

The Bible contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable.

Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveller's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christian's charter.

Here paradise is restored, heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is its grand subject, our good the design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently and prayerfully.

It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened at the Judgement, and will be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labourer, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.

Personal Worker's Testament

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The French philosopher and mathematician Blaise Pascal once declared: “Certain authors, when they speak of their work say, ‘My book,’ ‘my commentary,’ ‘my history.’ They would be better to say, ‘Our book,’ ‘our commentary,’ ‘our history,’ since their writings generally contain more of other people’s good things than their own.” This is certainly the case with regards to this book that I have written!

I owe my special thanks, and I am greatly indebted, to all fellow believers, researchers and scholars of every age who have laboured whole-heartedly to uncover the great wealth of evidence that totally authenticates the divine inspiration of the Holy Bible, and whose works have been a true source of inspiration and support for me over the years.

Why We Can Trust The Bible is the result of almost fifteen years of intense research and study, which involved numerous Bible commentaries, historical, scientific and spiritual literature, and hundreds of long and detailed hours studying the Holy Scriptures. It is my prayer that God will use the evidence and research provided in the following chapters to inspire, inform and encourage you to personally investigate the Bible for yourself. And if my work should create or renew in the hearts of its readers a new or revived love and appreciation for the Word of God, I will have received my reward in full.

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INTRODUCTION

All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

(2 Timothy 3:16)

The subject of this book – the divine inspiration and reliability of the Holy Scriptures – is a very crucial subject because of its serious implications. The Bible is the most important Book in the world, as it consistently claims to be the authoritative, truthful, and inerrant Word of God. It has answers to the most fundamental questions of life, and accurately tells us who God is, who we are, why we are here, and what happens when we die.

Therefore, it is of the greatest possible importance that each individual determines for himself whether the Bible is truly the Word of God or not, as our religious beliefs will determine our decisions, our actions, our goals and, most importantly, our eternal destiny.

Although written by forty or more authors over a time span of sixteen centuries, the Bible reveals an extraordinary coherent unity and progressive revelation from the Book of Genesis through to the Book of Revelation. This progressive revelation presents a single unfolding story of God's plan of redemption for mankind; redemption from the curse of sin and condemnation to a life of complete transformation and unending joy in the presence of God the Father.

Among all the people described in the Bible the leading Character is the One true God made known and manifested through His Divine Son, who was to come into the world to die for humanity so that by believing on Him we would inherit eternal life as a free gift. The New Testament precisely displays the fulfilment of all

these ancient prophecies in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The New Testament also declares that every human being will one day stand before their Creator to give an account of how they responded to His offer of salvation through the atoning death of His Son on the Cross:

He has appeared once for all at the end of the age to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once and after that the judgement.

(Hebrews 9:26b-28)

Considering this important fact alone, and the profound implications involved, should any living soul be left in ignorance as to what the Bible has to say? While it is true that most people reject the Bible's authority because they intuitively see that its moral teachings would interfere with how they wish to live, others, however, not only of the general public, but many professing Christians as well, remain totally uninformed as to the trustworthiness and inerrancy of Scripture. This is one of the reasons that I have chosen to write this book.

Moreover, helping people to trust the Bible and live by its precepts not only has personal implications for each person, but it is also an important issue for the direction and future of every nation of the world. If men and women lived according to the Ten Commandments, or according to the great commandment of Jesus Christ to love your neighbour as yourself, then a lot of today's social problems would be solved or greatly reduced. Yet people do not live according to these principles simply because they do not believe such commandments came from God, or that they will be held accountable to Him when they die.

Therefore, the most important question to answer at this point is whether or not there is any real evidence to support the Bible's claims to be a genuine divine revelation from God; or are we to consider the Scriptures as nothing more than a mere collection of

philosophical writings from a group of ancient Middle Eastern men? The difficulty here is not in how to answer this question, but to know when to stop. My thesis in *Why We Can Trust The Bible* is that the Scriptures contain an incredible amount of fascinating evidence that absolutely authenticates every Book of the Bible as the inspired and authoritative Word of God, whether it has to do with science, history, archaeology, prophecy or morality.

