people of Capernaum who had seen his miracles but still had not repented (Matthew 11:23-24). Jesus said this was because the men of Sodom would have repented if they had seen the miracles Jesus performed in Capernaum!

The next critical question to ask is; **what are the criteria or rules by which Jesus will judge all people who have never heard of him, or have never heard about him in a correct manner?** The first clue comes from the lives of men of God, before the time of Jesus. Consider Abraham, of whom we read, *Abraham believed God, and because of his faith God accepted him as righteous* There are other examples in the Bible book of Hebrews chapter 11.

These passages suggest that those who have never heard the message of Jesus are **judged by their faith in the knowledge of God that has been shown to them. It is clear that the faith God is looking for is a quality of faith that leads to action towards what is known to be right.** Thus, the Bible book of James makes it clear that God was interested in Abraham’s actions, not simply belief in God. It is not the acts themselves that gain us favour. It is the faith that is important, provided it is a **quality of faith that leads to action towards God** - a quality of faith that leads to a reaching out to God; a seeking after God and a seeking for truth.

Paul in Ephesians 2:8 wrote: *For it is by God's grace (free and unmerited favour) that you have been saved, through faith. It is not the result of your own efforts, but God's gift, so that no one can boast about it. For we are God's workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus to do good works**, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

In each Bible description of Judgment Day, the same sort of words are used. They talk about men and women being judged, **according to what they have done**. For instance, in the book of Revelation chapter 20 we read: *Then I saw a great white throne and the One who sits on it. Earth and heaven fled from his presence and were seen no more. And I saw the dead, great and small alike, standing before the throne. Books were opened, and then another book was opened, the book of the living. The dead were judged according to **what they had done**, as recorded in the books. Then the sea gave up its dead. Death and the world of the dead also gave up the dead they held. And all were judged according to what they had done.*

In the Old Testament book of Daniel we read: *Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever (Daniel 12:2-3).*

Again Daniel wrote: *As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and **the books were opened** (Daniel 7:9-10).*

Jesus said, *"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people **one from another** as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me'. Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?' The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me'" (Matthew 25: 31-40).*

Here again, we see the emphasis placed on ‘what we have done’ or ‘what we have not done’. **These, and other passages, emphasise that we will all be judged according to what we have done.**

How will Jesus judge the works of mankind? Biblical descriptions of Judgment Day state that the books will be opened and people will be judged on the basis of what they have done, because this is a clear reflection on whether or not they had a true faith in God. However, the words of Jesus make it clear that **what we have done will be judged in the light of what we knew we should have done. Those who have heard the gospel message will be judged first and foremost on what they have done with Jesus Christ.**

For instance, Jesus said *“Much is required from the person to whom much is given, much more is required from the person to whom much more is given”* (Luke 12:47). Jesus also spoke to the people of his days on earth, who had seen his miraculous healings: *Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. “Woe to you Korazin, woe to you Bethsaida. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be **more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgement than for you.** And you Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. **But I tell you it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of Judgement than for you”*** (Matthew 11:20).

These towns, such as Tyre, Sidon and Sodom, were notorious for practising conduct contrary to the laws given by God. Sodom was judged by God and totally destroyed, as an example to mankind of what God thought of their violence and sexual behaviour. However, these same people who experienced God’s judgement in this life will actually face a second judgement before Jesus Christ. **Amazingly, we are told that they will actually receive more mercy than some who seemed less evil and very ‘religious’. This is because Jesus will judge their actions in the light of what they knew to be right and in the light of the knowledge of God available to them at the time.**

When Jesus was on the cross he cried out: *“Father forgive them for they know not what they do”* (Luke 23:34). It is good to know that our future judge takes into account what we know, not just what we do. By the same standard it is sobering to know that the people judged most severely are those of us who know the most.

In Acts 7, we read a message given by Paul to the people of Athens, *“Therefore, since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone - an image made by man’s design and skill. **In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has***

set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead” Here again we see how God takes ignorance into account.

The reverse side of God’s justice is the fact that he is very blunt and angered by those who have been shown the most truth and yet have not accepted it. The words of Jesus, *“For judgement I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind”*. Some Pharisees (religious people whom Jesus often accused of hypocrisy), who were with him, heard him say this and asked *“what? Are we blind too?”* Jesus said, ***“If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains”*** (John 9:39-41).

In the Bible book of Romans 1:20, Paul writes that **no man has an excuse for not believing in God, for since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what he has made, so men are without excuse**. Here Paul is saying that no man has an adequate excuse for not believing in a powerful creator God. However, God expects more than just belief; he expects mankind to acknowledge their responsibility to live according to their knowledge of God. Those who have received the greatest knowledge will be judged the most severely.

This same Paul, a bit later in the book of Romans, points out that those who have never been given access to the laws of God, as were the Jews, will often die without this knowledge. Nevertheless, in verse 14 we read, *Indeed, when gentiles (non-Jews) who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them. **This will take place on the day when God will judge men’s secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.***

Other Bible passages contain this same basic truth, namely that God will judge what we do in the light of what we knew we should have done. For instance, *“If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin. If I had not done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these miracles and yet they have hated both me and my Father”*. (John 15:22-24).

Another passage reads: *Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact sin is lawlessness* (1 John 3:4). **This summarises an often repeated truth, namely that wrongdoing is only defined as sin when the doer is aware that he is breaking a God-given law**. A baby is not born guilty of sin, but is born with the tendency to be selfish and selfishness is the root of all sin. The child only becomes a sinner when it knowingly breaks a God-given law, or the law of its own God-given conscience. This

is why Jewish society and most legal systems only consider a juvenile fully guilty of a crime once that individual is over a specific age.

So, Christianity does say that there is no other way to God, except through Jesus Christ. However, this does not mean that everyone who is not a Christian is lost and heading for hell.

It does mean that everyone will kneel before Jesus at Judgment Day.

It does mean that the death of Jesus, as a substitute for the sins of the whole world, is the only basis for forgiveness and acceptance by God. The crucial question to ask is; **How will Jesus judge me?**

If we have heard the Gospel message of God's love and mercy, offered to us through faith in Jesus, then our response to this message is vital. If we reject his offer of forgiveness through Jesus, then: *How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation* (Hebrews 2:3).

If we have never heard the Gospel message, or have never heard it in a correct manner, then Jesus Christ will still be our judge. It will still be his decision alone that will determine the eternal destiny of each and every person who has ever lived.

I am most grateful that God is revealed to us as just and merciful. He will judge all of us according to what we have done, and all that has been done will be judged in the light of what we knew we should have done.

I also praise God that the way remains open for full and total forgiveness and peace with God, right here and now, before we die and before we stand before Jesus Christ. **This is the Good News (Gospel).** Below is the essence in E.H. Swinstead's chorus.

*There's a way back to God from the dark paths of sin,
there's a door that is open and you may go in;*

At Calvary's cross is where you begin, when you come as a sinner to Jesus

Yes, I firmly believe that God is just. Many things happen here on earth that make us cry out for justice. Sometimes people say, *"How can there be a God of love and justice if he allows such things to happen?"* Well, **if this life is the only existence, then we may be excused for asking such questions. However, once we accept that life continues after physical death and that all mankind will stand before the judgement seat of Jesus Christ, then this has to put things into a new light.**

At Judgment Day, God will balance the balances and judge the injustices. "It is mine to avenge: I will repay says the Lord" (Romans 12:19, and Deuteronomy 32:35). Those who have put their faith in him and any who have never heard of him, but who may nevertheless experience his mercy at Judgment Day, will all know at that time that they have received far more mercy than they ever deserved.

I believe that, at Judgment Day, all will be forced to admit that God is in fact a God of mercy, justice and love. He will also compensate those who have been wronged. Jesus said, *“But many who are now first will be last, and many who are now last will be first”.* (Matthew 19:30).

God sees the present fleeting experiences of time and mortality in the light of what he has in store for eternity. The present life is but a ‘stepping-stone’ to a far wider and richer existence beyond physical death. This life is but the ‘curtain-raiser’ to the real thing. It is most rash of any person to accuse God of any injustice, because none of us has yet experienced our ultimate destiny.

That final destiny is obviously totally in God’s hands. He holds all the cards. Whether we like it or not, our eternal destiny depends upon his decision. Whether we like it or not, he has revealed to mankind that there is a Heaven and there is a Hell. The latter was prepared for Satan and his rebellious angels. Nevertheless, the Bible makes it clear that some of humanity will also land up there, because they have allied themselves with the ‘rebellion’ camp. I comment further on Hell and the Second death in chapter 3.3.

Justice demands that a place like Hell exist. How else can the Hitler’s of this world receive justice? How many anguished cries for justice rose from the millions of Jewish men, women and children, who were herded naked into the gas chambers while the soothing classical music played through the death camp loudspeakers? How many terrible things have been committed by men and women that cry out for vengeance? The apostle Paul quotes the Old Testament and reminds us, *Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written “It is mine to avenge; I will repay”, says the Lord.* (Romans 12:19).

At Judgment Day, all people will discover that God is in fact just and merciful. However, those who are granted access to heaven will also discover that they have been forgiven and accepted by God, not on their own merit, nor because they belonged to a specific religion, but only on the merit of what Jesus achieved for all mankind on Calvary’s cross.

Many will discover that, **although they may never have heard of Jesus, they have been granted access into the eternal presence of God through the Saving Work of Jesus and through his authority and decision as Judge.** In other words, all will then realise that Jesus Christ is the ONLY way and that his judgments are TRUE and that he alone can give eternal LIFE.

I was saddened some years back when viewing a film made about a missionary group in Papua New Guinea. They reached out to a small tribe deep in the jungle. The whole tribe responded to a ‘Gospel message’ and the film showed them all singing and dancing for joy. Then suddenly they all started crying and howling. When asked what the matter was they said “all our ancestors are lost!” They had

apparently not been told about people who had never heard the Gospel and how God will judge them differently.

How sad that these people had been taught a 'false Gospel'. **Unfortunately this false presentation of the Gospel is not uncommon within some sections of Christianity.** These presentations have led to many people criticising Evangelical Christians who believe everyone from another faith is heading for Hell. Their reaction to this wrong presentation of the Gospel message is understandably negative since it **calls into question the love, mercy and justice of God.**

3.2 Why preach the Gospel message?

Some Christians ask: If some people who have never been exposed to the Gospel message will still be admitted to heaven by Jesus on the final Day of Judgment then why is it so important that I tell others about my faith in Jesus and the Gospel message of Salvation through Jesus alone?

There are several important reasons, namely:

The overall reason should be a desire to share with others what you have discovered about God and his love. It is a practical outworking of the greatest commandment given by God to mankind: *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength **and love your neighbour as yourself**”* (Mark 12:30).

There are countless millions of people who are burdened with **heavy loads of guilt**. The message of Jesus brings them a way of forgiveness and peace of mind.

There are millions of people who live **without any real meaning to life**. The Christian message can liberate them from hopelessness and give them a worthwhile reason to live.

There are many who live with the **fear of death**. The message of Jesus and his resurrection can free them from this fear, as they discover for themselves the reality of the resurrection and the promise of Eternal Life and as they experience the assurance that comes from the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

There are millions who are **held captive to habits and sins** from which they cannot break loose. God, through his Holy Spirit and through the support of fellow Christians, can set the captives free.

There are many who have deliberately turned away from the truth that God has revealed to them. **Such people are in the worst condition of all**. However, the Christian message, delivered in the power of the Holy Spirit, can convict such people of the error of their ways and save them from the eternal danger they are in.

The Christian message of new life through Jesus has **the power to transform society**. A transformed society means less crime, less abuse of women and children, less pain and suffering. In short, a truly Christian society means a better life for all, even right here on earth.

Telling the Good News about Jesus, is a **direct command that he gave to all his followers**. If he is Lord of our lives then it follows that we need to: *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age”* (Matthew 28:19).

There are many millions of humanity still living under shocking conditions. This is due to the greed and selfishness of man, his wars and his spending of vast amounts of money on armaments. **A right relationship of people with their Creator can be an important motivation for involvement in movements aimed at transforming societies.**

Jesus said, *“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour”* (Luke 4:18-19).

We, as followers of Jesus, are also called to be empowered by the Holy Spirit and to take this same message of forgiveness, spiritual freedom, spiritual insight, release from bondages and habits, assurance of Eternal Life, and to announce this ‘good news’ to the ends of the earth.

Many great humanitarian movements have been initiated by committed Christians, or by people strongly impacted by the Christian message. This is a natural result of the love of God impacting the lives of Christians and motivating them to love their neighbours as themselves. The Gospel message has the power to turn lives and societies upside down, not by force of arms or bombs, but through the power of God’s love, acting through us, to change lives.

If the early Christians had not taken the words of Jesus seriously, Christianity would never have spread to such a wide portion of the earth. However, there are still areas where people live in ignorance of the Gospel message.

May our great and awesome God bless us and keep us and make his face to shine upon us and give us his joy and his peace. And may he empower us and motivate us to share the Good News with people around us. We do not have to be great theologians or trained evangelist. All we have to do is share our own life experience, point people towards Jesus and show the love of Jesus in practical acts of kindness.

However, it will make us much more effective witnesses if we **seriously study our faith** and learn how to express it to those who have never clearly heard about the God who, *so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him, should not perish, but should have Everlasting Life* (John 3:16).

3.3 Eternal LIFE and Eternal DEATH

The following analysis is based on comparing Bible passages: (All NIV unless noted)

Starting with John 3:16 Jesus told Nicodemus: *“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**”.*

We need to ask how these words, ‘Perish’ and ‘Eternal Life’ relate to other Bible passages and to the recorded words of Jesus Christ.

Regarding Eternal Life, comments by Jesus and by the human authors of the New Testament documents, enable us to achieve some measure of understanding about God’s promise of life continuing after our physical death. We also have the example of the resurrected Jesus.

However, when we discuss our understanding of ‘**perishing**’, this raises a number of very important considerations relating to the destiny of people who may not be granted Eternal Life in God’s heaven.

The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, as a workman who does not need to be ashamed and **who correctly handles the word of truth*** (2 Timothy 2:15).

Correctly handling the scriptures includes adopting the fundamental way of determining the meaning of Bible verses, namely by comparing scriptures with scriptures. There are many historical and contemporary examples of doctrines being built on one or a few Bible verses, without comparing these verses with all the other scriptures that are relevant.

My overall aim

I am taking the unusual step of summarising my conclusions about Eternal Life and Eternal Death, at the start. I hope that this will motivate you and challenge you to look carefully at my reasoning and the scriptures that have led to my conclusions about the meaning of ‘perishing’.

SUMMARY: In Scripture I do not find teachings stating that some people will be condemned at Judgment Day to suffer in agony for eternity in Hell fire. The Bible message about ‘perishing’ is that the opposite of Eternal Life is Eternal Death. I detail how this message can be reconciled with references to ‘everlasting destruction’ and ‘the second death’. Also how references to ‘wailing and gnashing of teeth’ can be understood as the reaction of people when told of their everlasting (irreversible) destiny. The only clear reference to lasting torment refers to the devil, the beast, and the false prophet.

This is a very important subject because it impacts directly upon the Gospel message. My summary may have raised questions in your mind and possibly initial disagreements with my conclusions. However, I urge you to read the rest of this article. I believe you will find satisfactory answers to any questions that may have come to mind upon reading the summary.

My approach is to list Bible passages relating to the following questions and to comment on how they can be reconciled with an understanding of ‘perishing’ meaning ‘eternal death’.

- Destruction and the ‘Second Death’.
- Angels cannot die.
- Hell, Hades and Paradise.
- There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.
- Jesus will be the Judge of all people on the final Judgment Day.
- How will he judge?
- God’s character

References to Destruction and the Second Death

Revelation 20: 14-15: *Then death and Hades were thrown into the Lake of Fire. The Lake of Fire is the **Second Death**. If anyone’s name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the **Lake of Fire**.*

Matthew 18: 8-9 & Mark 9:44: *“It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into **eternal fire**”.* The Mark 9: 44 record of these words of Jesus reads: *“It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell. Where ‘their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched’”.* NOTE: Some have quoted this reference as support for eternal torment in Hell. However, by comparing Mark’s account with the Matthew account we can see that these words ‘their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched’ are referring to an **eternal fire**. This association was understood by the Jews at that time because it referred to the place outside Jerusalem where rubbish and bodies of criminals were thrown and the fires never went out and dead bodies were decomposing. It was a place of ‘**on-going destruction**’.

Matthew 7: 13: *For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to **destruction**, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life and only a few find it.*

Matthew 25: 46: *Then they will go away to **eternal punishment**, but the righteous to eternal life.* (Eternal Punishment can mean an irreversible **sentence of death**. There is no appeal court).

Matthew 25: 41: *“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the **eternal fire** prepared for the devil and his angels.*

Matthew 10: 28: *Rather be afraid of the one who can **destroy** both soul and body in Hell.*

2 Thessalonians 1: 9: *They will be punished with **everlasting destruction** and shut out from the presence of the Lord.*

Hebrews 6: 2: *instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead and **eternal judgment** (Eternal judgment meaning that the judgment can never be reversed)*

Hebrews 10: 26-27: *If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of **raging fire** that will **consume** the enemies of God.*

Matthew 5: 28-29: *Those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be **condemned** (life contrasted with condemned – the condemnation is the opposite of life, namely to die).*

Galatians 6: 7-8: *Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap **destruction**; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap **Eternal Life**.*

Romans 6: 23: *For the wages of sin is **death** but the gift of God is **Eternal Life** in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

2 Peter 3: 7: *By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the Day of Judgment and **destruction** of ungodly men.*

Matthew 25: 41: *Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the **eternal fire** prepared for the devil and his angels. NOTE: Eternal fire burns up mortal people but not the devil and his angels because God limited himself when he created angels to be immortal (Luke 20: 36).*

Further comment on Matthew 25

Note that the **Eternal Fire** (Hell) was prepared by God for the devil and his angels. God has voluntarily limited himself when he created angels to be immortal (Luke 20:36). It seems logical that God could not destroy Satan and those spiritual beings associated with him. Therefore he has prepared a place or a ‘dimension of existence’ in which Satan can be confined for ever, no longer able to interfere with God’s eternal plans.