Evidence For Divine Inspiration

First let us examine the question of how God would reveal Himself to humanity if He truly exists. After creating the Universe and mankind how would God reveal His purpose and laws to His creatures? He could choose to communicate directly to each individual in every generation, but that would be quite impractical.

On the other hand, God could choose a nation of men living in various generations over a period of centuries and inspire them to faithfully record His instructions to the rest of mankind. Obviously this option is the most practical and logical one.

But in order for God to demonstrate to mankind that the Bible was His legitimate revelation, and to aid us to differentiate between His genuine inspired Word and the many other religious philosophies that have been produced over the centuries, He placed a considerable amount of supernatural evidence within the biblical texts that no one apart from a divine intelligence could have possibly created.

For example, the evidence from hundreds of fulfilled prophecies regarding the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the miraculous rebirth of the State of Israel in 1948, provide some of the strongest and most obvious proofs of the Bible's divine origin. But there are a great number of other intriguing prophecies and incredible facts which prove that only God could have inspired

the biblical prophets to record. The Bible's unique claims, internal unity, recorded miracles, miraculous preservation, and incredible accuracy concerning science, history, geography and prophecy set it apart from all other ancient literature and requires an explanation for its origin beyond the natural.

I have divided this book into various sections that will carefully examine these areas in detail so that the reader can test the authenticity and divine authority of the Bible for himself. The evidence we will examine in each area includes:

1. The fascinating archaeological discoveries of tablets, pottery and mounds dug up from ancient civilizations, confirming that all the history written in Scripture is true, accurate and factual, including the Israelite Exodus from Egypt and their conquest of the Promised Land, the Universal Flood, the Tower of Babel and many others.

It is a striking fact that for over a century detailed archaeological excavations have failed to prove a single biblical statement incorrect, while it has confirmed as accurate thousands of historical, geographical and other biblical details which were considered myths and legends until quite recently.

Also, probably three of the greatest American archaeologists of the twentieth century, William Albright, Nelson Glueck, and George E Wright each had their beginnings as sceptics, but later became firm Christians through their many fantastic archaeological discoveries that convinced them of the total historical accuracy of the Bible.

2. The tremendous accurate scientific statements found throughout the Bible; that were often disharmonious with the excepted knowledge of the period in which the Scriptures were written. Also an advanced knowledge of medical and sanitation laws of which many of the best scientists and

doctors were ignorant of until the beginning of the twentieth century. History reveals that the advanced medical knowledge recorded in the Old Testament saved millions of lives for those who followed its precepts during the Black Death Plague that invaded Europe in the Middle Ages.

Concerning the incredible scientific previsions contained in Scripture we can only say that it is something very unique in the history of ancient literature. The Bible is so full of scientific and cultural detail – which has been verified through modern research techniques – that it has become virtually impossible for any critic to deny its divine authorship and authority.

In so many disciplines we find full corroboration with the Holy Scriptures: geology, astronomy, anthropology, palaeontology, genetics, atomic physics etc., etc., etc. For anyone to argue that the scientific evidence in the Bible is the result of lucky guesses requires an enormous amount of faith, as we all know how impossible it is to write science and prophecy thousands of years in advance apart from divine inspiration.

3. The precise fulfilment of thousands of detailed prophecies that have been fulfilled to the smallest detail down through the centuries of human history. For the Bible to declare that its predictions were a hundred per-cent accurate, and then offer hundreds of individual predictions with hundreds of matters forecasted, we can imagine how easy it would be to prove the Bible was not the Word of God by finding just one false prediction. Yet no such prediction has ever been found. Despite the fact that the world is full of spiritual texts, written by a variety of religious leaders, and the fact that some of them claim divine inspiration – such as the Muslim Qur'an, the Book of Mormon and parts of the Hindu Veda – a close examination of this literature reveals that not one of

these texts contain predictive prophecy. No other religious literature of the ancient world besides the Bible has ever ventured to make predictions of the coming of any religious leaders or of the rise and fall of any world empires and kings centuries in advance.

By contrast, the Old Testament prophets precisely predicted hundreds of detailed prophecies related to the life, death and resurrection of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, hundreds of years before He was even born.

All these prophecies, that were written over a thousand year period, described in specific detail that the Messiah would be born of a virgin; that He would live in Nazareth of Galilee; that He would be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver by a friend; that He would die a humiliating death by crucifixion alongside thieves; that He would pray for His enemies; be buried in a rich man's tomb; rise from the dead on the third day; and that He would ascend into heaven and sit at God's right hand.

In addition to these, the prophet Daniel perfectly predicted the rise and fall of the great world empires that would rule the world from the time of the Babylonian Empire until the end of the present age. Other biblical prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel were given the capacity to see into the future to a time when the Jewish people, dispersed around the world for almost 2,000 years, would again be a nation in the land of Israel.

The evidence for the dating and fulfilment of these ancient prophecies is so convincing that any attempt to discredit them is futile, and this can be said for the thousands of other prophecies in Scripture.

For example, the prophetic Books of Ezekiel, Daniel and the apostle John speak in precise detail of what is happening in our world today – the explosive economic and military growth of China; the push towards a one world government,

economy and religion; the unification of Europe and the ongoing Middle East peace process to name a few. The precise fulfilment of these prophecies can only logically be explained by divine foreknowledge and no other reason.

4. The unprecedented influence that the Bible has had on the laws of nations, cultures, individuals, and the history of the Western World. It is a well-known fact that the Jurisprudence and customs of Western civilization have been shaped by the legal and ethical precepts contained in the Word of God.

Moreover, a number of the great men who founded the United States of America, such as George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, were strongly influenced by their faith and firm belief in the divine inspiration of Scripture, not to mention many of the world's best scientists whose faith in the Bible was the driving force behind their research and fantastic discoveries.

5. The phenomenon of the transformed lives of the biblical writers themselves. For example, many of the historical records handed down from the first century reveal that almost every one of the apostles of Christ faced a cruel death without ever denying their true faith, even though they had every opportunity to do so.

Such a transformation and determination in the lives and character of these men can only be accounted for through a personal knowledge of the facts surrounding the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is also evident when we consider that they faced terrible hatred and opposition from the cleverest legal, political and religious authorities of their day.

6. The Bible's incredible continuity which reveals that it is only one Book; an amazing fact when we consider that the sixty-six Books of the Bible were written over a sixteen-hundred year span by more than forty authors from all walks of life, including kings, military leaders, tax collectors, musicians, lawyers, shepherds and poets.

When we compare this unity with the compilation of other ancient literature and Western classics, the Bible stands absolutely alone in its continuity. Many people who have never read the Bible, or have never done so with an open mind, think of it as a contradictory heap of bits and pieces that are full of errors and myths. But most people who have studied the Word carefully admitted that it holds together in a remarkable unity.

The brilliant historian and former professor of biblical criticism and exegesis at the University of Manchester, FF Bruce, described the amazing continuity in Scripture as something very unique in the history of ancient literature, a fact which can only be explained by divine inspiration. He wrote:

The Bible, at first sight, appears to be a collection of literature that is mainly Jewish. If we enquire into the circumstances under which the various biblical documents were written, we find that they were written at intervals over a space of nearly 1,400 years. The writers wrote in various lands, from Italy in the West to Mesopotamia and possibly Persia in the East. The writers themselves were a heterogeneous number of people, not only separated from each other by hundreds of years and hundreds of miles, but belonging to the most diverse walks of life.

In their ranks we have kings, herdsmen, soldiers, legislators, fishermen, statesmen, courtiers, priests

and prophets, a tent-making Rabbi and a Gentile physician, not to speak of others of whom we know nothing apart from the writings they have left us. The writings themselves belong to a great variety of literary types.

They include history, law (civil, criminal, ethical, ritual, sanitary), religious poetry, didactic treatises, lyric poetry, parable and allegory, biography, personal correspondence, personal memoirs and diaries, in addition to the distinctively biblical types of prophecy and apocalyptic. For all that, the Bible is not simply an anthology; there is a unity which binds the whole together. An anthology is compiled by an anthologist, but no anthologist compiled the Bible.