The question arises, if Satan and his close allies are destined for the Lake of Fire, *to be tormented day and night for ever and ever* (according to Revelation 20:10), Does this tormenting for day and night for ever, also apply to people

whose names were not found in the Book of Life? Humanity was not created by God to be immortal like the angels. They can be destroyed in the Lake of Fire (the Second Death).

All of humanity who end up being cast into the Lake of Fire (Hell) are, according to the scriptures listed earlier in this article, burnt up and destroyed.

The only New Testament Bible reference that I can find, that may relate to people being **tormented** in fire is the verse in Revelation 14: 9-12: *If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with **burning sulphur** in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb.*

We must ask whether this 'tormenting' in fire lasts for ever or does the passage allow us to suggest that their fate will be remembered for ever. We read: *And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever (verse 11).*

This reference to '*the smoke of their torment*' can be interpreted in more than one way. It could mean that their torment lasts for ever and ever, or it could mean that their destruction by fire will be remembered for ever. Smoke is normally associated with fire burning something and so this smoke may also refer to the destruction of these people in the fires of Hell, which we are told, is the Second death.

We cannot use this one scripture as evidence for a place of on-going torment for the **following additional reasons**. The passage also says: *There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image or for anyone who receives the mark of his name*. This comment sounds like a warning to living people, emphasising how important it will be not to worship the beast or receive his mark.

This warning is given to people while the beast is still around and before he is thrown into the fires of Hell. In support of this statement, there is a description in Revelation of **one of the sufferings that will come upon those who accepted the 'mark of the beast' while they are still alive**. For instance: *The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly and painful sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshipped his image* (Revelation 16:2).

In other words, the previously quoted passage stating that: *There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image*' is referring to End Times events that will cause suffering to those who had received the mark of the beast on their foreheads or hands. This means that it is not acceptable to link this passage to the sufferings in hell.

It is wise to accept that this one passage relating to people being tormented with burning sulphur should not negate all the other listed scriptures. The other scriptures do not speak of people being tormented in Hell for ever and ever. The people who are not accepted into heaven, upon the decision of Jesus Christ, will be cast into Eternal Fire, which is the 'second death'. They will **'perish'**. This destiny is eternal, meaning that it cannot be reversed.

I trust readers of this article will accept that it is wrong to base teachings on Hell and eternal suffering, on this one scripture in the book of Revelation.

One other scripture is sometimes given as evidence of on-going torment, namely the account of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16: 19-31). This parable confronts us with the mysteries relating to Paradise, Hades and Hell. The Jewish people listening to Jesus believed that good people went to Paradise while others who awaited the Final Judgment went to Hades. The repentant thief on the cross was told by Jesus "*I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise*" (Luke 23: 42-43).

The description of Lazarus with Abraham, suggests a place different from Heaven because all visions of Heaven recorded in the Bible speak of thrones, angels and glory. From the context, Lazarus is in Paradise, not heaven.

The spirits of those who died but did not go to Paradise, are awaiting God's final Judgment. This is spoken about in 1 Peter 3:18-20. *For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also **he went and preached to the spirits in prison (Hades?)** who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.* From this we can understand that Jesus descended into Hades during the time he was mortally dead, and amongst other things he preached to the spirits of physically dead humanity.

The fact that Jesus preached to these spirits, implies that they still had the opportunity to respond to the words of Jesus. These spirits were not in heaven and not in paradise (the place for departed believers) and so they were, and presumably still are, in Hades. They are not destined for Hell unless that will be the sentence passed on some of them by Jesus, at the final Judgment Day, when the 'book of Life' will be opened.

In other words, the description of the rich man suffering in Hades refers to a condition before the final Judgment Day. Maybe this account of Lazarus and the rich man is one scripture that led theologians in the Roman Catholic Church to believe in Purgatory?

It is not wise to be dogmatic when discussing the meaning of paradise, Hades and Hell since we are not given much information about them in scripture. It is equally undesirable to use this parable of Lazarus and the rich man, as evidence for eternal torment of the lost.

What about references to “*There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth*”?

There are several references to, *There shall be wailing (weeping) and gnashing of teeth*.

Luke 13:28: *“But he will reply, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers’. There will be **weeping there and gnashing of teeth** when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out.*

Matthew 8:12: *But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be **weeping and gnashing of teeth**.*

Matthew 13:41-43: *The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the **fiery furnace** where there will be **weeping and gnashing of teeth**. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.*

Matthew 13: 49-50: *This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the **fiery furnace**, where there will be **weeping and gnashing of teeth**”.*

Matthew 22:13: *Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be **weeping and gnashing of teeth**.*

Matthew 25:30: *And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be **weeping and gnashing of teeth**.*

NOTE

There is no mention of the ‘weeping and gnashing of teeth’ lasting for ever in a place of torment. It can be understood to mean that this is the response of people upon hearing the judgment and we should take note that other scriptures describe the Final Judgment as a process. A process normally takes time and so the weeping and gnashing of teeth can be a response upon hearing their sentence being proclaimed.

At the final Judgment Day we are told that the ‘book’ of every life will be opened and all are judged according to what they have done, or have failed to do, as recorded in the ‘books’. This judgment will be ‘summarised’ in another book called the ‘Book of Life’. Only those who have their names recorded in the Book of Life will receive Eternal Life.

It is at that time, when God's Judgment is revealed through Jesus as the appointed judge, that we can better understand the weeping and gnashing of teeth – in anticipation of the destiny prescribed, namely **Eternal Destruction** in the **Lake of Fire** that we are told is the **Second Death**.

We are not told in scripture the length of time between a sentence of Eternal Death and its application in the Lake of Fire that is the Second Death. Is there a period of payment for the actions that lead to the Second Death? There are some scriptures suggesting degrees of penalty for wrongs done. For instance, the comparison by Jesus of Sodom with Capernaum and his statement that "It will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you". (Matthew 11: 24).

CONCLUSION

This section of my book, on "Eternal Life and Eternal Death", has profound importance in relation to more effectively presenting the Gospel message. This is because the insistence by some Christians that God created a place of Eternal Torment for people negates the main emphasis of the Gospel of Jesus, namely the LOVE of God and his desire to rescue us from 'perishing'.

3.4: Miracles



A miracle is sometimes described as an event not explainable by natural or scientifically known laws.

In this section of the book I focus mainly on those events described in the Bible that can be placed in the category of ‘miraculous’. We will see that some of these events can partly be explained by what we know about the laws governing our universe and world, but other events have no explanation and are normally classified as totally supernatural.

Examples of the first type of event include some of the recorded ‘plagues of Egypt’, such as

locusts, hail, frogs and livestock sickness. In these cases the miraculous is seen in the timing and intensity of the events and in the fact that Moses was told when each event would start and when it would end.

Some of the examples of ‘supernatural’ events include the death of all Egyptian firstborn, the ‘manna’ food provided for the Israelites in the desert, many of the events around the life of Jesus, such as walking on water and supremely his resurrection.

I will consider miracles under three headings:

1. Miracles that are partly understood through scientific discoveries.
2. Miracles not understandable through known laws of our universe.
3. Miracles that happen in our personal experience.

Miracles that are partly understood through scientific discoveries

Some examples include the following:

- The 'darkness that could be felt' that covered most of Egypt but not the area where the Israelites lived in Goshen.
- Israelite crossing of the sea on dry ground.
- The 'sun standing still'.

The 'darkness that could be felt'

Most of the 'plagues of Egypt' events left no archaeological evidence. However, one of the 'plagues' did leave evidence, namely the 'darkness that could be felt'. We read, *Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand towards the sky so that darkness will spread over Egypt – darkness that can be felt" So Moses stretched out his hand towards the sky, and total darkness covered all Egypt for three days. No one could see anyone else or leave his place for three days. Yet all the Israelites had light in the places where they lived* (Exodus 10:21-23).

A darkness 'that can be felt' sounds very much like a cloud of volcanic ash from a volcanic eruption. A report in the scientific journal NATURE (Stanley & Sheng 2013) says that sediment cores drilled down in the eastern Nile Delta have revealed an ash layer corresponding to the mineral characteristics of the Santorini (Thera) volcano situated in the Aegean Sea, between Greece and Turkey.

The ash composition and the calculated age of this deposit coincide with the probable date of the cataclysmic eruption of Santorini. This shows that ash from an eruption in the northern Mediterranean Sea can be blown as far south as Egypt. However, the C-14 dating of this core deposit suggests it was deposited somewhere between 1595 and 1512 BC (Anon 1986).

This ash deposit in the Nile Delta does not seem to correspond with the Bible date for the exodus from Egypt. However, the Bible account states that the Israelites lived in Goshen which is situated in this eastern Nile Delta. Therefore, if there was another ash cloud that covered Egypt just before the exodus date of 1446 BC, we will not expect this to be present in the sediment core if it had only covered the western Nile Delta. The Bible account specifically states that the darkness did not cover the Goshen region that is situated in the eastern Nile Delta and the ash layer found in the drilled cores is dated 100 years after the exodus of Israel from Egypt.

However, other studies of volcanic eruptions in the northern Mediterranean Sea show that ash deposits from three volcanoes are all dated to about 1370 BC, with an accepted margin of error of 80 years (Vogel et al: 1990). In other words, 1370 plus 80 = 1450 BC, about the time of the Israelite exodus from Egypt!



It is most likely that the darkness covering Egypt in about 1446 BC did originate from one of these volcanoes.

We may ask how an ash cloud blown across the Mediterranean Sea to Egypt could cover all of Egypt except the North-Eastern Goshen area. This is easy to understand when patterns of ash dispersion are studied. A strong wind can blow a column before it like a river of ash, but on either side of this 'river' any observer would be in sunlight.

This Bible reference to a 'darkness that could be felt' is a good example of a Bible account where the writer

described events without understanding their cause. In other Bible passages we read words like "*I saw what looked like*".

This example and its probable scientific explanation in no way reduces its miraculous nature. The miracle was in the timing, the intensity and the fact that it only affected part of Egypt, not Goshen where the Israelites lived. The miraculous is also shown by the fact that Moses was told when the darkness would start and when it would end. The scientific explanation and dates of volcanic eruptions also helps us accept the Bible time-line for when the Israelites left Egypt.

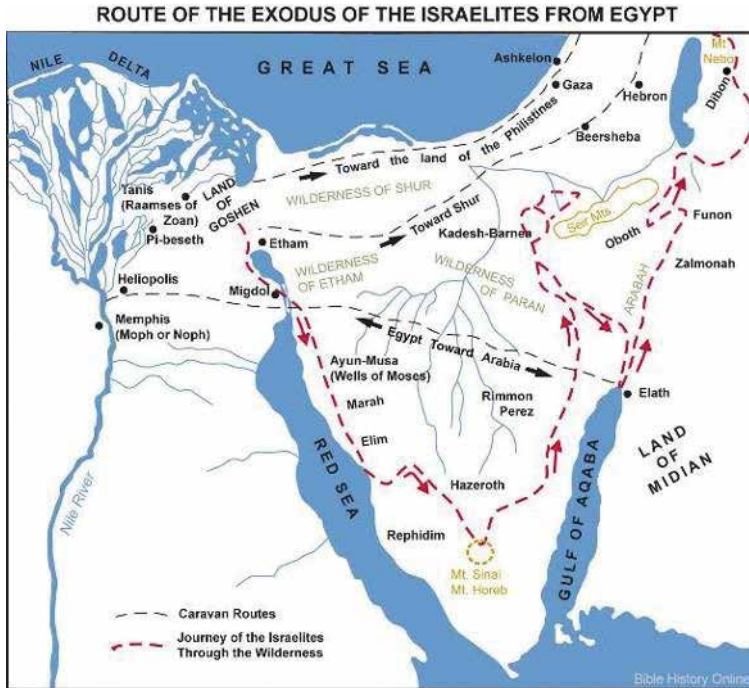
Israelites crossing the Sea?

If we look at the possible routes taken by the Israelites leaving Egypt, the most likely one took them through an extensive body of water known as the 'Sea of Reeds'.

On the map the most prominent dashed line gives one possible route. Starting from the Land of Goshen in the North East of the Nile Delta, they then went south to near Migdol and then miraculously crossed the 'Sea of Reeds' situated just north of Migdol.

Archaeologist and biblical scholar James Hoffmeir places Migdol of Egypt's New Kingdom period near Magdolum (not shown on the map). *Pi-hahiroth* is thought to mean 'mouth of the canal (s)'. The Pelusiac branch of the Nile was used in

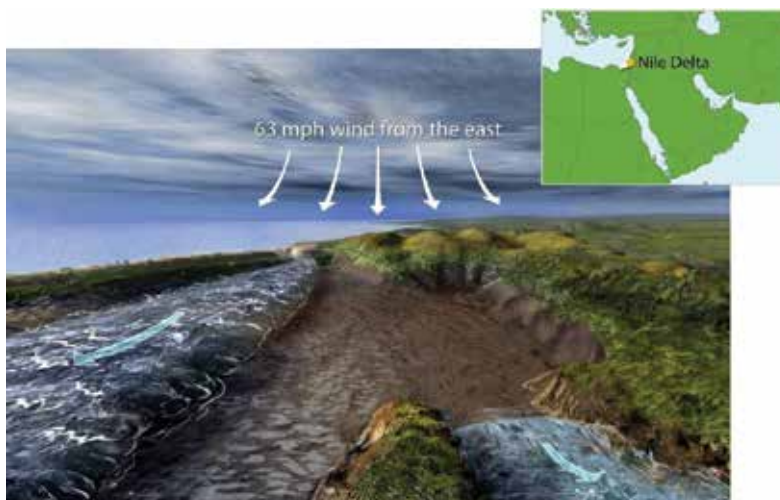
ancient times as a canal for transportation and irrigation, as were smaller channels passing near Migdol itself (Drews & Han 2010). This places Migdol closer to the Mediterranean than shown on the map below.



The Bible account reads: *Then the Lord said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites to turn back and encamp near Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea. They are to encamp by the sea, directly opposite Baal Zephon"*

Further support for this crossing site comes from a Major-General Sir Alexander B. Tulloch. He served in the British army in 1882. He witnessed an event that reminded him of the Bible account. He wrote, *One day, when so employed (surveying) between Port Said and Kantarah, a gale of wind from the eastward set in and became so strong that I had to cease work. Next morning on going out I found that Lake Monzaleh, which is situated on the west side of the (Suez) canal, had totally disappeared, the effect of the high wind on the shallow water having actually driven it away beyond the horizon, and the natives were walking about on the mud where the day before the fishing-boats, now grounded, had been floating. When noticing this extraordinary dynamical effect of wind on shallow water, it suddenly flashed across my mind that I was witnessing a similar event to what had taken place between three and four thousand years ago, at the time of the passage of the so-called Red Sea by the Israelites (Drews 2011).*

This scenario has now been scientifically tested, as reported in NEW SCIENTIST scientific journal (McAlpine: 2010). This is also reported by Drews and Han (2010).



The scientific study, reported in New Scientist journal, created computer simulations of the area that may have been the site of the Bible account. They found that a strong wind from the east, blowing for 12 hours, could have exposed a five kilometre wide mud flat that could enable a few hundred thousand Israelites to cross. A 100km per hour wind would have needed a little over 8 hours to blow water in the Lake of Tanis westward and back up into the Pelusiac branch of the Nile, parting the waters around the peninsula from which it is assumed the crossing would have started. When the wind stopped the water would flow back in.

It should be noted that this Reed Sea is not a body of water that could be crossed on foot. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that it was almost certainly deeper 1,500 years back and has slowly become shallower due to silt deposits over time.

So we can again conclude that the Bible account can be based in realistic history. The importance of a strong east wind was also mentioned in the Bible account. We read, *Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back **with a strong east wind** and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground with a wall of water on their right and on their left* (Exodus 14: 21-22).

This crossing of the Reed Sea is in **no way less miraculous than it would have been anywhere else**. The miraculous is seen in God's timing, his leading Moses to an exact place at an exact time and causing the east wind to blow for a precise time while the Israelites crossed over. Then causing the Egyptian army to be drowned immediately after the Israelites had finished crossing over.

It should also be noted that all the Bible references to crossing the sea on dry ground refer to the **Reed Sea, not the Red Sea**. The Hebrew words are *Yam Saph*. The word Yam means 'sea' and Saph means 'reeds'. It was a fresh water lake!

The same words *Yam Saph* are used in Numbers 14:25, Deuteronomy 1:40, Joshua 4:23, and Psalm 106:7-9. Clearly it is an incorrect translation to refer to the Red Sea. The Israelites did not cross the Red Sea, they crossed the Reed Sea!

The sun standing still

Recently an article by Humphreys and Waddington (2017) suggest that a solar eclipse of 1207 BC might explain the Bible account of the sun standing still, as recorded in Joshua 10:12-14. However, according to dates given in the Bible, the events recorded in Joshua would have taken place close to 1400 BC, about 200 years before the eclipse mentioned in this article.

The Joshua account gives other details that cannot be explained by a solar eclipse. We read:

1. As they (the enemy) fled before Israel on the road down from Beth Horon to Azekah, the Lord hurled large hailstones down on them from the sky, and more of them died from the hailstones than were killed by the swords of the Israelites.
2. The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day.

In order to understand these accounts it is helpful to note that the Bible writers were often describing events as they seemed to them. We have already noted the 'darkness that could be felt' account. In other places we read words such as 'it looked like'.

With this in mind I feel it is justified to remind ourselves that daylight comes from sunlight. If it is daylight around us then we assume the sun is shining, even if it is hidden from our view by clouds. If the Israelites experienced a supernatural extension of daylight, far beyond the normal day length, would it not be natural to conclude that the sunset had been delayed or the sun had stopped moving?

We should try to find an explanation for the recorded extension of light, plus the recorded shower of large hailstones and the comment that it was light right through the expected night-time. In fact one whole night was missing.