A former Boden Professor of Sanskrit, M. Montiero Williams, spent more than forty years of his life studying Eastern books of ancient literature. After comparing them with the Bible he made the following conclusion:

Pile them, if you will, on the left side of your study table; but place your own Holy Bible on the right side all by itself, all alone, and with a wide gap between them... There is a gulf between it and the so called sacred books of the East which severs the one from the other utterly, hopelessly, and forever.

Dear reader, among other things, the Bible's wisdom, knowledge and incredible foreknowledge concerning science, history, prophecy and spiritual truth clearly proclaim its divine origin to anyone who will openly examine the evidence.

I have felt a compelling responsibility to carefully check the accuracy of every statement that *Why We Can Trust The Bible* claims because of the serious importance concerning the truth of

Scripture, and the importance of how we as Christians present that truth to others.

My principle aim in writing this book is to firmly establish the credibility and divine authority of the Bible for both believers and unbelievers as a solid and reliable foundation for their faith, and to encourage and inspire each person who is seeking answers to life's most profound questions to personally examine and investigate the evidence for himself.

For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.

(Romans 15:4)

Open my eyes so that I may behold, wondrous things out of your law.. The unfolding of your words gives light, it imparts understanding to the simple.

(Psalm 119:18, 130)

If you are one of these people then I urge you to follow me through the following chapters, where we will examine and explore many other fascinating topics that will further demonstrate the authority of the Bible and help increase your faith in its message.

These topics will include the miraculous way the sixty-six Books of the Bible were created and preserved over the centuries; the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ and the tremendous legal evidence that bears witness to the truth of His resurrection; the value of the Dead Sea Scrolls in authenticating the textual integrity of the Old Testament manuscripts; and the incredible scientific evidence drawn from chemistry, biology and physics which proves that a thinking intelligent Being planned and created the Universe for human beings to inhabit, exactly as the prophet Moses wrote thousands of years ago.

01

THE BIBLE'S UNIQUENESS AND MIRACULOUS PRESERVATION

The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of God will stand forever.

(Isaiah 40:7-9)

Down through the centuries of human history numerous attempts have been made to destroy the Bible. Yet despite such opposition, hatred, and persecution, that precious Book is miraculously still circulating today, having triumphed over emperors, dictators and monarchs who tried to silence its message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

The Bible remains the most widely read, published, and influential Book in history and is read daily by millions of people around the globe. It has been translated either in whole or in part into nearly every known language of the world and is considered the oldest Book in existence today; with its continuing sales outnumbering that of any other in the field of publishing. It staggers the mind to discover that the number of Bibles sold in the course of history reaches into the billions.

While it might be argued that in a certain designated period more copies of a certain book were sold, it can also be said that no book in history can ever begin to compare to the Bible in terms of its total circulation.

It is also an amazing fact that the Scriptures have never diminished in style or accuracy, or even faced extinction, despite the fact that they were first written on perishable fabric and copied for hundreds of years before the invention of printing. Compared with all other ancient writings, the Bible has more

evidence to support it than a dozen pieces of classical literature combined together. This is mainly due to the great care and respect the Jewish scribes exercised in preserving these precious documents over the course of time. They had special classes of men within their culture whose sole duty was to preserve and transmit these documents with practically perfect fidelity. These included scribes, lawyers and Masoretes.

The Bible has not only changed and influenced the lives of billions of souls down through the ages, but also the course of history for entire nations and peoples. For all those who have studied history it is clear that civilization has been influenced more by the Judeo-Christian Scriptures than by any other book in the world.

Indeed, no great moral or religious work has ever exceeded the debt of morality in the principles of Christian love as those portrayed in the Bible. And no other book in all of history has impacted and inspired the literary world in such a way as the Bible has. On this subject the brilliant scholar Bernard Ramm wrote:

There are complexities of bibliographical studies that are unparalleled in any other science or department of human knowledge. From the Apostolic Fathers dating from A.D. 95 to the modern times is one great literary river inspired by the Bible; Bible dictionaries, Bible encyclopaedias, Bible lexicons, Bible atlases and Bible geographies.

They may be taken as a starter. Then at random, we may mention the vast bibliographies around theology, religious education, hymnology, missions, the biblical languages, church history, religious biography, devotional works, commentaries, philosophy of religion, evidences, apologetics and on and on... There seems to be an endless number.

Vain Attempts to Destroy the Bible

The Word of God has miraculously withstood some of the most vicious attacks by its most hated enemies. Many have tried to burn it, outlaw it and ban it from the days of the Roman emperors to present day Communist dominated countries. During the first centuries A.D. the Roman emperors did everything in their power to destroy the faith of Christianity.

Christian homes were set on fire while entire families perished in the flames. Any who bore the Christian name received no mercy from their pagan tormentors and were blamed for every disaster and misfortune. The worst lies and most absurd stories could be told against the followers of Christ, while the forms of torture devised against them exhausted imagination.

Under the persecutions of Emperor Nero some Christians were sewn inside skins of wild animals and thrown to fierce starving dogs to feed on, while others were clothed in shirts covered in wax to be used as torches for Nero's garden parties.

In A.D. 303 another enemy of Christianity, Emperor Diocletian, issued an official command that all Christian churches and sacred books were to be destroyed by fire, and all Christians arrested as traitors to the emperor. Under this decree all followers of Christ who held high positions lost all civil rights, while those in households, who persisted in their profession of Christianity, were deprived of their liberty. But these persecutions, vile as they were, only succeeded to strengthen the spirit of Christianity rather than destroy it.

The persecutions under the tyranny of the Roman Empire continued until Emperor Constantine made Christianity the official state religion in A.D. 325. The fourth-century Church historian Eusebius recorded that less than twenty five-years after Diocletian's edict, Constantine issued another edict ordering fifty copies of the Bible to be prepared at the government's expense.

The Church Falls into Apostasy

Many centuries after the reign of Emperor Constantine a different persecution began, this time from the religious leaders. The Church of Rome rejected the truths in Scripture and fell into apostasy, compromising with the aristocracy and kings of Europe. These leaders introduced policies and practices which were completely in opposition to the doctrines laid down by Jesus Christ and the apostles.

Laws were issued that made possession of a Bible illegal for any layman and the sword was taken up against all who opposed the false doctrines and traditions that had become part of the Church since the time of Constantine.

During the Inquisition period in Europe there were appalling penalties for anyone found in possession of a Bible. Many faithful servants of God were burned at the stake for attempting to translate the Scriptures into the common language, in the hope that the simplest peasant could read for himself the message of God's salvation. While he was being burnt at the stake in Belgium, William Tyndale prayed, "*Lord open the eyes of the King of England.*"

Finally, after almost a thousand years of spiritual darkness, the reformers opened the way for spiritual freedom and opposed the position that tradition and papal decrees could supersede the inspired teaching of Scripture.

H.L. Hastings strongly illustrates the miraculous way in which the Bible has withstood these attacks from infidels and critics over the centuries and still remained the most widely published and popular Book in history. He wrote:

Infidels, for eighteen hundred years have been refuting and overthrowing this book, and yet it stands today as solid as a rock. Its circulation increases, and it is more loved and cherished and read today than

ever before. Infidels, with all their assaults, make about as much impression on this book as a man with a tack hammer would be on the Pyramids of Egypt. When the French monarch proposed the persecution of the Christians in his dominion, an old statesman and warrior said to him, "*Sire, the Church of God is an anvil that has worn out many hammers.*"

So the hammers of infidels have been pecking away at this book for ages, but the hammers are worn out, and the anvil still endures. If this book had not been the book of God, men would have destroyed it long ago. Emperors and popes, kings and priests, princes and rulers have all tried their hand at it; they die and the book still lives.

Bernard Ramm concluded similarly:

A thousand times over, the death knell of the Bible has been sounded, the funeral procession formed, the inscription cut on the tombstone, and committal read. But somehow the corpse never stays put. No other book has been chopped, knifed, sifted, scrutinized and vilified.

What book on philosophy or religion or psychology or belles lettres of classical or modern times has been subject to such a mass attack as the Bible? With such venom and skepticism? With such thoroughness and erudition? Upon every chapter line and tenet? The Bible is still loved by millions, read by millions, and studied by millions.