It is fascinating that an event occurred on 30 June 1908 over Podkamennaya Tunguska River in Siberia, Russia, that most probably caused events similar to what happened in the battle recorded in the book of Joshua. This area was not inhabited.

This event has been extensively studied. What we do know is that there was a large explosion over this forested area. Trees were flattened radiating away from the epicentre and a probable explanation is that a comet entered earth's atmosphere

and exploded before reaching the ground, but fragments of an icy comet could still have reached the ground.



After this event the night sky remained light even as far away as Britain. At midnight people could play cricket and golf.

A Wikipedia article on this Tunguska event lists many of the scientific papers relating to it.

We now know that the explosion of an icy comet high in Earth's atmosphere could create a cloud of minute particles that would catch the sun's rays and create reflected light right round the earth. This was well illustrated when we started sending people into space. The rocket engines caused a very fine mist around the earth, far higher than any natural cloud formation.

We read about this in a report from Cornell University with the title 'A mystery solved: Space shuttle shows 1908 Tunguska explosion was caused by comet' (Ju 2009)

In other words, the most likely explanation for the events recorded in Joshua chapter 10 is as follows:

1. God knew what was about to happen and so he prompted Joshua to pray for extended daylight.
2. When the daylight was prolonged it is natural that the Israelites concluded that the sun had stopped. This conclusion was natural because we all know that daylight comes from the sun.
3. If a comet had exploded high in the atmosphere some distance away from the battle, this would in all probability have created very high altitude cloud that actually obscured sight of the sun, although sunlight still passed through the cloud.
4. This event created large 'hailstones' that rained down on the fleeing enemy (actually fragments from the exploded comet?)
5. This event caused bright light throughout the night and so the Israelites experienced daylight for a period lasting two normal day lengths. To them it seemed that the *'The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day'* Joshua 10:13)

Why do I detail this very plausible cause of the Joshua events? Well, as a scientist I know that God has created our solar system in such a way that the earth constantly moves around the sun and day and night is caused by the constant rotation of our earth.

The laws of physics tell us that it is impossible for the earth to suddenly stop moving or rotating and if it could stop then everything on earth would be propelled out into space at an enormous speed. Because the basic God-ordained Laws of our Universe prevent the earth from suddenly stopping its rotation, this passage in the Bible has been ridiculed by many who wish to discredit the Bible.

Therefore, since we live in the Age of Science and we desire to 'give reasons for the faith that we hold' it is helpful for Christians to search for explanations that remove perceived challenges to logic and which help many people raised in our scientific age to accept biblical events in ways that do not conflict with established laws governing the universe.

The Bible speaks very clearly about the importance of telling the truth. It is very sad that some Christians have been circulating a story about 'NASA finding a missing day' on their computer analysis of our past and suggesting the explanation is the 'missing day' of the Bible account. In fact this is a case of Fake News created by some misguided person. There is absolutely NO TRUTH in this NASA story.

Miracles not understandable through known laws of our universe?

I find it exciting that science can help us understand how other miracles that are not understandable through known laws operating in our universe, may be caused through laws that operate outside of the restrictions of time.

These laws could be the same as existed in the Timeless Dimension from which our universe was created at the Big Bang event. We call any such laws, that existed before creation of our universe, Transcendent Laws

Science is starting to investigate events that seem to be independent of the restrictions of time. This research is taking place within the scientific discipline known as Quantum Mechanics.

Scientists making these studies all admit that they are discovering things that are so mysterious that no-one really understands them. This is shown by headlines such as on this front cover of New Scientist Journal.

These studies relate to the microscopic building blocks of our universe. We used to believe that there is nothing smaller than atoms and that everything we can see in our universe is built up from these microscopic 'building blocks'. However, quantum mechanics has demonstrated that there are many even smaller units of



energy that we call 'particles' but which are actually bundles of energy.

The really amazing discoveries relate to how this microscopic world, containing the energy interactions that form our visible universe, defy our understanding of time and space. Scientists have had to invent terms such as 'superposition', 'entanglement' and to accept the reality of instantaneous interactions over vast distances and that 'quantum particles' can exist in more than one place at a time!

In scientific machines such as the Particle Accelerators it has been shown that sub-atomic realities can interact with each other instantaneously over vast distances. In fact, it looks as if this sub-atomic world is operating in a Timeless Dimension.

Realities existing in a 'superposition' of many states only materialise as specific realities when we measure them with our time bound instruments. These measurements of multiple realities (superpositions) become detected as things like electrons, positrons and many other varieties of energy manifestation, when we 'freeze' their timelessness into our time-bound universe.

We and our universe are locked into time. Events happen in sequence and we speak of the 'Arrow of Time' that takes us and the whole universe from our past via our ever moving 'present' and into our future.

Amazingly, our universe that is locked into time, seems to be built up from a reality that is independent from time. Furthermore, Einstein and other scientists have provided much evidence that our universe started at a very specific event, namely an enormous explosion of energy that we call the Big Bang. Science understands that time and space came into existence at this Big Bang Creation.

So what was before this dramatic start of our universe when space and time came into existence? We know that the Big Bang event had to be a very precise event otherwise we would not exist. We can imagine that a very precisely determined amount of Timeless Dimension energy was instantly transformed into an explosive Big Bang NOW event. It had to be a truly God event.

Everything that we can see around us had a beginning. All beginnings demand a cause of the beginning. The universe is no exception to this universally observable truth. Therefore the universe also had a cause of its beginning. What was that cause? The most logical conclusion is that God was the cause.

Since science believes that time only started at the Big Bang Creation it seems logical to conclude that God existed and still exists in a Timeless Dimension. The Bible tells us this truth. God revealed himself to Moses as the "I AM" and in a number of places the Bible refers to God as existing from 'eternity to eternity' or 'timelessness to timelessness'.

When we look at God's visible Creation we see that it is held together by consistent laws and processes. We are told that God is in some way present throughout our vast universe and in fact *'in him all things consist or are held together (Colossians 1:17), or 'sustaining all things by his powerful word (Hebrews 1:3)*. It is not surprising that Quantum Mechanics is revealing that our time-locked universe is built up from and held together by mysterious interactions that defy the limitations of time and locality. Our universe is held together by a timeless energy matrix!

So, what does the Bible tell us about what existed before our universe was created? We read, *"By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible"* (Hebrews 11:3). We are not told that our universe was created from nothing. Since God exists outside of time and he made our universe from realities that are not seen and since he has revealed himself as a God of order and consistency, it is not hard to believe that the Timeless Dimension also contains energy and laws.

Laws that existed in God's Timeless Dimension, before our universe was created, are called Transcendent Laws. Once we accept the probability of Timeless Dimension Laws, used by God to create our universe and to hold our universe together, this helps us understand that God can from time to time cause one of the Transcendent Laws to temporarily overrule the normal operation of the laws that govern events in our universe. We see examples of 'higher Laws' overcoming other laws. For instance the laws governing aerodynamics enable an aircraft to overcome the normal operation of the Law of Gravity.

These realities help me to understand a little bit of how God can cause those miracles that we classify as 'totally supernatural'. His powerful Mind directs 'Transcendent Laws' of the Timeless Dimension to temporarily suspend the usual function of the laws that we have experienced and understood through the studies of science.

Miracles that happen in our personal experience.

Some people experience more 'miracles' in their lives than other people. In some cases we simply fail to recognise miracles that are less spectacular than others. For instance, how often have you or I met people we needed to meet or have been 'in the right place at the right time'? These encounters may have led to meaningful consequences in our lives or they may have prevented us from harmful situations.

The laws of chance and statistics do sometimes explain unusual situations or apparent coincidences. However, if these meaningful and unexpected events happen often then we can more easily believe that God has been guiding our steps.

I have been blessed with many events where I realised that chance was not the explanation. Some of these events were during war situations in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. Several times I was saved from very probable death by a series of very unlikely split-second timing of aspects of those events. I list some of these as a free download from my webpage www.factandfaith.co.za. The article is titled '**Personal journey of discovery**'.

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3.5 Theology of healing

One Bible passage often quoted in relation to a theology of healing is Isaiah 53:5:

*But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and **by his wounds we are healed.***

If we compare scripture with scripture we find that the Apostle Peter understood it differently. We read: *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls* (1 Peter 2:24).

Peter clearly links this passage ‘*by his wounds you have been healed*’ with being healed from going astray and healed from the guilt of sin. He does not link it to being healed from sicknesses. The NIV Study Bible commentary on Isaiah 53:5 states ‘healed here probably equivalent to “forgiven”’.

When we consider a biblical theology of healing, it makes an enormous difference if we accept that our mortality is not the result of Adam and Eve sinning. In other words, the Big Bang creation and the nature of our Universe were planned by God to result in people on Earth who were created mortal. We have already discussed this in earlier sections of this book.

Our attitude to the origin of physical death will radically influence our theology of healing from sickness. This will have a direct implication for our understanding of the atonement. What did Jesus achieve for us on the cross?

Atonement is a word that implies restitution, or a way of return to the condition humanity was in before Adam and Eve sinned. Jesus paid the price for our forgiveness and restoration to an Eternal Life relationship with Father God.

Atonement is the divine act of grace whereby God draws to himself and makes ‘at one’ with him those who were once alienated from him. Calvary was the place of reconciliation. Atonement brings forgiveness from sin and from the consequences of sin.

My understanding is that the death of Jesus, the second Adam, makes a way of restoration to a state of ‘sinless’ in the eyes of God, but does not restore us to physical immortality. This is because neither we nor Adam and Eve were ever physically immortal. They had an Eternal Life relationship with God that was lost when they sinned.

Jesus restores us to this relationship. We are also restored to a state of ‘sinless’ before God, because we are cleansed and covered with the merit of the blood of

Christ. We do not approach Father God through our own 'sinless condition', but because we are covered with the sinless-ness of Jesus.

When we come to discuss whether the healing of sickness is a part of the atonement, we need to distinguish the type of sickness or disease we are talking about. If it is an infirmity of old age then this can be a natural consequence of our mortality rather than a result of sin. When we consider broken bones, severed limbs or injuries due to accident, these may be directly related to human sin but they could equally be due to earthquakes, falling trees or other situations that are not the result of human sin.

I suggest that healing from sicknesses that are due to human sin, such as physical pains and symptoms that can result from un-forgiveness, anger or stress; in these cases healing of these sicknesses can be experienced when we come to the cross in repentance and faith. This repentance and receiving of the Holy Spirit at our 'new birth', should lead to healing from un-forgiveness, anger and stress. This in turn should lead to healing of sicknesses linked to these sinful attitudes.

Other sicknesses are directly the result of demonic oppression or possession. Clearly, in such cases healing is also promised through the atonement.

I believe we can say that healing of sicknesses, caused by sinful attitudes and sinful behaviour, and those caused by demonic activity, are all covered in the atonement. However, the healing of broken limbs, missing organs, birth deformities, bacterial and viral diseases such as malaria and the raising of the dead, falls into another category of healing.

Because we place certain sicknesses and deformities in a separate category, does not mean that Jesus cannot heal them. However, because they are not the direct result of sin and are therefore not automatically covered by the atonement, healing of these is only brought about through direct and specific instruction from God.

The words of Jesus tell us that he desires to give his disciples authority to: *Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons* (Matthew 10:8). However, it is not correct to assume that all of this is the birth right of every believer. It is also not specifically stated by Jesus that **all** of the sick or leprous or dead would be healed.

Certainly Jesus does intend his disciples to have authority to command all these miracles. However, I believe the situations that are not directly linked to human sinful attitudes, are only healed when it is the sovereign will and purpose of God to do so. **For these situations it is vital for Christians to first receive specific 'words of knowledge' before praying any prayer of command for healing.** In these cases, if we have not received specific revelation (words

of knowledge) then it is right to include the words, 'Nevertheless, your will be done'.

Such sicknesses may also be healed through the power of God, in the absence of any human intermediary, when the presence of God is powerfully felt in a gathering of Christians. In this case the Holy Spirit himself decides who will be healed on that occasion.

If we fail to take note of the different categories of pain and sickness then we might find ourselves bringing the name of the Lord into discredit. For instance, if I enter a mortuary and start commanding all the dead to rise in Jesus' name, this brings discredit to the name of God when the dead do not come to life. Or if I enter a leper colony in Africa and command that all be healed in the name of Jesus. **In a real sense such an action goes against the scripture: *You must not put the Lord your God to the test*** (Matthew 4:7).

We are today seeming to witness an increase in the miraculous demonstrations of the power of God to heal sicknesses. This is wonderful and exciting. At the same time many other sick people are not healed, even when prayed for in situations where all the biblical conditions have been met. This should lead us to search the scriptures to see if we have taken into account all the relevant factors.

When mankind rebelled against the rule of God this did result in a 'curse'. Satan then received a legal right to claim humanity as his, unless redeemed through the merit of the death of Jesus. This situation led to an increase in human sickness due to sinful behaviour patterns. However, mosquitoes, viruses and other disease causing organisms were all created by God. The Bible clearly states that God has created everything that has been created. We read this in Genesis but also in the New Testament, such as in John 1:3.

Satan's activity is confined to diverting God's creation into paths that were not intended in his ideal plans for humanity. As a result some organisms have become diverted from their original function in nature. For instance, human sex with animals has exposed humanity to new diseases. Human conflict and stress reduces our natural immunity and gives Satan open doors into our lives and this can lead to sickness.

Some theologians remind us that there is no sickness in heaven and so, they argue, there cannot be any sickness on Earth in situations where the kingdom of God operates. For instance, when we enter again into an Eternal Life relationship with God, through the merit of Jesus Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit, we have entered into the kingdom of God. This is true, in the sense that we have now acknowledged to kingship of God over our lives and have the Holy Spirit within us. One definition of the 'Kingdom of God' is any place where God rules.

However, none of us are perfect and so none of us are totally within the 'rule of God'. Furthermore, although we have 'tasted of' this kingdom while here on Earth, we nevertheless still exist within our state of mortality and live within a humanity subject to viruses, bacteria, genetic mutations and ultimately to physical death.

Furthermore, scripture tells us that, *man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment* (Hebrews 9:27). Why do people die? More often than not one of our vital organs wears out or malfunctions. We cannot expect to be healed of every infirmity otherwise we are expecting to be physically immortal! Only God knows when our appointed time has come to die physically, sometimes when we are young and sometimes when old.

Scripture promises that a time will come when there will no longer be any pain, sickness, sorrow or death. However, this time is still to come. **Right now there is no mortality in heaven but we remain mortal creatures of dust here on Earth.** Paul made it clear that 'flesh and blood' cannot inherit immortality, unless given transformed and supernatural bodies. This will only happen when we go to be with God in the heavenly dimension.

It is therefore wrong to use the argument that there is no sickness in heaven, as a reason why we can claim healing for all diseases here and now. Physical healing is only experienced here and now according to the will and purposes of God. He has many agendas unknown to us. He has our eternal wellbeing as a priority. Practical experiences of many Christians and biblical examples show that he does not always heal every disease or deformity or injury, even in the greatest of saints with the strongest of faith.

We believe that God knows what he is doing. Just like Paul, after we have 'pleaded' with the Lord to heal our particular sickness, God may let us know that 'his grace is sufficient for us' and that he knows that our spiritual effectiveness will be greater if we remain in humble acceptance of the trials and tribulations of life. In a real sense 'sharing in his sufferings' without losing our faith, gains great victories in the spiritual dimension.

We have already discussed that not all sickness is the result of sin. Jesus commented on this when healing the man born blind. He was asked whose sin caused this. He replied, "*Neither this man nor his parents sinned*" said Jesus. "*but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life*" (John 9:3).

So, what is a theology of healing that is in harmony with the following realities.

1. We are physical creatures who are mortal.
2. Physical death did not result from the sin of Adam and Eve. We were created mortal but lost our Eternal Life relationship with God when sin entered the world.

3. We live in a world that God himself has ordained to be subject to pain and death.
4. Some sickness and disease is the direct result of the sin of the sufferer, such as those caused by sinful attitudes of un-forgiveness, anger or stress.
5. Many other diseases and sicknesses are not related to the sin of the sufferer.
6. Some sicknesses and disease are the result of demonic oppression or possession or because the sufferer has given Satan an 'open door' into their lives, due to a sinful action or attitude.
7. Jesus walked this Earth and healed the sick and the deformed, and he cast out demons and raised some of the dead.
8. Jesus gave his disciples authority to heal the same sorts of diseases as he healed and to cast out demons and to raise some of the dead.
9. This healing was to be enabled in and through the authority and power of the name of Jesus.
10. After the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, his followers did heal the sick and cast out demons.
11. It is the experience of great Christians that many who are prayed for are not healed. Many of these 'healers' themselves died from cancer or other disease.
12. It is also the experience of those with the God given gift of healing, that on some occasions prayer for a specific type of problem, such as deafness, results in spectacular healings, but at other times the same 'healers' pray for deafness but without result.
13. At other times many who are prayed for are instantly and miraculously healed.
14. The Bible gives cases where some leading men of God were not healed of diseases.
15. Most cases of healing are in a context of evangelism, taking the Gospel message into new territory.
16. In the ministry of Jesus on Earth, he only did what he 'saw' his Father doing. In other words, he only acted after he heard how and when and where to act.
17. When we pray in the 'name of Jesus' we have to pray as his representative. We are 'ambassadors for Christ'. An ambassador only says what he is instructed to say.
18. The 'prayer of faith' is more than just believing with strong faith that God can heal. It is a prayer that follows on from instructions. A 'prayer of faith' is acting on the initiatives of God.
19. The greatest healings follow after 'words of knowledge'. This is because the 'healer' is hearing what Father wants to do in this situation.