The French writer Voltaire often expressed much contempt for Christians and the Bible. He wrote a prediction almost two

centuries ago declaring that Christianity and the Bible would be a vague memory in less than a hundred years.

Despite his bold prediction, there are more Bibles and Christians in the world today than any other period in history. The historic irony of Voltaire's prediction is that no less than fifty years after his death the Geneva Bible Society used his press and house to produce stacks of Bibles.

Truly, the enemies of the Bible have attacked without respite for the last two thousand years, but the Word of God still stands as the most popular and fascinating Book in history, and has held the undying attention of the most brilliant and influential men of every age, who openly acknowledged it as the world's greatest literary masterpiece. I challenge you to read a few of their short citations listed below and not be impressed by their commitment to biblical truths:

To the Bible men will return because they cannot do without it. The true God is and must be pre-eminently the God of the Bible.

Matthew Arnold

The Bible contains a complete series of acts and historical rule to explain time and eternity, such as no other religion has to offer. If it is not the true religion, then one is very excusable in being deceived, for everything in it is grand and worthy of God.

Napoleon Bonaparte

Young men, my advice to you is to cultivate an acquaintance with, and firm belief in the Holy Scriptures, for this is your certain interest. I think Christ's system of morals and religion as He left

them to us, the best the world ever saw or is likely to see.

Benjamin Franklin

It is a belief in the Bible which has served me as the guide of my moral and literary life. No criticism will be able to perplex the confidence which we have entertained of a writing whose contents have stirred up and given life to our vital energy by its own. The further the ages advance in civilization the more the Bible will be used.

Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

Western civilization is founded upon the Bible; all our ideas, our wisdom, our philosophy, our literature, our art, our ideals come more from the Bible than all other books put together.

William Lyons Phelps

England has become great and happy by the knowledge of the true God through Jesus Christ.. This is the secret of England's greatness.

Queen Victoria

There are more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible than in any profane history... I account the Scriptures of God the most sublime philosophy.

Sir Isaac Newton

I have carefully examined the evidence of the Christian religion, and if I were sitting as a juror

upon its authenticity, I would un-hesitantly give my verdict in its favour.

Alexander Hamilton

This Jesus of Nazareth, without money and arms, conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar, Mohammed, and Napoleon; without science and learning, He shed more light on things human and divine than all philosophers and scholars combined; without the eloquence of schools, He spoke such words of life as were never spoken before or since and produced effects which lie beyond the reach of orator or poet; without writing a single line, He set more pens in motion, and furnished themes for more sermons, orations, discussions, learned volumes, works of art, and songs of praise, than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times.

Philip Schaff

This great book is the best gift that God has given to man.

Abraham Lincoln

A thorough knowledge of the Bible is worth more than a college education.

Theodore Roosevelt

The Word of God is truly unique in every sense of the word. Its dramatic power to change and transform lives; amazing accuracy and foreknowledge concerning science, history, archaeology, and prophecy; and its miraculous preservation down through the centuries, despite the brutal force and destructive criticism by all

the best arguments in the world to date, reveal without doubt that it is a Book truly inspired by God.

Is not my word like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces.

(Jeremiah 23:29)

02

DISCOVERIES OF ANCIENT LITERARY METHODS PROVE MOSES WROTE THE TORAH

From Monotheism to Polytheism

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made, so that men are without excuse... Claiming to be wise they became fools; and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles.

(Romans 1:19-21, 22-24)

The Bible declares that God Almighty revealed Himself at the very beginning of human history as the One true Creator and that belief in a multitude of distinct and separate deities (polytheism) was a corruption that developed later. However, since the time of Charles Darwin, and the spread of evolution theories in the late 1800s, many popular thinkers and atheists became persuaded that religion and the belief in the One true God evolved slowly over many millennia.

The first stage in the evolution of religion hypothesis is said to have begun with *animism* (which involved the worship of spirits believed to inhabit natural phenomena), followed by *pantheism* (the belief that everything is divine), then *polytheism* (the belief in multiple gods), and eventually *monotheism* (the belief in One God). Yet when these theories began to be tested in fieldwork, they were found to be completely contrary to empirical facts and

have long been abandoned by anthropologists. From the 1920s onwards, field research has revealed that the development of religion went in the exact opposite direction.