20. Other great healings take place when God and his glory are powerfully present in a place. Many people then get healed without any human intermediary praying for them or laying hands on them. For instance, when the shadow of Peter fell on the sick.
21. Normally the fewest healings take place when all the sick are lined up and the Christian commands healing in Jesus' name for each and every person in the line. In such cases the person praying for the sick often has no word of knowledge and cannot know whether or not it is Father's intention to heal.
22. We are told, via the example of the temptation of Jesus, that we *must not put the Lord our God to the test*. When we command something in the authority of the name of Jesus, we must make sure we heard very clearly from the Lord, otherwise we are in fact 'putting the Lord our God to the test'.
23. During the ministry of Jesus, not every sick person in Israel was healed and not every dead was raised. We have the example of when he went to the Pool of Bethesda. There were always many sick waiting at the pool, but Jesus only healed the one.
24. Many Christians and other people are healed through the miracles of modern medicine. Where would any of us be without x-rays, anaesthetics, medicines and medical skills?
25. Before Adam and Eve sinned, God told them to be fruitful and multiply and 'subdue' the Earth. What had to be subdued? The development of modern medicine can be included in this process of 'subduing'. It is part of God's healing plan.

Christians involved in 'healing ministries' have taken various viewpoints on how to reconcile these many realities with the scriptures. I am only talking about those Christians who acknowledge that God still heals today.

As already mentioned, one commonly proclaimed interpretation of healing theology, states that all healing is part of the Atonement. In other words, just as Calvary ensures that our sins are forgiven through what Jesus achieved on the cross, in like manner our healing has been achieved at Calvary. Therefore it is the 'birth right' of all Christians to be healed of all their sicknesses. This view cannot be reconciled with a comparison of all relevant scriptures.

John Wimber, in his 1986 book 'Power healing', points out that Christians have a variety of viewpoints on healing, all based in scripture. He quotes some who do not accept that we should expect 100 percent healing here on Earth. Those who do claim this blanket healing, base it on the conclusion that 'physical healing is in the atonement' and on the understanding that all physical death and sickness are a direct result of the sin of Adam and Eve (the 'fall') However, even within this theological persuasion, not all believe that healing is automatic or immediate.

For instance, Wimber quotes Donald Gee, *We have erred by refusing any place in our doctrine, or at least a very insufficient place, for the sovereign will of God. To ask for divine healing without any accompanying 'nevertheless not my will but thine be done' seems to pose an attitude out of keeping with every other right attitude we take in prayer... We make our own problems because the Almighty does not always do what we, in our haste or our imperfect ideas, think he ought to do.*

Amongst healers who believe that healing is not an automatic consequence of the atonement, is J. Sidlow Baxter. Wimber quotes him, *This conclusion is supported at once by the fact that forgiveness of sins and cleansing from guilt are offered through the cross freely and certainly and at the present moment to all who sincerely believe, whereas healing for all our infirmities and sicknesses is not offered freely and certainly at present to all who believe. Not one of those who have believed for forgiveness and cleansing has ever been denied, but thousands and thousands who have believed for physical healing have been denied.*

When healing is 'commanded' but does not take place, this is sometimes blamed on a lack of faith or some unforgiven sin or other failure on the part of the sufferer or the practitioner of healing. This can lead to guilt, condemnation and anger.

We need to honestly face up to these realities and ask ourselves whether our theology of healing is actually taking into account the whole of scripture. My approach to this subject is to look again at the biblical basis for any theology of healing.

We find that the Old Testament passage of Isaiah 53 is the most often quoted authority by those who advocate that all sickness has already been taken away from Christians. As a result they only have to claim their healing in order to receive it. The words most quoted are *'by his wounds we are healed'*.

According to one particular interpretation of Isaiah 53, it may seem to follow that the death of Jesus on the cross gives us guaranteed healing of sickness. This is if forgiveness of sins and physical healing are both placed in the same category. It is argued that, since Jesus gained us automatic forgiveness from sins he must have gained for us automatic healing from diseases.

Regarding the advances in medicine, we need to acknowledge that these are part of God's mandate to humanity. In Genesis, even before Adam and Eve sinned, God said: *Be fruitful and increase in numbers; fill the earth and subdue it* (Genesis 1:28). We may well ask what had to be 'subdued'? I suggest it was everything that adversely affected our God-ordained mortality.

Furthermore, God gave instructions to mankind to 'rule' over the Earth. Because we are made in God's image, we have intellect and creativity, amongst

other characteristics. God intended us to use these abilities as part of the process of 'subduing' the Earth. Medical discoveries are part of God's mandate to mankind. It is therefore not surprising that many Christians, and other people, are often healed from sickness through this God-ordained channel of healing. In such situations we, as Christians, still believe in prayer for the sick. God sometimes answers our prayers through supporting and speeding up the healing that is mediated through modern medicine and medical discoveries.

I am convinced that God heals today. Furthermore, the authority for that healing comes through what Jesus achieved on Calvary. He clearly has the authority to heal all and every disease and deformity and to raise the dead. However, there is a big difference between acknowledging the power and authority of Jesus to heal, compared with the claim that it is the 'birth right' of all Christians to be healed while here on Earth, or the right of Christians to command healing in others in every situation.

We have already said that theology stating that 'All Christians can claim their healing as part of the atonement', is largely based on the Old Testament passage of Isaiah 53. This whole Isaiah passage is certainly speaking very powerfully about the crucifixion of Jesus. However, the main emphasis is on: *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.*

Some Bible commentaries point out that these words, referring to 'healed', are most probably equivalent to saying that we are 'healed from the consequences of sin', meaning that we can be forgiven and re-gain an Eternal Life relationship with God. For instance, the NIV study Bible notes that it is probably not correct to imply that the wounds of Jesus automatically heal all sickness, in those who accept Jesus into their lives as saviour and Lord. The commentary states, *Healed here probably is equivalent to "forgiven"*.

This understanding of, *by his wounds we are healed*, is further reinforced in 1 Peter 2:24, *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For we are like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.* Here Peter is clearly relating these highlighted words, that he quoted from the Isaiah 53 passage, to forgiveness from sins, not physical healing. He is saying that we have been 'healed' from going astray.

However, in Matthew 8:16-17 we read, *When evening came, many who were demon possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed the sick. This was to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: 'He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases'.*

One major theme in Matthew's Gospel is to persuade Jews that Jesus was their Messiah. For this reason he points out that the physical healings performed by Jesus are a further demonstration that he is the Messiah, because the Jews knew the prophecies that said that the coming Messiah would 'heal the deaf and open the eyes of the blind'.

Matthew does not quote: *by his wounds we are healed*. Matthew chooses another part of Isaiah 53 that can equally mean that he 'has authority over all diseases'. This is not the same as claiming that it is a right of all Christians to receive physical healing.

It is doubtful that we can use this Matthew passage to support the view that the death of Jesus ensures that no Christian should be sick. The Isaiah passage actually says that Jesus fully identified with our human situation of sin, pain, hunger, tiredness and sickness. This was part of his qualification to be our substitute 'redeemer'. He was fully man and he *suffered in every way as we do* (Hebrews 2:17-18). Furthermore, his authority over sickness demonstrated to all that he was indeed the promised Messiah.

Another scripture sometimes quoted in support of a theology advocating healing as a birth right is Psalm 103. This Psalm is a personal testimony by King David: *He forgives ALL MY sins and heals all MY diseases*. The NIV translation and some others correctly translate this as MY diseases, not OUR diseases.

The application of Isaiah 53 to 'automatic' or 'guaranteed' healing, through the sufferings of Jesus, fails to take into account that we are mortal and destined to die physically. It also fails to take into account that physical death was appointed by God for all life on Earth. **The death of Jesus opened for us the way to Eternal Life, but this is not eternal physical life.** We are promised that ultimately we will receive a new 'Timeless Dimension' body like that of the risen Christ, not an eternal continuation of our physical bodies.

Because we are mortal creatures, we are exposed to things that impact upon our mortality, such as viruses, parasites and other sicknesses. **Just as Jesus did not promise immortality in our physical bodies, in like manner he did not promise us healing from sickness in every situation.**

Once a Christian understands that God created life on Earth to be mortal, then it is easier to understand that the death of Jesus does not mean a restoration to physical immortality. God is not concerned with our physical bodies becoming immortal. He is primarily concerned with restoring to us what was lost in the Garden of Eden, namely that Eternal Life relationship with our Creator.

In the light of our mortality and several important scriptures, I personally believe that the often quoted reference to Isaiah 53, as our basis for **commanding**

physical healing, is incorrect. Calvary does not guarantee us this physical healing, but it does clearly demonstrate that Jesus has the authority and the power to heal all and any physical ailments, in addition to the authority and ability to forgive sins and the ability and authority to give Eternal Life. **He has authority to do all these things, but God has laid down the rules that apply to us receiving each aspect of the inheritance we have in Christ.**

These rules are discovered primarily in the New Testament, not in Isaiah 53. The rules for forgiveness and receiving Eternal Life, are repentance and faith. The rules for receiving physical healing are different. If God decides to heal our sickness, this is certainly achieved by his authority and his power, but other factors relating to our physical mortality and the battle between God and Satan, do determine whether our physical health is the most important issue.

We need to look at some biblical reasons why God does not always heal our physical bodies.

To mention just some of the biblical references, we can consider the Old Testament character called Job and his sufferings, including pains and sores. If someone had 'commanded' his healing it would not have been 'God's will' at that time. It was only later, after a spiritual contest had run its course, that we read how God then healed Job.

We read of Elisha, who had been instrumental in many great miracles, *Now Elisha was suffering from the illness from which he died* (2 Kings 13:14).

In the New Testament we read about Paul's 'Thorn in the flesh'. He writes, *Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "my grace is sufficient for you, **for my power is made perfect in weakness**"* (2 Corinthians 12:8-9). Note that Paul 'pleaded' with the Lord; he did not command the 'thorn' to go. Some have suggested that Paul's 'thorn' was not a sickness. This is hard to justify in the light of his comments in the book of Galatians, *Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn... if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me* (Galatians 4:13-15).

From this it seems that the illness involved Paul's eyes. Furthermore, it seems that he never fully recovered from this eye problem and usually used a scribe to write for him what he dictated. Only occasionally he added a few words in his own writing. For instance, *See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand* (Galatians 6:11). In the light of these scriptures it is most likely that Paul's 'thorn in the flesh' was a continuing problem with his sight. We might well ask why God did not restore Paul's eyesight so that he could write his letters himself. Even if his 'thorn in the flesh' was not a sickness, his bad eyesight certainly was!

Other Christians suffered health problems that were not supernaturally cured. For instance Paul wrote to Timothy, *Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses* (1 Timothy 5:23). Clearly Timothy had frequent sickness that was not cured supernaturally and so Paul suggests a practical means that might help.

Paul also writes, *Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus* (2 Timothy 4:20). It is unreasonable to assume that Paul did not pray for healing of Trophimus and so we may ask why he was not healed.

By far the greatest biblical emphasis, relating to physical healing, is that it is a sovereign act of God and **Christians need to follow the example of Jesus**. We read that he only did what he 'saw' his Father doing. He followed the insights and motivations that came to him from Father God. For Christians to effectively pray for the sick, they need to develop their 'hearing capacity' and ask God for an understanding of what to pray for in each individual situation.

Yes, I firmly believe that God does heal today and these healings are sometimes dramatically greater than merely psychological, and include raising of the dead. However, God does not obey our commands, unless they are within his sovereign decision to heal. When he does not heal, we have to trust that he has bigger eternal agendas and his greatest concern for each one of us is our Eternal Life destiny and our faith and character preparation for this destiny.

We also need to take seriously the example of Jesus when he was tempted by the Devil in the wilderness. The Devil quoted scriptures from the Bible, but at one point Jesus answered: *It is written 'You must not put the Lord your God to the test'*. When we command healing, in circumstances where we have not clearly heard from God, then we are actually 'putting the Lord God to the test'.

The only specific New Testament instruction relating to healing the sick is found in the book of James chapter 5:14-16. I believe that this scripture should be studied in detail, as the basis for all teaching relating to healing. Furthermore, this scripture should be read in the light of the other biblical passages. This will provide a more comprehensive and balanced view of healing.

We need to study what is meant by 'The prayer of faith'. One aspect of this is to really believe that God can heal. In addition, the 'prayer of faith' is an action or prayer performed 'in faith'. This means that we are praying what Jesus wants us to pray. This is only truly 'in the name of Jesus', if it is in response to an initiative from God. Faith, is ideally acting on the initiatives of God.

This instruction in James also links healing with other things, in addition to prayer. *Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith*

will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective (James 5:14-16)

We should note the following:

- This instruction was for Christians who are sick.
- The elders (plural) should be called.
- They should anoint with oil.
- The effective prayer is the prayer offered 'in faith'.
- If raised up he/she will be forgiven. This may imply that part of the reason for the sickness is un-confessed sin.
- Part of the forgiveness process is the confession of sin to others.
- It is the prayer of a 'righteous man' that is powerful and effective. Here the emphasis is on a right relationship with God. This is probably more than the righteousness imparted to us at conversion. It is a close relationship that includes 'hearing' from the Lord what to pray for.
- Olive oil was one of the best known ancient medicines (see also Isaiah 1:6 and Luke 10:34). Some commentaries believe that James may be using the term medicinally in this passage. Others regard its use here as an aid to faith, as an outward sign of the healing to be brought about by God, in response to 'prayer offered in faith'.

The use of medication, in addition to prayer, is illustrated in Paul's letter to Timothy.

We have already noted that Paul recommends a practical and medicinal solution, namely, *Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses* (1 Timothy 5:23). In addition to possible references to medication, the use of oil can also be a symbol of the Holy Spirit. By 'anointing' the head of a sick person we are reminding ourselves that healing only comes from God.

Another example of healing, that involved medication, is in the Old Testament. When King Hezekiah was sick and dying the prophet Isaiah was sent by God to tell him he would die. However, because of Hezekiah's tears the Lord relented and sent Isaiah back with a message that he would be granted a further 15 years by God. We read, *Then Isaiah said, "Prepare a poultice of figs" They did so and applied it to the boil, and he recovered.* (2 Kings 20:7).

The instruction given in James is specifically given for Christians. Incidences of healing described in the book of Acts, apparently did not require any prior repentance and acceptance of Jesus as Lord. These cases were mainly proclamations of the

authority of the name of Jesus, in situations where people were not yet Christians. They were part of an evangelistic outreach.

It is important to study how and when Jesus healed. Wimber quotes a study done by Michael Flynn, presented to the Anaheim Vineyard Christian Fellowship. He studied 26 cases in scripture of healing the chronically ill. He found that nearly all took place in 'evangelistic settings'.

A frequently heard comment, amongst Christians who pray for the sick, is that **more non-Christians are healed than Christians**. Even today, most healings take place in situations where the Gospel is being preached for the first time or where spiritual strongholds of darkness are being challenged. This was the pattern in the Book of Acts but also throughout the history of Christian missions.

Signs and wonders are instruments of God to proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven. Where the kingdom of God (the rule and presence of God) is present in powerful ways, such as during revivals, far more signs and wonders take place. In situations where the awesome presence of God is almost touchable (described by many as a weight of glory that can be felt) then many people get healed without anyone praying for them.

We read of this happening in the first church at Jerusalem. Even Peter's shadow passing over the sick led to healings. Later in Acts, we read how handkerchiefs touched by Paul led to healings. These amazing events were the direct result of the 'tangible presence of God'. Such a presence is not always experienced. It happens when God's people seek him with ALL THEIR HEART.

However, even when we are in a close relationship with God, I believe we cannot claim automatic healing for everyone we pray for. It is essential to 'hear' what God wants to do in each situation.

So, we may well ask; Why does God not always heal, even when faith and motives seem to be ideal?

We do not know the mind of God but he does reveal things to us through the scriptures. This enables us to obtain a measure of understanding. In addition, God is speaking to us from 'The heavens declare', namely his voice that it being greatly amplified through the discoveries of science. What is this voice saying about healing? I have already discussed this, but it needs emphasis because it requires a major shift in Christian thinking about supernatural healing.

This voice of God from science is telling us what is actually also there in the scriptures, but we have failed to notice it. **This 'voice' is saying to us that our mortality is not the result of human sin**. Therefore, it is only some types of pain and sickness that can be healed as a direct result of the atonement.

As mentioned earlier, it is the experience of many great ‘healers’ who have been channels through whom God has brought healing of sickness, injuries, deformities, and even raising the dead, that not everyone who is prayed for receives healing. In fact the majority of those prayed for are not healed. Furthermore, many who were used greatly to heal others nevertheless ultimately died themselves from sickness.

Let us assume that we have reached a place in our Christian walk where we are hearing from the Lord. When we are faced with a sick person, can we assume that God wants to heal? Is our listening merely so as to find out how we must pray for the healing? Or will God sometimes say, “This one is not going to be physically healed because I am busy in their lives in other ways?”

We may well ask what ‘other agenda’ God may be working out in the life of someone suffering from sickness or disability, or in the lives of those tasked with caring for the sick? **The following are some possible factors that should be considered.**

To keep us from worse things

James wrote: *When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures* (James 4:3). God alone knows the heart of each sufferer. Could it be that for some people the challenge of sickness humbles them and keeps them from sin? Maybe he knows that some people, even if they do not know it themselves, would drift into serious sin if they are healed.

Since the Lord has the best interests of us all at heart, he may look at the eternal consequences of every situation. If he sees that sickness will lead to spiritual blessing in this life, and more importantly, to eternal treasures in heaven, then he may withhold physical healing from the sufferer.

As part of a redemptive process

Peter expressed this thought in the following way: *Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God* (1 Peter 4:1-2).

Redemptive sickness should also be looked at in the light of at least three main considerations:

1. Jesus said that no man comes to the Father unless he is drawn by God.
2. Jesus promised that our prayers, within the context of his will, are answered.
3. Jesus said that it is not God’s will that any should perish.

In other words, if we pray for our children or someone known to us, and ask the Lord to bring them to repentance and faith (salvation), we know that this prayer

is within the stated will of God. We can therefore stand on the promise that he will answer our prayer. Therefore, God in his grace and mercy starts a process of drawing the one prayed for.

At first he may use gentle means of persuasion. However, if the sinner continues in rebellion, God may allow drastic circumstances into their lives, so as to get their attention. In some cases the person only turns to the Lord on his/her death bed.

There are scriptural examples that include God allowing sickness for specific reasons. For instance, the sufferings of Job, the judgment of leprosy on Elisha's servant, or the plagues that swept through the Israelite camp when they sinned. These cases of sickness can be as punishment, but more often they are related to redemptive purposes. Paul's 'thorn in the flesh' can be looked at as being 'redemptive', because it kept him humble and relying more on God.

To enter into the 'fellowship of his sufferings'

Paul wrote, *I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead* (Philippians 3:10-11).

Paul also wrote, *Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong* (2 Corinthians 12: 9-10).

Are we entitled to exclude sickness from this list of 'weaknesses, hardships and difficulties'? I do not think so, because of biblical cases where great men of faith suffered sickness. Paul was ready and willing to suffer all things rather than deny the Lord in whom he believed. People with this attitude have the same sort of attitude needed by the martyrs. When Christians stand firm in their faith, no matter what hardship God allows into their lives, this leads to great victories in the spiritual dimension.

That is probably why missionaries, when entering lands where the Gospel has never been preached, often struggle to gain a foothold. However, the breakthroughs come once Christians are martyred or suffer great hardship with a 'martyr spirit'. We do not wrestle against mere flesh and blood, but against spiritual forces in heavenly places.

Sometimes our commitment is tested by sickness, even long-term sickness. Such was Paul's 'thorn in the flesh'. The reason for it is described by Paul himself: *But he said to me, my grace is sufficient for you, for **my power is made perfect in weakness*** (2 Corinthians 12: 8-9).

Winning battles for God

Christians are caught up in this cosmic battle between God and Satan, between good and evil. For this reason, as we become more useful to God, so we experience more attacks from the enemy. Each time a Christian suffers attack, God weighs up the situation and decides on the action that will best serve the Kingdom, and best serve the spiritual growth of his child.

For this reason the Lord may decide on a number of possible options, such as:

- Allow suffering and hardship in order to refine our character.
 1. Allow it to draw us closer to him.
 2. Allow it to keep us from worse harm. God alone knows whether healing will be for our spiritual good, or whether we will then wander away from the Lord and commit harm to ourselves or to others.
 3. Allow it to test our willingness to be faithful under trials and persecutions.
 4. Allow it as part of the cosmic battle between God and Satan (e.g. Job).
 5. He may decide to heal instantly and supernaturally.
 6. He may decide to heal through medical knowledge of doctors.
 7. He may decide to heal by exposing the root cause and using healing methods, such as bringing the sick person to repentance or into forgiveness of others.

The challenge of fake miracles

The internet has enabled an enormous proliferation in fake news. Rapidly developing Artificial Intelligence is presenting all of us with new challenges. Christians expect that proclamation of the Gospel message should be accompanied with supernatural 'signs and wonders'. However, some 'ministries' or churches have been claiming miraculous happenings that are in fact invented fake news.

We may ask how this sad reality has come about. Unfortunately some individuals or organizations have realized that the way to attract followers is to portray themselves as anointed by God through claiming spectacular false miracles. This desire for greater exposure on the internet is motivated by money.

Personally I check webpages of groups claiming spectacular miracles and I note how prominently the 'Donate Now' icons are displayed. Wherever money making is prominent I immediately view such groups with suspicion.

In Conclusion

For us to have the right to speak ‘in the name of Jesus’ and to be a channel of God’s healing power, we have to be in a relationship where we hear his voice in each situation. In addition, there must not be any known sin in our lives and no unconfessed sin: *If I cherished iniquity in my heart the Lord would not have listened* (Psalm 66: 18).

More than this, we need to be in that relationship described by Jesus in his discourse on the vine and its branches. We have to be in a relationship of obedience and closeness to the source of all our spiritual life and spiritual authority.

Part of this right relationship is a spirit of humility. God does not share his glory with others. If we pray for healing, so as to be praised by man as a great healer, or to bring in money, or to bring fame to our church, or to our healing room, then our motives are wrong. We should pray for healing out of compassion and with the sincere desire to bring glory to the name above all names.

MacNutt (1974) in his book on healing suggests two basic ways of praying for healing. Each is perfectly valid but one is deeper and better than the other, yet it cannot be forced, for it is a gift from God.

First way: For ordinary Christians in ordinary circumstances, the prayer of healing is ‘a prayer of petition’, asking the Father to heal the person in the name of Jesus Christ, but allowing for, *nevertheless, your will be done*.

Second way: For the person with the ‘gift of healing’, at those times when he is truly inspired by a ‘word of knowledge’, then the prayer is more like a ‘prayer of command’. “Be healed in Jesus’ name”.

Once we have taken note of all the circumstances in a sick person’s life, and have heard from the Lord what to pray for, then another vital ingredient is faith. On many occasions Jesus healed people and then commented “Your faith has made you whole”.

For those of us who want to pray for the sick, it is vital that our faith becomes stronger. This happens as we spend time with the Lord and in his Word. It also happens progressively, as we pray for the sick and see healing taking place. **However, it is important to know that faith is not the only factor. We need to take into account all the other factors listed earlier in this section on healing and probably other factors not covered in this chapter.**

3.7 Sexuality and Christian marriage

Biblical views on marriage and sexuality are being challenged by secular society. Evangelical Christians need clear definitions and the courage to speak out on these issues.

The foundation relationships between men and women come from the Genesis creation account. The words of Jesus and the apostles relate this to Our Christian understanding of marriage and the responsibilities of husbands and wives. For instance Ephesians 5: 22-33, *for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh* (verse 31).

We consider references to polygamy in the Old Testament times to be of historical significance that has been changed by Jesus. He even changed some Mosaic laws such as “an eye for an eye” morality to “love your enemy” and changed the Mosaic laws around divorce.

The Bible also places emphasis on the welfare of children and how they should relate to fathers and mothers and their role in teaching children about God and the need to take him seriously. This instruction is found in Old Testament scriptures like Deuteronomy 11: 18-19 Proverbs 22:6 and New Testament passages such as Ephesians 6: 1-4.

It will be a valuable exercise for competent researchers to study the impact of same sex relationships on children that they are allowed to adopt. This is an urgently needed study that potentially can contribute valuable evidence against permitting adoption of children by same sex partners. This can potentially be evidence that cannot be justifiably labelled as ‘religious propaganda’.

The most important aspect of marriage and sexuality should be to bring God glory. As Christians, bringing God glory is the central part of all aspects of our lives. Our relationships within marriage do bring him glory if they are centred on love, loyalty, fidelity and when being a united couple enables them to be role models in a world where Christian values for marriage and sexuality have been corrupted by the world and by *the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient* (Ephesians 2:2).

Loving and supportive parents play an enormous role in sexual education of their children, through instruction and through displaying the godly and loving relationship of their marriage. Instruction can include watching some secular films together with the children, so as to comment on and discuss the negative content that so often is glamorised.

I think the main challenges to our beliefs about marriage come from the agendas of individuals and governments who are accepting, encouraging and in many cases promoting same sex relationships and are increasingly preventing us

from criticising these relationships and are even criminalising criticism, labelling it as homophobia or hate speech.

Any discussion of sexuality faces questions relating to 'same sex attraction'. Scientific studies have failed to identify any genetic basis that might pre-dispose young people to become sexually attracted to their own sex. However, there is strong evidence that 'same sex attraction' can be the result of experiences encountered in infancy or during adolescence.

There is a basic difference between brother with brother close friendship or sister with sister close friendship, compared with close friendships that include sexual interactions. However, when boys and girls are placed together in situations outside of close family bonds, there is an increased risk of sexuality becoming involved.

For instance, there are many documented cases where homosexual behaviour was initiated in sex segregated schools. In many cases boys become initiated through being molested by older boys or by teachers. In addition, our modern technological civilisation initiates many children into sexual activity much earlier than in previous generations. Exposure to the internet makes it easy for children to view explicit sexual encounters, including 'same sex attraction' encounters and pornography.

In addition, individuals and groups such as 'pride marches' and 'drag queen' shows are in fact promoting their sexual orientations and practices in ways designed to expose young people and influence them to experiment with activities that are outside of Christian morality guide-lines. For this reason I personally am in favour of the Russian approach where promotion of same sex activity is outlawed.

Many Evangelical Christian churches run their own schools and so it becomes very important not only to educate children in Christian sexual morality but also to point out to them the dangers they will inevitably encounter in the wider world environment. Attempts to isolate children from the corrupted sexuality prevalent in modern society has the potential of making them more vulnerable after leaving the home or school environments where they were kept largely ignorant of these things.

Children should be told that there are many sexually transmitted diseases and some of them do not have a cure and some show no symptoms. The Christian morality protects us from these diseases or at very least greatly reduces the chance of becoming infected. In other words the biblical instruction to avoid fornication (sex outside of marriage) has practical health benefits as well as spiritual benefits.

The spiritual benefit of avoiding sex outside of marriage is because sexual intimacy creates a spiritual connection and will make it harder for those involved to

experience the sort of intimacy that God desires within marriage. As Paul wrote: *the two will become one flesh*' (Ephesians 5: 31).

We also take note of Paul's commentary on sexual immorality: *Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body* (1 Corinthians 6: 18-20).

Sexual immorality includes any sexual activities that happen outside of marriage. This includes adultery (infidelity) and fornication (premarital or extra marital sex). We read: *Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral* (Hebrews 13: 4).

Scriptures include: *The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh". But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.*

3.8 Abortion

Consider the biology of human reproduction

The following information comes from: <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001488.htm> and <https://www.webmd.com/baby/understanding-conception>

Human reproduction has been extensively studied by science and we know the following:

Each month a group of eggs in the woman's ovaries starts to enlarge. Each egg is enclosed in a fluid-filled sac called a follicle. About two weeks after the last menstrual period one of the eggs bursts out of the follicle (ovulation).

Once an egg has left the follicle the follicle thickens and develops into a corpus luteum and this functions to release a hormone that enables thickening of the uterus lining, a process that prepares the uterus to receive the egg.

After its release, the egg travels down the fallopian tube and remains in this tube for about 24 hours and waits for a male sperm to fertilise it. If no sperm is available then the egg moves further through the uterus and then disintegrates and the hormone levels go back to normal. This stimulates the body to shed the thickened lining of the uterus, resulting in the start of the period.

If a sperm does fertilise the egg in the uterus by burrowing through the egg outer membranes, then the egg changes so that no other sperm can get in. At the moment of fertilisation, the baby's genes are determined. If the sperm contains a Y chromosome the baby will be a boy and if it has an X chromosome the baby will be a girl.

The fertilised egg remains in the fallopian tube for 3 to 4 days but immediately after being fertilised, it starts dividing into many cells and keeps dividing fast as it moves down the fallopian tube to the uterus. It then attaches to the lining of the uterus, a process called implantation. The uterus lining now thickens and the cervix becomes sealed by a plug of mucus that will stay in place until the baby is about to be born.

Within three weeks the tiny baby shows clumps of cells being formed, including the first nerve cells. From the time the ova is implanted a hormone starts to be released into the mother's blood. This hormone is called hCG and is detected in pregnancy tests, sometimes as soon as 7 days after ovulation.

When does a fertilised egg become a potential person?

A fertilised egg can only develop into a baby when it becomes attached to the lining of the uterus, the process called implantation. However, not all fertilised eggs become implanted. Scientific research indicates that at least 10% and probably between 40% and 50% fail to implant.

This fact means that it is wrong to define all fertilised eggs as being 'human'. They have potential to become human but only if implanted in the woman's womb.

How many spontaneous abortions occur?

The medical profession know that a developing foetus can be lost naturally. If this happens before the 20th week of pregnancy we call it a miscarriage or it can be called a "spontaneous abortion". Pregnancy losses after the 20th week are called stillbirths.

Miscarriages can be caused by a number of factors, including genetic failures, but also drug and alcohol abuse, blood clotting disorders, exposure to environmental toxins and hormonal problems, infections, overweight, physical problems with the mother's reproductive organs, diabetes and smoking.

Between 10 % and 25% of pregnant women will have a miscarriage, most occur during the first 7 weeks of pregnancy. Far fewer occur once the baby's heartbeat is detected.

When are abortions medically necessary?

Christians must decide whether, in situations where pregnancy problems endanger a mother's life, who takes priority – the mother's life or her unborn child. Historically some religious groups have advocated that the child constitutes more value than the mother but logical and loving people should value the mother as first priority.

Some Christian groups have disputed that any situations exist requiring an abortion to save the mother's life. These groups are disputing the sound and proven medical evidence that can list pregnancy problems that DO ENDANGER the mother's life.

Does God form each child in the womb?

Once we accept that God has created all things and that he upholds all things by his power, then it follows that the processes by which a baby is formed, are all God initiated. He has organised how our mortal bodies function and how a woman's reproductive egg can fuse with a man's reproductive sperm. This is the God created miracle of reproduction. However, we need care how we formulate a theology

relating to each individual baby and to what extent God determines this for each and every child who is born.

The problem arises when a baby is born with major anatomical or genetic problems. For instance, someone I knew was born with major structural abnormalities to the heart. It was only miracles of modern medicine that enabled the child to grow up but never to be able to do things that other children can do. In this case the child was born into a Christian family and the accepted teaching at that time was that God forms each and every child in the mother's womb. This child with a deformed heart then seriously questioned the love of God and at one stage in his life became an atheist.

We should look at Evangelical teachings relating to this situation. A much quoted Bible passage is Psalm 139: 13-16. *For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb, I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.*

We also have scriptures like: *The word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations"* (Jeremiah 1: 4-5).

These scriptures need to be considered in the light of God's foreknowledge enabled by his operation outside of the limitations of time. This is important when linked with: *For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified* (Romans 8: 29-30).

In other words, as God looks into the future, he can see in advance how each of us will choose when faced with decisions. When he can see that you or I will choose to follow his best plan for our lives, then he plans in advance to give us the opportunities to make those right choices. We make free will choices but God knows in advance what those choices will be.

With this knowledge we can confidently say that God called people like King David and the prophet Jeremiah. God saw in advance that a boy would be conceived and born with the characteristics of David. Therefore God predestined him to become King of Israel. We also need to accept that in Psalm 139 David is being poetic and we cannot say that all his words were factually correct. For instance, was he *woven together in the depths of the earth?*

David was certainly correct to praise God for the miracle of conception and for the fact that God saw events in advance and that he therefore predestined that this baby would become King. David was also correct in proclaiming that everything is only possible because God is: *before all things, and in him all things hold together* (Colossians 1:17).

In like manner the prophet Jeremiah was chosen by God before he was born. God made this choice based on his foreknowledge and that he could see in advance that Jeremiah would be the sort of prophet that he wanted at that time in the history of Israel.

In both cases, namely David and Jeremiah, it is not necessary to interpret these scriptures in a way that can bring the character of God into question. In other words, if the young man born with major heart problems was told that, although God created all things and the biological processes involved in human reproduction, he did not specifically decide to make a child with heart abnormalities. A variety of environmental factors can interfere with normal development of a baby.

At the same time it is possible and constructive to tell all children that God has a best plan for everyone. His best plan takes into consideration physical and mental attributes, where we are born and the specific tasks for which everyone who asks God into their lives, can know that there are, *good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do* (Ephesians 2:10). Many families have found that children with disabilities can be a huge blessing in the family and can learn to live productive lives.

The potential evil of human 'free choice' abortions

I have already discussed the biology of human conception and development into a new human life and noted that some fertilised eggs do not develop into babies and some fertilised eggs are aborted naturally and that sometimes medical abortions are necessary in order to save a mother's life.

The theological problems relate to abortions motivated by unwanted pregnancies and in particular when undertaken to avoid the result of immoral lifestyles in a promiscuous society. Regarding these cases, the Bible has strong commentary because throughout much of human history this has led to worship of gods who encourage promiscuity. They therefore made it part of their worship to require that unwanted babies be burnt alive. In this way the unwanted babies took on a 'religious significance' and the mothers could in some measure appease their consciences by believing that they were doing what was required by their god.

For instance, the worship of the god Molech is described in the Bible. This worship was accompanied by shrine prostitutes and sexual promiscuity was part of how people followed their god. In the Bible God was scathingly condemning of these practices that were also linked to Baal worship.

For instance: *Hear the word of the Lord, O kings of Judah and people of Jerusalem. This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Listen! I am going to bring disaster on this place that will make the ears of everyone who hears of it tingle. For they have forsaken me and made this a place of foreign gods; they have burned sacrifices in it to gods that neither they nor their fathers nor the kings of Judah ever knew, and they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent. **They have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as offerings to Baal, something I did not command or mention, nor did it enter my mind.***(Jeremiah 19: 2-5).

In other words, modern society tries to hide the enormity of their actions behind words and phrases like 'Reproductive freedom', 'Freedom to choose', 'talk about foetus rather than child', 'pro-choice' instead of murder. In fact the abortion clinics are murdering potential humans and burning them in the incineration furnaces, not because of danger to mothers lives or some other serious medical conditions, but simply because so many people want to do away with babies that result from life styles that have deviated far from God's standards of sexual morality.

If a woman decides to undergo an abortion, other than for a good medical reason, then she and in some cases also the biological father, must be told that this is, according to the Bible, not in God's permitted guidelines. Of course, as with all sin, forgiveness is available upon repentance but the consequences continue, such a guilt and irreversible regret.

Chapter 4:

Balanced view of the Bible

I believe a balanced understanding of the Bible should be in harmony with how Jesus Christ viewed the Hebrew Scriptures that are now incorporated into our Christian Bible as the Old Testament. In addition, we need to face some serious questions about how to relate these scriptures to a belief that they are God inspired.

We can look at this subject under the following headings:

- 4.1: Some definitions of Bible inspiration
- 4.2: Factual contradictions in the Bible?
- 4.3: Can we reconcile contradictions with Bible infallibility?
- 4.4: How did Jesus view the Old Testament writings?
- 4.5: How did New Testament writers quote the Old Testament?
- 4.6: Different types of literature in the Bible.
- 4.7: The poetic books.
- 4.8: The historical books.
- 4.9: The prophetic books.
- 4.10: Hidden messages in the Bible due to the cosmic conflict.
- 4.11: Comparing scriptures to determine meaning more accurately
- 4.12: The meaning of the word 'ALL' in the Bible.
- 4.13: The words of Jesus about the 'End of the Age'.
- 4.14: Comparing teachings about God in the Old and New Testament scriptures.
- 4.15: The evolution of God's revelations to humanity.
 - Through Adam and Eve
 - Through Noah
 - Through Abraham
 - Through Moses
 - Through prophets
 - Through history.
 - Through Jesus Christ: The New Covenant Gospel of love.
- 4.16: The Bible as 'Living Word'.
- 4.17: The need for Fact Based answers to Fact Based questions.

4.1 Definitions of Bible inspiration

Paul's second letter to Timothy is the most quoted passage relating to Bible inspiration. The Greek word used for 'inspired' is *theopneustos*. It is the only place in the Bible where this word is used. (2 Timothy 3:16)

This passage reads: *All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness* (New King James Version)

'Vines Expository Dictionary of the New Testament Words' and most other authorities translate the Greek word *theopneustos* as '**Inspired by God**' rather than 'God breathed'. This translation was accepted by great Bible translators like Wycliffe, Tyndale and Coverdale and many current Bible scholars.

This translation of *theopneustos* allows space for the writers of books in the Bible to have used their own understanding of some issues, influenced by the culture and knowledge of their times. It also allows space for errors in historical details within some of the historical books. Some small errors or contradictions do exist and I will detail some of these in section 4.2.

Each document that has been included in our Bible reflects the author's unique style of writing and may also reflect aspects of the culture and beliefs at the time they lived.

In other words, when we speak of the scriptures being inspired by God, it is possible to accept that he did not force the writers to abandon their writing style or abandon aspects of the culture in which they were raised and lived.

Some Christians view the entire Bible as without error and infallible as originally given. This view attempts to overlook the relatively small errors and contradictions that do exist, by suggesting that they crept in due to scribe errors when making copies of the Bible writings. However, we do have many copies of portions of the Bible, spread over hundreds of years and in several languages, and these reveal hardly any errors that can be attributed to making copies. For instance, the Dead Sea Scrolls that date to before the birth of Jesus, contain a nearly complete copy of the book of Isaiah that is almost identical to the current book of Isaiah in the Bible.

Also some differences in details of accounts relating to the actions and miracles of Jesus definitely cannot be placed in a category of scribe copying errors. Some of these are listed in the next section.

Another reason not to accept every word in the Old Testament as being infallible is that Jesus himself changed some Mosaic laws and interpretations. For instance, he changed the Mosaic justice law of 'eye for eye', to a new law of 'love

your enemies'. He changed the Mosaic divorce laws that allowed men to easily divorce their wives. He changed this to outlawing divorce except in cases of adultery. Jesus also radically modified Mosaic laws in his Sermon on the Mount. He gave a series of cases introduced by "You have heard it was said by them of old time... But I say to you...." (Matthew chapter 5).

4.2 Factual contradictions in the Bible?

It is important to honestly face the fact that there are some errors and contradictions in the Bible manuscripts as we have them today.

The following are some of the examples:

Who incited David to count the fighting men of Israel?

- God did (2 Samuel 24:1)
- Satan did (1 Chronicles 21:1)

How many fighting men were found in Israel?

- Eight hundred thousand (2 Samuel 24:9)
- One million, one hundred thousand (1 Chronicles 21:5)

The chief of David's mighty men killed how many at one time?

- Eight hundred (2 Samuel 23:8)
- Three hundred (1 Chronicles 11:11)

Who killed Goliath?

- David killed Goliath (1 Samuel chapter 17)
- Elhanan son of Jaare-oregim killed Goliath (2 Samuel 21: 19)
- Elhanan son of Jarre-oregim killed Lathmi the **brother of Goliath** (1 Chronicles 20:5)

How many were the descendants of Azgad?

- One thousand two hundred and twenty-two (Ezra 2:12)
- Two thousand three hundred and twenty-two (Nehemiah 7:17)

Jesus rode into Jerusalem on how many animals?

- One- a colt (Mark 11:7 and Luke 19:35)
- Two- a colt and an ass (Matthew 21:7)

Did Jesus allow his disciples to keep a staff on their journey?

- Yes (Mark 6:8)
- No (Matthew 10:9 and Luke 9:3)

Did Herod think Jesus was John the Baptist?

- Yes (Mathew 14:2 and Mark 6:16)
- No (Luke 9:9)

When Jesus entered Jerusalem did he cleanse the temple that same day?

- Yes (Matthew 21:12)
- No (Mark 11:1-17)

When Paul saw the light and fell to the ground, did his companions also fall to the ground?

- Yes (Acts 26:14)
- No (Acts 9:7)

Did Herod want to kill John the Baptist?

- Yes (Matthew 14:5)
- No It was Herodius (Mark 6:20)

How many times did Jesus pray before his arrest?

- Three (Mathew 26:36-46 and Mark 14:32-42)
- One. (Luke 22:39-46).

Where was Jesus immediately after his baptism?

- Spirit immediately drove him to the wilderness for 40 days (Mark 1:12-13)
- Next day after baptism he called his disciples (John 1:35; 1:43; 2:1-11)

The Bible contains some other differences in the accounts about Jesus, as written in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. A modern day illustration from our own experiences may help to understand some of these. For instance, there was a bad vehicle accident on a dual carriageway road. Two cars collided and both drivers were killed. There were no passengers but three witnesses gave their accounts of what happened.

The first witness said the accident was caused by a Mercedes car travelling very fast crashing into the back of a Toyota causing it to crash into a tree next to the road. The second witness said the Toyota driver suddenly changed lanes causing the Mercedes to crash into it and causing the Toyota to hit a tree. The third witness said a large dog ran out into the road causing the Toyota driver to suddenly swerve into the other lane and the Mercedes driver had no time to brake.

If there had only been one witness to the accident the investigating traffic officer would have received a limited account of what happened. In fact all three witnesses accurately reported what they noticed and a much fuller picture of what happened was obtained from combining details from all three accounts.

In similar manner, witnesses of miracles performed by Jesus did not all notice every detail. Differences in the accounts do not mean that the miracles did not take place!

4.3 Can we reconcile contradictions with Bible infallibility?

In the previous section I listed some of the contradictions. However, none of these relate to belief about God or any of the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Acceptance that contradictions exist has led some Christians to modify their initial views about the infallibility of the Bible and now they say that 'The Bible is infallible in all matters of faith and doctrine'. I personally prefer to say '**The Bible is our God inspired authority in matters of faith and doctrine**'.

With reference to differences in some accounts in the four Gospel books, it is pointed out that this can be presented as strong evidence against the authors having constructed their accounts together. If that had been the case we would expect all details in the four accounts to agree.

In other words, each of the writers Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, wrote about events that came to their minds under the prompting of the Holy Spirit. The slight differences in accounts are simply a reflection on how each writer remembered the events that took place. To be honest we must accept that some differences and even contradictions in details do exist. Clearly God did not **dictate** every word to these God inspired writers.

Since the writers were inspired by God to write their accounts, it is possible that God specifically allowed them to include details that seem to conflict, so that it counters any suggestions that the Gospel accounts were fabricated by a group of disciples.

The most held view of inspiration by orthodox Christianity is often called 'Verbal, plenary inspiration'. 'Verbal' refers to every word of Scripture. 'Plenary' means complete. Together, these terms indicate that God has inspired every word of scripture. **Certainly we can accept that God inspired the writers and ensured that the whole Bible has a united message regarding the essentials of revelations about God and how we can relate to him.** Also, regarding the prophetic sections: *For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.* (2 Peter 1:21).

However, in the light of the small conflicts in historical details outlined earlier and also the differences within the accounts relating to the life of Jesus, we cannot logically accept that 'every word' was 'dictated' by God to the authors of the four Gospel books.

4.4 How did Jesus view the Old Testament writings?

Jesus accepted the Old Testament as being divinely authoritative. He never cast doubt on any section and he assumed the mentioned people were actual people.

Jesus told his disciples after his resurrection, *“This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the **Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms**”* (Luke 24:44 NIV). The Law of Moses is the first 5 books in the Bible.

Jesus mentioned portions from all three sections of the Old Testament. In fact he quoted from at least twelve different Old Testament books. These included Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, 1 Samuel, 1 Kings, Psalms, Isaiah, Daniel, Hosea, Jonah, Zachariah and Malachi, but **he specifically emphasised the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.**

Jesus clearly believed the following characters were real people, namely Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Solomon, the Queen of Sheba, Elijah, Elisha and Zechariah. He also referred to events as if they were factual. For instance;

- Moses gave the rite of circumcision. (John 7:22)
- Manna was provided in the wilderness. (John 6:31)
- David ate the Bread of Presentation. (Matthew 12:3-4)
- David was the writer of some Psalms. (Matthew 22:41-44)
- Moses wrote the Law. (Matthew 8:4)
- The prophets were persecuted. (Matthew 5: 11-12)
- The popularity of the false prophets. (Luke 6: 26)
- The events around Lot’s wife. (Luke 17:32)
- The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. (Matthew 10:14-15)
- The destruction of Tyre and Sidon. (Matthew 11:21-22)
- A real Adam and Eve. (Matthew 19:4-5)
- Cain and Abel conflict. (Luke 11:50-52)
- The flood of Noah’s generation. (Matthew 24:37-39)
- Jonah and the great fish. (Matthew 12:38-41)

Jesus also confirmed the authorship of books disputed in recent times:

- Daniel wrote the book of Daniel. (Matthew 24:15)
- Isaiah wrote at least most of the Isaiah book. (Matthew 8:16-17, John 12:37-38, John 12: 39-41).

4.5 How did New Testament writers quote the Old Testament?

There are about 205 places where the New Testament writers quote from the Old Testament. Most frequently quoted books are Deuteronomy (35 times), Psalms (95) and Isaiah (75).

The writings of Paul are the best examples of how Old Testament passages were quoted in order to show that the Gospel of Jesus Christ was supported by Old Testament teachings and how the Old Testament could be used in support of the New Covenant between God and mankind.

For instance, Paul supported his teaching on how God chooses people (election) by quoting Old Testament examples such as Abraham's two sons, Ishmael and Isaac, to show that although Ishmael was the firstborn, the blessings went to Isaac because of a promise made to Sarah. (Romans 9:7 and 9; Genesis 21:12; 18:14).

When discussing Faith and Works, Paul again used Old Testament examples, such as Abraham receiving promises and blessings and covenants (solemn agreements) from God even before the laws of Moses were written. Paul uses this and other comparisons to argue that Christians can receive promises and blessings through faith in Christ and receive covenants with God without practicing the laws of Moses.

These examples suffice to show a practice throughout New Testament writings, of using Old Testament scriptures as support for explaining how the Gospel message was not in conflict with revelations from God given through Old Testament authors.

4.6 Different types of literature in the Bible

It is important to realise that the Old Testament is made up from 39 books and the New Testament from 27 books and the human authors are many.

The first five books, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy are probably all mainly authored by Moses, with a few additions after his death.

There are 12 Old Testament books that mainly record historical events. These are Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther.

The poetic books are Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon and Lamentations.

Sermons and prophetic writings are mainly in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. I understand these books to be the prophetic books referred to by the Apostle Peter. (2 Peter 1:21).

In the New Testament we also have a variety of documents. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, written by some of those who knew him best. Luke is a bit different in that his book is partly written from his first-hand knowledge but also from his research and interviews with people who knew Jesus well.

Most of the other New Testament books are written to further explain the teachings of Jesus and to add insights given to the writers by the Holy Spirit. However, the book of Acts is primarily a record of some early church history and the book of Revelation is largely a prophetic book about future events, with much that cannot be easily understood.

4.7 The poetic books

Not all poetic writings are meant to be understood literally. For instance: *In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun, which is like a bridegroom coming forth from his pavilion, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. It rises at one end of the heavens, and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is hidden from its heat* (Psalm 19:4-6).

Some very meaningful and encouraging psalms, like Psalm 23, are not meant to be taken literally. Does the Lord literally, *make me lie down in green pastures, he leads me besides quiet waters?*

We normally accept that the poetic writings refer us to deeper spiritual truth. For instance: *The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars; the Lord breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon. He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, Sirion like a young wild ox. The voice of the Lord strikes with flashes of lightning, the voice of the Lord shakes the Desert of Kadesh. The voice of the Lord twists the oaks and strips the forests bare. And in his temple all cry "Glory"!* (Psalm 29: 5-9)

In this Psalm God's majesty and power is acknowledged in all of creation. However, the psalmist David is not scientifically correct. It is not the thunder (voice) that splits the cedars but in fact it is the lightning. Do we doubt that David was inspired by God to write this poem of praise as he witnesses a thunderstorm? **Clearly God did not 'force' David to correct the scientific details.** This is one of many examples of how writings inspired by God still reflect the beliefs of the writers at the time that they lived, long before the scientific age.

The type of poems or prose seen in the prophetic books does to some extent reflect the style and knowledge of the God inspired writers.

4.8 The historical books

Comments on historical events over the centuries since Adam and Eve are found in many of the Old Testament books. However, the main historical accounts relating to the history of Israel are found in the books of Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah.

Some events are recorded in more than one of these books and when comparing details we do find some conflicting information, as shown earlier in this article.

Within these historical books we also have details about how God interacted with people, either individually, such as with Abraham, or nationally through his dealings with Israel.

Some of the historical accounts contain challenging and even disturbing events where the writer claims that God was consulted or even that God approved. However, in at least some of these cases, such as some events described in the books of Judges, it is more probable that the accounts are the writer's opinion. If this is the case then it again shows that, although God inspired writers to record history, sometimes the views and biases of the writers were allowed (by God) to contain personal interpretations. The last verse of Judges is relevant where it says: *In those days Israel had no king; **everyone did as he saw fit.***

We see an example of this in Judges Chapters 20 and 21. The Israelites fought against their fellow tribe the Benjamites and almost wiped them out. They decided on this action themselves and only after deciding to do it did they start asking God for guidance about how to fulfil their decision. How did they ask for guidance? We read: *We'll go up against it (the Benjamite city) **as the lot directs*** (Judges 20:9).

In other words they cast lots for guidance for a war that was not initially sanctioned by God and then they assumed that God would guide them through this casting of lots. It is true that elsewhere in the Bible God did sometimes guide through people casting lots. In all probability it was not God who guided in this instance because the initial course of action was not the result of God's guidance. In fact it was initiated after events that God definitely would not have sanctioned, as described in Judges Chapter 19.

A bit later, before launching the attack they *enquired of God again. They said, who of us shall go first to fight against the Benjamites?" The Lord replied, "Judah shall go first".* (Judges 20:19). We should ask ourselves, **was it really the Lord that they consulted** and how did they do the consulting? Did God really guide them in this situation through the casting of lots or when they went to Bethel?

They should not have expected to be guided since they should have asked for guidance in the first place before deciding to attack. Did the Lord reply to their

question about who should attack first? In the light of other scriptures about God and his ways, **it seems likely that their perceived instruction from God was not in fact from God.** We are told elsewhere in the Bible *'Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world* (1 John 4:1). False prophets are not only found in New Testament times!

This example is one of several historical accounts that raise questions about how much of the writers account of historical events was their own interpretation, rather than the actual truth. I believe we can find many other examples in the historical books where actions were attributed to God but in fact this was just the opinion of the writers.

4.9 The prophetic books

In many places the prophetic writings in the Bible refer to events around Israel at the time that the prophets wrote. However, scattered within these writings are passages that foretold aspects of the coming Messiah, whom Christians know was Jesus Christ. Normally it is only after the prophesied events have taken place that we see how the details in the prophecies were fulfilled.

Old Testament prophecies are often hidden within comments on current events. The writer may suddenly change theme, almost in mid-sentence, and include a prophecy relating to future events. Some prophecies relate to a series of future events that may be separated from each other by hundreds of years, but the time-span is not clear from the wording.

As an example, *He (Jesus) went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:*

*“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners,
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to release the oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.*

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:16-21 NIV).

If we compare this quotation with the original prophecy, written in the book of Isaiah chapter 61, we find that **Jesus stopped his reading in the middle of a sentence.** The Isaiah passage continues, *to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour and the day of vengeance of our God.*

Jesus is saying that the first part of this prophecy was being fulfilled by him during his ministry in Israel. However, the ‘day of vengeance of our God’, known elsewhere in the Bible as ‘Judgment Day’, will only be fulfilled later.

This account of the words of Jesus is a good example of how to read other Bible prophecies, where the time scales are contracted. The prophecy will take place but possibly as a series of events, separated by long periods of time.

There are many Old Testament prophecies that were fulfilled in Jesus. The Jews accepted that several hundred passages referred to the future Messiah (deliverer). Nearly all of these were fulfilled by Jesus and the events associated with his life

and teachings. We should realise that all of these prophecies were written prior to 250BC. This was confirmed from discovery of the 'Dead Sea Scrolls' that contained parts of all but one of the Old Testament books, including an almost complete book of Isaiah. They were all written before the time of Jesus!

Possibly the most famous prophecy is found in Isaiah 53. It describes the sufferings of Jesus on the cross. If we compare details in this prophecy with details relating to the life and death of Jesus, we find truly amazing comparisons.

Another remarkable Old Testament prophecy fulfilled in the person of Jesus is:

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.*

*And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, mighty God, Everlasting Father,
and Prince of Peace.*

*Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end,
he will reign on David's throne, and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it, with justice and righteousness,
from that time on and forever.*

The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this (Isaiah 9:6-8)

Here we read about a human child who will become a ruler, but at the same time will be called mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace! And his kingdom will be everlasting! What better description of the baby Jesus, crucified as a criminal, raised from death as a demonstration of his deity, and soon to return to rule from the throne of David in Jerusalem?

When we read these Old Testament prophecies that have been fulfilled it is easy to agree with Peter when he wrote, as previously quoted: *You must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21)*. Peter is referring specifically to prophecies, not necessarily to the Bible records of historical events.

When we look at the New Testament prophecies spoken by Jesus, we can see that many of them have already been fulfilled in great detail. I present these in my Web page article, '*Four major reasons to take Jesus seriously*'.

4.10 Hidden messages in the Bible due to the Cosmic Conflict

I believe we will struggle to reconcile the events of human history, as written in the Bible, with belief in a God who is involved with details of his universe, unless we also accept that this earth is caught up in a spiritual conflict between God and Satan, between good and evil.

The Bible introduces us to this conflict through the Garden of Eden events and the reality of temptation and the reality of Satan, even though he speaks through a serpent. The following historical events, recorded in the Old Testament, show a progressive revelation of God to humanity and also reveal that his plans involve long periods of time. His call to Abraham and his promises to Abraham only came to fulfilment after Israel spent over 400 years in Egypt, 40 years in the wilderness and after hundreds of years of Israel's history.

We may ask why God did not plainly speak out his plans for saving humanity through Jesus Christ. We have a comment on this in the New Testament. Paul wrote: *We speak of God's **secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden** and that God destined for our glory before time began. **None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*** (1 Corinthians 2:8).

Who are the 'rulers of this age' that Paul is referring to? He expands on this in the book of Ephesians chapter 6 as follows: *Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the **devil's schemes**. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, **against the powers of this dark world and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms**.*

If Satan had fully known what he was doing when he motivated people to crucify the Lord of Glory, he would not have done it. He thought the crucifixion was his greatest victory, but it turned out to be the key event ensuring his ultimate defeat!

Why did Satan not understand that the death of Jesus would be a vital part of God's plan? I have concluded that Satan was not able to work out the whole of God's plan because of the following:

- After Satan rebelled against God, the scriptures suggest he and his fellow rebel angels were cast down to earth. We read that he is now the *ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient* (Ephesians 2:2-3).
- Satan is now confined to time since he was cast out of God's Timeless Dimension of reality. He cannot see the future, only guess what will happen.
- The Old Testament prophecies about the coming Messiah were known to Satan but they are deliberately written in words that do not clearly describe Calvary, nor how the death of Jesus would make a way for the forgiveness of sins.
- The whole of human history has been guided by God towards Calvary because the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ not only made a way of 'redemption' for humanity, but it was also another major step towards the final defeat of Satan.
- Why did God not simply destroy Satan and his rebellious angels? This is because

God had limited himself by creating angels to be immortal (Luke 20:36).

- The fact that angels cannot die meant that God's final destiny for Satan and all rebellion is a place of confinement. Jesus said that Hell was created as the final place of confinement for Satan and his angels (Matthew 25:41).

This analysis helps me to understand why God did not clearly reveal himself to humanity in Old Testament times. Even Moses and the prophets were only able to understand a little and were enabled to write just enough detail so that in retrospect we can see how their prophecies about the coming Messiah were fulfilled.

The cosmic conflict was also revealed to Daniel.

Another reason why God does not reveal himself as clearly as he could is that humanity has been given a free will, meaning the ability to make choices. In a universe locked into a cosmic conflict **it becomes important to test loyalties**. Throughout the Bible the importance of faith is emphasised. Mankind have been given just enough evidence for the existence of God, through the mysteries and fine tuning of the universe, and through historical events, so as to exert faith in his existence. In addition, the Israelites were shown on many occasions how, whenever they were in serious trouble from enemies and they turned to God for forgiveness and deliverance, then they experienced deliverance.

People throughout history, including today, who have sought seriously for God have discovered that he does reveal himself. As the Bible book of Hebrews says, *Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists **and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him*** (Hebrews 11:6).

4.11 Comparing scriptures to determine meaning more accurately

I will give just two examples of how comparing scriptures can give us a balanced view of the meaning of some Bible passages:

1. Does the Hebrew word 'pas', translated as 'all' in the Bible, actually mean 'everything', or does it often mean 'some of all'?
2. What did Jesus mean when he said *"I tell you the truth, this 'generation' will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened"* (Matthew 24).

4.12 The meaning of 'ALL' in the Bible

It may come as a surprise to some that this small word 'ALL' **does not always mean 'everything'** that is being referred to. For instance, consider the recorded 'plagues of Egypt'.

Exodus chapter 9 describes a plague that killed the animals. *'And the next day the Lord did it: **ALL the livestock of the Egyptians died**, but not one animal belonging to the Israelites died' (verse 6).*

However, a bit later we read about the plague of hail, *'therefore, at this time tomorrow I will send the worst hailstorm that has ever fallen on Egypt, from the day it was founded till now. Give an order now to **bring your livestock** and everything you have in the field to a place of shelter, because the hail will fall on every man and animal that has not been brought in and is still out in the field, and they will die (verse 18-19). Throughout Egypt hail struck everything in the fields – **both men and animals**; it beat down everything growing in the fields and stripped every tree. The only place it did not hail was in the land of Goshen, where the Israelites lived. (Verse 25-26)*

Clearly not all the Egyptian animals died in the first plague since there were still others to die from the hail.

Then again, we read about the death of all the first born in Egypt. *'At midnight the Lord struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon, and **the firstborn of all the livestock as well** (Exodus 12:29).*

Comparison of these three events clearly shows that the use of the word ALL did not mean 'everything' or 'all of the animals'. From the context it clearly means that 'some of all' the Egyptian animals died in the plague but 'none of all' the Israelite animals died. We can therefore conclude that the use of the word ALL does not always mean what we often understand by this word.

In fact there are many places in the Bible where this word ALL does not mean 'everything' or 'everyone'. It very often means 'some of all'.

For instance, in the book of Acts we have a description of events on the Day of Pentecost. Peter explained the exuberance, boldness and speaking in other tongues by the disciples, as a fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecy found in the book of Joel. The prophecy reads, *'And afterwards, I will pour out my Spirit on **ALL** people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. (Joel 2:28-29).*

At Pentecost God's Spirit was released into 'all categories' of people, not just a selected few, as was the case in the Old Testament times. Now God's Spirit was poured out on men, women, old and young. In fact the Spirit was now available to **'some of ALL categories of humanity'**, rather than just for a few selected categories such as priests, kings and prophets.

There are many other places in the Bible where ALL actually means 'some of all'. In other words we should be very cautious about our interpretation of passages that include the word 'all'

4.13 The words of Jesus relating to the End of the Age

In Matthew, Mark and Luke we read accounts of words spoken by Jesus regarding events at the 'end of the age'. In all three accounts we read words that have puzzled many generations of Christians, *I tell you the truth, **this generation** will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away* (Matthew 24:34; Mark 13:30; Luke 21:32).

Clearly, the events described by Jesus relating to his promised return did not take place in the generation who heard his words, nor in many generations since. However, in my opinion the confusion has arisen because translators of the Greek words have not carefully followed the important principle of comparing scripture with scripture.

The important key to understanding this passage is found in Matthew's account. We read the initial question asked by the disciples, that led to Jesus recounting events that would take place before he returned.

Jesus had just commented on the Jerusalem temple and told his disciples that a time was coming when not one stone would be left standing on another. The disciples responded by asking the question: ***What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?*** (Matthew 24:3)

It is only the Matthew account that clearly states this initial question.

If we look at the Greek words used in this question we find that the 'end' is the word *sunteleia*. This actually means '**full end**'. We may ask what 'full end' are the disciples asking about? This word has been incorrectly translated in some English language Bibles as 'end of the world'. However, the Greek word translated here as 'world' is actually *aeon*. The meaning of *aeon* is more commonly '**age**', 'indefinite time' or 'dispensation'.

Therefore, the question asked by the disciples was, *"Tell us", they said, "when will this happen and what will be the sign of your coming and of **'the full end of this age'?**"*

After the disciples asked this question, Jesus gave an account of wars, earthquakes, the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple and other events so terrifying and dangerous that the survival of all life seems to be in jeopardy. Then, in the Luke account Jesus said, *"Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near"* (Luke 21:29).

Then follows this dramatic statement, “I tell you the truth, this GENE (Greek word) will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away”.

It seems that most translators of this word ‘genea’ have not taken into account the context and content of all three gospel accounts. As a result they have translated the word as ‘generation’. This is the most common translation of ‘genea’ but it is not the only possible translation. Other less common but nevertheless acceptable translations of *genea* are ‘age’, ‘nation’ or ‘time’. Bible concordances note that *genea* is translated in other places in the Bible, as ‘age’ (2 times), ‘nation’ (1 time) and ‘time’ (2 times).

For instance, in Ephesians 3:21: *Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages (genea), world without end. Amen* (king James Version). In most other translations we read, *throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen* (NIV translation).

In Colossians 1:26 we read, *the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations*. In other words *generations* is used in a context implying a long period of time.

It must be accepted that the more usual translation of *genea* is ‘generation’. However, if we compare all three Gospel accounts, this apparently difficult passage can be regarded as a **direct answer to the initial question** that led Jesus to recount the future world events, leading up to the end of this age. In summary:

The initial question: *“Tell us, they said, “when will these things happen and what will be the sign of your coming and the **full end of this age**”?”*

Answer by Jesus: *“Truly truly (without a doubt) I say to you, **this AGE** (genea) will certainly not come to a ‘full end’ until all these things (that I have told you about) come to pass”.*

This explanation enables us to avoid some previous attempts by Christians to explain away the difficulty posed by the reference to ‘generation’. Some had suggested that the reference by Jesus to the fig tree was significant. In Matthew’s account the only tree mentioned is the fig. They pointed out that the fig tree is sometimes associated in the Bible with Israel. Therefore, it was suggested that the budding of the fig tree could refer to the founding of the modern state of Israel in 1948. However, this explanation falls away when we compare the Matthew and Luke accounts. In Luke 21:29 it says *‘the fig tree and **all the trees***.

Clearly the reference to trees sprouting new leaves is an illustration of the fact that budding of new leaves heralds the approach of spring and summer. In like manner, Jesus is saying, when you see all these things I have spoken about actually taking place, you will know that the ‘full end of this age’ is near.

We might ask why God allowed the Gospel writers to use this word 'genea' instead of the more usual word for 'age' (aeon). My suggestion is that God wanted this scripture to keep Christians in all generations expecting the imminent return of Jesus Christ.

4.14 Comparing teachings about God in the Old and New Testament scriptures

The most comprehensive teachings about God in the Old Testament are those passed on to the Israelites by Moses. God's character is also revealed through his interactions with the Israelites and with surrounding nations.

The Israelites were taught that God is ONE, *Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one* (Deuteronomy 6:4). However, God also revealed to Moses that this ONE God existed in three persons or three forms. On Mount Sinai God said: *And the Lord said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion". But, he said, "You cannot see my face, for no-one may see my face and live".*

However, after Moses had descended from the mountain, God met with him in the 'Tent of Meeting'. Here we are told that they spoke together 'face to face'. We read, *God said "When a prophet of the Lord is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in*

Dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the Lord. (Numbers 12:6-8).

In addition, God met with Moses and others through his Holy Spirit. We read: *Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke with him (Moses) and he took of the Spirit that was on him and put the Spirit on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied, but they did not do so again. However, two men, whose names were Eldad and Medad, had remained in the camp. They were listed among the elders, but did not go to the tent. Yet the Spirit also rested on them and they prophesied in the camp* (Numbers 11: 25-26).

Clearly the TRINITY nature of the ONE God is not only revealed in the New Testament. Christians understand that Jesus was 'God become man'. This same Jesus is spoken of as the 'time travelling Jesus' who was present at the creation. If we accept that revelation of Jesus, then the Old Testament appearances of God in 'human' form were none other than the time-travelling Jesus!

We read in the New Testament that it was Jesus Christ who accompanied the Israelites out of Egypt and through the Sinai Desert. This is one interpretation of the words Paul wrote about the Israelites in the wilderness: *for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ* (1 Corinthians 10: 4). Other Old Testament accounts speak of God in human form interacting with Adam and Eve, with Abraham and later with Joshua.

Abraham was visited by three 'men' and he addressed one of them as God. The other two were angels because they left and went down to Sodom to bring Lot out before that city was destroyed. However, the third visitor was addressed by Abraham: *The 'men' turned away and went towards Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the Lord. Then Abraham approached him and said "Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?"* (Genesis 18: 22-23). Then followed a verbal interaction between Abraham and the one he identified as God.

It is important to accept that the character and actions attributed to God in the Old Testament are being attributed to the same God revealed to us by Jesus Christ in the New Testament. **Do we accept that God's character does not change?**

It is helpful to compare revelations about God in the New Testament and Old Testament writings.

Paul reminds us about the Israelites being rescued from Egypt and miraculously led through the Reed Sea (not Red Sea): *Nevertheless, **God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert.** Now these things occurred as examples, to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "These people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry. We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did – and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. We should not test the Lord, as some of them did and were killed by snakes. And do not grumble, as some of them did – and were killed by the destroying angel* (1 Corinthians 10:5-10).

Are accounts such as these in harmony with the God revealed to us in the New Testament, through the words and actions of Jesus Christ?

We love to celebrate the love, mercy and grace of God but sometimes forget that he is still the same God who told the Israelites through Moses: *See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse – the blessing if you obey the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving to you today; the curse if you disobey the commands of the Lord your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods* (Deuteronomy 11:26-29).

From the following history of Israel we see how obedience brought peace, good crops and other blessings while disobedience brought pestilences, conflict and poor crops.

This same reality is given within the New Testament writings: *If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the Law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. **How much more severely do***

you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay" and again, "The Lord will judge his people". It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:26-30).

In the Old Testament we have examples of cities like Sodom and Gomorrah being destroyed by God because of the wickedness of its people. We have instructions given to Moses and Joshua to destroy cities and all the inhabitants while entering the promised land of Canaan. We may ask how this relates to the character of God as revealed in the New Testament and through the words of Jesus, such as 'love your enemies' or 'do good to those who persecute you'.

In the New Testament book of Acts we have the account of Ananias and Sapphira who dropped dead when Peter challenged them about their dishonesty with money. Many of us can probably identify with being dishonest about money and we do not drop dead. However, this does not mean that God overlooks such dishonesty today. The account in Acts should remind us that we cannot mock God and expect no consequences, either in this life or at Judgment Day.

The words of Jesus help us to see that God has short term and long term agendas. The short term agendas may seem harsh to us but when the long term agendas are revealed we start to see that the short term events were necessary in order to direct history towards the goal of saving humanity from the enemy Satan, in the Cosmic Conflict.

As a zoologist I see how God's short term agendas included stages on earth, such as the age of dinosaurs, that were later destroyed, so as to create conditions needed for a world suitable for humanity. In nature we see the evolution of short term realities that led to longer term realities.

In the case of humanity we can trace some of God's short term realities, such as the calling of Abraham, the creation of Israel as a nation, the conquest of Canaan, the conquest of Israel by the Romans and many other stages. All these were steps in the evolution of God's revelation to mankind. All of these were needed to guide history towards Jesus Christ and Calvary.

Then we come to the new reality of how all of this relates to a God of love, justice, mercy and grace. We start to understand this through the life, words and actions of Jesus Christ. He revealed that past events in history were only part of the whole story. For instance, the people destroyed in Sodom and Gomorrah will all stand with the people living at the time of Jesus earthly ministry and with all people who have ever lived. At Judgment Day the 'books will be opened' and we will be judged according to what we have done or have failed to do. However, what we have done will be judged in the light of what we knew we should have done.

For instance, although those who believe in Jesus and accept him into their lives as Saviour and Lord, have been promised Eternal Life, there are many who have never heard of Jesus during their lives on earth who will find far more mercy at Judgment Day. For instance, Jesus compared the people who had seen his miracles but had not accepted his message, with the people of Sodom who had been destroyed because of their evil lifestyles. Jesus said, *“If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you it will be more bearable for Sodom on the Day of Judgment than for you”* (Matthew 11:23-24).

We read a further comment by Jesus on other cities such as Tyre and Sidon. *“If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the Day of Judgment than for you”*

Through similar words of Jesus we start to understand that many past events, such as the destruction of cities at God’s command, are only part of the full picture. Many, who never heard of Jesus, such as Old Testament people and many even today who only heard a distorted version of the Gospel message, will find more mercy from Jesus at Judgment Day than many who knew much more but rejected the truth. Jesus was very accepting of the prostitutes and ‘sinners’ of his time who recognised their need of forgiveness, but he was very harsh and condemning of the hypocrites who knew the truth but failed to live by it.

I cover these thoughts in greater detail in articles on my webpage, such as the freely downloadable book ‘Big Bang Christianity’. In this I have chapters on ‘God of love’ and ‘God of Justice’.

4.15 The evolution of God's revelations to humanity

God has directed human history from the time of Adam and Eve up to now and this has been a step by step evolution of revelation.

Through Adam and Eve

The account of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, gives us an introduction to the whole Bible. This teaches us the reality of a conflict between right and wrong and the existence of a conflict in the spiritual dimension between God and Satan.

We are shown that mankind have been given a Free Will and can choose between following God's plans or our own plans. Even when placed in the ideal surroundings of a **specialty planted garden**, Adam and Eve chose to disobey their Creator. This brought estrangement between God and Adam and Eve. In Adam and Eve humanity experienced the first sin, namely disobedience against God or falling short of his standards. They were the first created beings to be given a law from God and so they became the first to commit a sin.

Adam and Eve demonstrated God's plan for man and woman to complement each other and become one, and the importance of this for the production of children and for their raising up to adulthood.

Adam and Eve were told to subdue factors around them that were potentially harmful. Mankind have a God appointed role to wisely rule over creation. The account also gives us hope that God has made a plan to counter the destructive activity of Satan.

Adam and Eve demonstrated that God desires a close and intimate relationship with people, based on our free will choice to obey him.

Through Noah

The account of Noah and the flood teaches us the importance of faith in God. Noah believed God and put his faith into practical action by building the Ark. The flood was not world-wide, as I discuss in chapter 2.8.

The account again emphasises the fact that God has short term and long term agendas. The achievement of his end goals sometimes necessitates destruction of existing realities.

However, when we combine the flood narrative with the New Testament commentary, we realise that God still had a destiny for those drowned in the flood.

We read: *For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also **he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed***

long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built (1 Peter 3:18-20).

If Jesus preached to those who died in the flood of Noah's time, this surely means that they were capable of responding to that preaching. How about those who died in other events, such as the destruction of Sodom? Is this how Jesus knew that: *The men of Sodom would have repented in sackcloth and ashes if they had seen the miracles that were performed by Jesus in Capernaum?*

Through Abraham

The account of Abraham again highlights the importance of Faith in God. He believed God and put his faith into practical action. He left his home and became a wanderer in a foreign land because God asked him to do this. On more than one occasion Abraham did difficult things because God asked him to do them. We are told that Abraham pleased God because of his faith. It was a quality of faith that led to action.

God promised Abraham that through his descendants one would come who would bless all nations. This was a prophecy that was confirmed by God when he entered into a solemn agreement with Abraham. A solemn promise to Abraham that was called a Covenant. This promise was fulfilled hundreds of years later in the person of Jesus Christ.

Through God's interactions with Abraham we again see how God plans to interact with humanity over long periods of time. He has a step by step agenda and an evolving revelation of himself to mankind.

Through Moses

Through Moses, God created a nation by miraculously saving them from slavery in Egypt and then instructed Moses to give them the 10 commandments and other instructions about how they must live as a nation and in relationship with God. It was made clear that it was only possible to approach God on his terms.

Central to Israelite life was a special meeting place. At first it was a large movable tent but later it was a large temple. Part of the worship instructions emphasised the fact that forgiveness of sins could only come through the shedding of blood of an innocent animal.

This was pointing forward to the time when God would fulfil the promise made to Abraham and Jesus Christ would come to earth and die on the cross as the one final perfect sacrifice of a sinless person, shedding his blood to take away the sins of all people who come to God through Jesus Christ.

Through Prophets

Old Testament prophets were used by God to challenge Israel to keep faithful to God. In addition, within these prophecies and sermons we find predictions of future events, including events that would take place through the Messiah. Many of these were fulfilled through the life of Jesus Christ and a few are still to be fulfilled when he returns to earth.

Looking back on how these prophecies were fulfilled can help us to understand that God is in overall control of human history.

Through History

The Israelite nation demonstrated to us the fact that material and spiritual blessings depend upon a right relationship with God. We are introduced to the principle of Blessings or Curses. This was demonstrated again and again through what happened to Israel when they obeyed or disobeyed God.

Establishing Israel in the land of Canaan was essential for God's long term agenda, to save humanity from the dominion of Satan, through Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection.

The Bible says that Jesus Christ was present at the creation of the Universe (John 1: 1-3, Colossians 1:15-19, Hebrews 1:1-3).

Jesus was involved in the Garden of Eden interactions with Adam and Eve. He was involved with calling Abraham and appearing to him, he was involved with Moses and the prophets.

We know so much more now through the teachings and life of Jesus. We accept his deity through his miracles, through the resurrection and ascension. Now we wait for the final dramatic events that will herald the end of this age and the final victory of God over Satan and the end of all cosmic rebellion.

History is the story of God's interactions with his creation. When all of history has been fulfilled and Satan is confined to Hell, then humanity will at last realise that all the unexplained events during Old Testament history were part of God's overall plan and motivation. That overall plan was summarised by Jesus when talking with Nicodemus, *"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. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him"* (John 3:16-17).

Jesus said, *"You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life"* (John 5:39). The scriptures are designed to lead us to personally discover God.

Through Jesus Christ: The New Covenant Gospel of love and Grace

Through the words and actions of Jesus Christ, **humanity has at last been shown the main purposes of God in relation to humanity.** History has been guided by God towards Calvary because the death and resurrection of Jesus was the key event that will lead to the final defeat of Satan and to the final end of the Cosmic Conflict.

This has been so important in God's agendas because he has an amazing Eternal Life destiny for countless millions of humanity. He has a planned 'New Heavens and New Earth' and, in the prophetic words of the book of Revelation: *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away (Revelation 21:3-4).*

Through Jesus, God was opening the way to bless people of **all nations**, just as promised to Abraham and predicted in several places in the Old Testament section of the Bible.

During the three years when Jesus was teaching the people he went out of his way to tell them that a **New Way was now coming. Instead of repeating over and over the 10 commandments he taught what is known as the Sermon on the Mount:**

Basically he was saying that what is important to God is our hearts, not just keeping of Laws. (Matthew 5:1-10.)

Jesus changed some of the Old Testament instructions:

He said *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them"* He was not saying that those laws were wrong. They were important for the Israelite nation but Jesus was saying that he was bringing a new and better way. He was 'fulfilling' what the prophets had been telling would happen but he was also going to bring in a **New Way or New Covenant** and, as we will see a bit later, this actually brought the Old Covenant to an end, meaning it was no longer the central part of how we can relate to God.

Jesus changed some Old Testament rules of behaviour.

For instance: Jesus said *"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye and tooth for tooth' but I tell you, Do not resist an evil person..." and "You have heard that it was said' Love your neighbour and hate your enemy' But I tell you Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven"* (Matthew 5: 38-48).

Jesus also went out of his way to do things on the Jewish Sabbath and when criticised told the people that he is Lord of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:1-8, Mark 2: 23-28, Luke 6: 1-5).

In order to make it clear what he meant by 'love your neighbours' and the importance of love, Jesus said things like the following:

Jesus answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second **is like it**, 'Love your neighbour as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments'" (Matthew 22: 37-40).

It is very significant that **Jesus linked these two laws as equally important**. In the Old Testament 10 commandments they are not closely linked. Jesus was again emphasising that **the New Way that he was bringing into the world was based on love**.

On another occasion he was asked, "Teacher, What must I do to **inherit eternal life?**" Jesus answered, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" He answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and 'Love your neighbour as yourself'.

"You have answered correctly" Jesus replied. "**Do this and you will live**".

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus. "And who is my neighbour?"

In reply Jesus told the story of the man beaten up by robbers. It was the despised Samaritan who took pity on the man and dressed his wounds (Luke 10:30-37).

In this reply **Jesus was again emphasising that love was the central feature of the New Covenant that he was bringing into the world**. Furthermore, by telling how the despised Samaritan was the loving one, Jesus was telling the Jewish people that the sort of love God was looking for was shown to all humanity, not just to Jews.

We do not have space here to give all the relevant scriptures about the centrality of love in the message Jesus brought to the world. However, the scriptures include:

Jesus said, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. **All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another**" (John 13:34-35).

Jesus said: "**Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me**. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him" (John 14: 21).

Jesus said: “Now **this is eternal life**: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent’ (John 17:3).

The apostle John wrote: *Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, **because God is love**” (1 John 4: 7-8).*

How do we know that God is love? We know it from the life of Jesus, healing the sick and accepting the outcasts of humanity. Supremely through his death on the cross. We read,

“Greater love has no-one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command” (John 15:13).

What is the essence of what Jesus commanded? It is to love God, love your brothers and sisters, but also to love all of humanity because that is the sort of love that God has, and this is the sort of love revealed through the life and death of Jesus.

Jesus followed up on his teachings about love by telling his disciples during the ‘last supper’ meal how he was about to give them a New Covenant. In other words a **New Agreement between God and all of humanity**. (Matthew 26:17-30, Mark 14: 12-26, Luke 22: 7-39 and John 13: 1-17):

*“While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to the disciples saying, “Take and eat; this is my body”. Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. **This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins**” (Mathew 26:26-28).*

*Jesus said, “This cup is the **New Covenant** in my blood, which is poured out for you”.*

Jesus had lived a life demonstrating the nature of true sacrificial love. Now he was about to demonstrate how far the love of God would go. He was about to voluntarily die on a cruel Roman cross, in agony and in shame, all because he so *loved the world* (John 3:16).

The disciples slowly came to realise **how dynamic this new Covenant of love was**.

They summarised it in various ways in New Testament writings:

Submit to one another	Just as Jesus Christ did
Forgive one another	Just as Jesus Christ did
Encourage one another	Just as Jesus Christ did
Restore one another	Just as Jesus Christ did
Accept one another	Just as Jesus Christ did

Care for one another	Just as Jesus Christ did
Bear with one another	Just as Jesus Christ did
Carry one another's burdens	Just as Jesus Christ did

That is why the apostle John wrote towards the end of his life:

*We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. **Anyone who does not love remains in death.*** (1 John 3: 14).

*Dear friends, let us love one another, **for love comes from God.** Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because **God is love.** This is how God showed his love amongst us. He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*

*Dear friends, since God so loved us, we ought to love one another. No-one has ever seen God; but **if we love each other, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us*** (1 John 3:7-12)

The new LOVE Agreement (The Gospel message) that Jesus brought into the world replaced the Law Agreement that God introduced through Moses for the Israelite nation.

We no longer have to keep the Sabbath or offer animal sacrifices or keep strict rituals and ceremonies.

We have been introduced to the **freedom of the New Love Covenant.** If we can allow God's Holy Spirit within us to grow us further and further into understanding how to love like Jesus showed us to love, then it is that love that changes the world. It is God's Holy Spirit within us who wants to create within us a heart of true love, but we must co-operate with Him.

True love will not allow us to exploit or harm our fellow man or woman. It will teach us to treat everyone as people who God wants to bless, **not as things for us to use and then discard.**

The first century Christians were a love movement that was Irresistible to many who were bound up in laws and rituals, guilt, anger, racialism, pride and fear. Within a few years the early Christians had been used by God to dramatically change the Roman Empire and this led to the widespread closing of heathen temples. **Is our understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ IRRESISTIBLE?**

4.16 The Bible as 'Living Word'

The Bible can be understood to be 'Living Word', because its predominant message is about the Living God and the Living Jesus Christ and the Living Holy Spirit (The Trinity God). It is God's WORD to us, progressively revealed through his interactions with humanity.

In addition, some Christians call it the Living Word because it can guide us in day by day decisions. When we are looking for answers to questions or needing to make decisions, then Bible verses may come to mind or we just open the Bible on a passage and certain words stand out that are relevant to the decisions we need to make.

Christians believe that God can guide them when having to make important decisions. The Bible can provide important guidelines, such as the importance of honesty, not marrying unbelievers etc. In addition, the Holy Spirit can lead us to a Bible verse that can guide us when making important decisions. Sometimes such verses are not taken within the context of the wider meaning of the chapter but they may confirm guidance received from other sources, such as advice from friends or logical analysis of situations.

When Bible verses seem to stand out and speak into a situation, those who believe that God does sometimes guide in this way may call the Bible the 'Living Word'. My own understanding is that God can and does guide us when we ask him to do so. However, this **guidance comes in many different ways**. For instance through 'doors' being opened or closed, through advice of friends, through us having peace about making a decision, or through us reading something that seems to have come to our notice unexpectedly.

If we only rely on the Bible for guidance by opening it at random, this can sometimes lead us in the wrong direction. It is wise to do this only as part of a much wider process of seeking guidance.

Although the Bible is a combination of writings by a variety of authors who were inspired by God to write this amazing book, it carries a **special supernatural authority and anointing**. It is used by God to inspire and guide us towards entering into a personal and intimate relationship with him. Jesus emphasised the importance of the first five Bible books (the Law), the prophetic books and the Psalms. In addition we have the New Testament books that enable us to better understand the whole Bible and to understand the WORD of God, especially through Jesus Christ; The '*Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us*' (John 1:14 NIV)

By faith, many people accept that there is a **supernatural 'anointing'** placed by God on the Bible. It contains many promises for those who accept that it is the main way that God has decided to reveal himself to humanity.

The 'voice of God', speaking to us through the Bible, together with revelations about himself revealed through our study of his creation, and together with personal experiences of his interactions with our lives, all form part of his WORD. Through the Bible we discover the central profound truth, that *the WORD became flesh and lived for a while among us* (John 1:14).

4.17 CONCLUSIONS:

Fact Based answers to Fact Based Questions

The words of Paul to Timothy can be our motivation, *Do your best to present yourselves to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth* (2 Timothy 2:15).

I believe correctly handling the word of truth includes looking seriously at the issues raised in this article. In this way we can reach a balanced view of scripture that enables us to be un-ashamed to uphold its truths in this generation, raised and surrounded by our scientific and technological discoveries. **It is a generation that has many questions that need to be answered** by us, if we are serious about bringing the Gospel message to those we meet.

Christians need to give '**Fact Based Answers**' to the many '**Fact Based Questions**'. Too often 'Faith Based Answers' are given to 'Fact Based Questions' that are asked by millions living in our generation. These 'Faith Based Answers' do not satisfy most people and can lead to many not taking the Bible seriously.

For instance, one '**Fact Based Question**' can be: "How long ago was the earth created? "

A 'Faith Based Answer' might be: *The earth is about 6000 years old because the Bible says so.* (This is not what I would say but it is the sort of answer given by some Christians).

A 'Fact based answer' could be: *The earth is, according to scientific discoveries, at least 4.5 billion years old and fortunately the Bible can be reconciled with this conclusion, provided we are willing to look at **legitimate** alternative interpretations of the Genesis creation account.*

A vital part of making Evangelical Christianity relevant to our science and technology generation is to stop fighting the vast accumulation of scientific evidence supporting the conclusion that our earth and universe are very ancient. Christians should accept that the Creator has used evolutionary processes as part of his creative activity. We are told this truth by the 'Voice of God' speaking to us from creation. Scientific discoveries are vastly amplifying this voice in our scientific generation.

A most important question: Are we serious about presenting the Gospel message to our generation or are we determined to cling to our traditional interpretations of scripture and so spend time and energy fighting the 'Voice of God' speaking to us from his creation?

If Evangelical Christianity is serious about promoting the Gospel message to our scientific and technological generation and serious about confronting the

challenges facing Christianity in an honest way, then I believe we need to accept the following:

- We live in a world that is billions of years old. The enormous size and great age of the universe, namely at least 200 billion galaxies each composed of billions of stars and these galaxies are stretched out over at least 13 billion light years of space. The universe is billions of earth years old.
- There are many scientific disciplines revealing that our earth is at least 4.5 billion years old.
- The universe is expanding in all directions at great speed, indicating that it started from a creation event that science often refers to as the Big Bang.
- God has chosen to bring about his creation in various ways, including through his guiding of the mechanisms and long processes that are an integral part of the way he has planned the universe.
- Life on earth has increased in complexity over long timescales, not just 6000 years.
- The fine-tuning of all the fundamental forces in nature and the existence of countless examples of 'Intricate Complexity' within living organisms, show believers that God has been intimately involved in guiding the processes that science is now progressively discovering.
- Science has no way of detecting the guiding 'finger of God' but at the same time science cannot deny this probability.
- Basic science shows that a world-wide flood about 4,500 years back, as suggested by one interpretation of the Bible account, did not occur. Only much more localised floods took place. The present diversity and distribution of plant and animal life on different continents is explained primarily by the very slow process of continental drift. For instance, Australia has marsupial mammals like kangaroos and no indigenous placental mammals, because Australia split away from other land before placental mammals dominated the other continents and largely caused marsupials to be eliminated.
- Fossils are not the result of a world-wide flood. We must accept the scientific and scriptural evidence showing the flood of Noah's time was not world-wide.
- Science has clearly revealed that death has been a fundamental part of all life on earth from the dawn of life. The complexity of living systems requires food chains and intricate interactions that are revealed through the scientific study of ecology.
- The Garden of Eden and Adam and Eve events are essential for our understanding of the nature of sin and our need for forgiveness, in order for us to be Born Again into an intimate relationship with God.

- Modern humanity was preceded by other branches of humanity, such as Neanderthals and our *Homo sapiens* species that have existed on earth for at least 200,000 years and has been present in Europe for at least 40,000 years.
- Adam and Eve, as representatives of the human race, were mortal but they had an Eternal Spiritual Life relationship with their Creator.
- We all know today that we are mortal and so the Gospel message is not changed by varying understandings about the Genesis creation account and origin of death.
- Our acceptance that physical death did not start in the Garden of Eden means that some Evangelical Christians need to change their understanding of Original Sin and teachings about healing of sicknesses.
- Our acceptance of the long history of life on earth requires us to look again at how the Genesis Creation account can be reconciled with scientific discovery. In sections 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3, I expanded on these questions.
- It is possible for Evangelical Christians to accept God-guided Evolution. I discuss this in section 2.9.
- Other theological questions are expanded upon in Chapter 3.

Chapter 5: My CV, Acknowledgements and an Invitation

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to my late wife Anna who always encouraged me to research subjects covered in this book and also subjects detailed on my webpage.

Valuable comments on this book were made by:

Dr Michael Cassidy, Claude Cunningham and my sister Professor Jennifer Jarvis.

My CV (Dr Michael John Fulford Jarvis)

My personal CV is available on my webpage: www.FactandFaith.co.za

I am located in Wellington, South Africa, close to Cape Town.

A brief summary of my background:

I was born in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in 1942 to Evangelical Christian parents. My father was trained at Kings College London as a surgeon and physician and my mother a trained nurse. Both were enthusiastic evangelists and volunteered to go to East Africa. They lived with many hardships and my father was the only doctor for large areas. My parents were what are often called Tentmaker missionaries. I grew up with a love for animals and this led me to study biology at the University of Cape Town where I graduated with a PhD in zoology in 1971.

University studies led me to question some of the Christian theology I had been exposed to and this motivated me to search for answers that could satisfy my desire to reconcile scientific discoveries with the Bible.

I also grew up with a strong desire to experience God in my personal life so that my faith would not rest entirely upon intellectual reasoning. The Lord initiated me into personally experiencing his reality during war time experiences in Zimbabwe during the time when the country was still called Rhodesia.

My personal experiences of God interacting in my life continued up until the present. These experiences intensified my motivation to find answers to questions. I also came to realise that many people, including some Evangelical Christians, were asking similar questions. Often these 'Fact Based Questions', like the 'Age of our Earth?' were not receiving 'Fact Based Answers' and the lack of satisfying answers was keeping many people from taking the Bible seriously. This in turn kept many from discovering the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Invitation

If any section of this book has prompted you to look further into the issues I have raised then you are encouraged to look at other articles, books and videos that can be freely downloaded from my webpage www.FactandFaith.co.za

I also welcome communication via my email address Mike@factandfaith.co.za