Also the evidence of modern archaeology proves that religion did not evolve ‘upwards’ but degenerated ‘downwards’ from monotheism to pantheism and polytheism, and from these to animism and atheism. This finding has been confirmed by many notable archaeologists and anthropologists, including the famous Scottish academic Andrew Lang. In *The Making of Religion* he wrote: “Of the existence of a belief in the Supreme Being among primitive tribes there is as good evidence as we possess for any fact in the ethnographic region.”

In his famous work, *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, the Oriental expert Max Muller, recognized as the founder of the science of the history of religions, came to the following conclusion:

There is a monotheism that precedes the polytheism of the Veda; and even in the invocations of the innumerable gods, the remembrance of a God, one and infinite, breaks through the mist of idolatrous phraseology like the blue sky that is hidden by passing clouds.

After much extended studies of ancient religions and long experience in India, the modern scholar Robert Brow said: “The tribes have a memory of a High God, who is no longer worshipped because he is not feared. Instead of offering sacrifice to him, they concern themselves with the pressing problems of how to appease the vicious spirits of the jungle.” In spite of this evidence the evolution of religion hypothesis is still taught in many academic circles today.

The Documentary Hypothesis

When Moses had finished writing down in a book the words of this law to the very end, Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord saying, "Take this book of the law and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God. Let it remain there as a witness against you."

(Deuteronomy 31:24-27)

In addition to the evolution of religion theory, many Higher Critics of the previous centuries denied that the Jewish Torah, or Pentateuch, was composed by Moses on the basis that writing had not yet been developed in his time, and so must have been written a thousand years later, around 440 B.C.

These Critics held onto the so-called *Documentary Hypothesis*, which claims that the different names used to describe God in the Book of Genesis (*Elohim, Jehovah, Adonai*) indicates that different authors composed parts of the Book.

Those adhering to the Documentary Theory also teach that the first five Books of the Bible were written almost a thousand years after Moses died and were the result of a process of writing, rewriting, editing and compiling by various anonymous editors. This theory got off the ground in 1895 when the German scholar Julius Wellhausen added the finishing touches to a hypothesis founded by a Frenchman named Astruc; a theory that is still prevalent in modern biblical circles and theological courses today even though much of its original basis has been proven false by archaeology.

Over the last few decades leading scholars with expertise in the literary methods of the ancient Near Eastern countries brought forth compelling evidence which proves that Moses did indeed compose the first five Books of the Bible as originally believed. This evidence proved that the different names used to describe God in the Old Testament is not an indication of different sources,

but follow certain principles which are shown by archaeology to have existed in ancient times.

The Higher Critics, who lacked much scientific information, commenced their theories against Moses before Egyptologists and Assyriologists had discovered how history was recorded in the Middle East in ancient times.

Experts in this field have found that all the literary methods evident in the Pentateuch are those of the time of Moses and not of a later date when methods changed. As I mentioned above, the Documentary Hypothesis course assumes that the sources of oral tradition can be traced in the Bible by the use of the different divine names *Yahwey* (Lord) and *Elohim* (God) used in the Law of Moses.

Concerning the Old Testament, the course gives examples of text separated into *Yah* and *El* segments in order to make them appear contradictory. The course is, in fact, divided into four parts; *J.E.D.P*, which stands for *Jehovah*, *Elohim*, *Deuteronomy*, and *Priestly*.

It was believed that passages containing *Jehovah* as the divine name were contributed by scribes living about five hundred years after Moses, and that scribes using the name *Elohim* for God wrote in about 600 B.C. *Deuteronomy* is believed to have been written as late as 632 B.C. And the *Priestly*, which was thought to be an advanced brand of religion, and as it was assumed that religion evolved, was supposed to have been composed as late as 400 B.C.

Hittite Treaties Reveal Literary Methods Current at Moses' Time

In response to the Documentary Theory Professor D. Wiseman, former Professor of Assyriology in the University of London, said that the *J.E.D.P Theory* was formed before any of the literary methods of the ancient Near East were known. He claimed the

theory completely ignores the *Hittite Gattung* structure of different styles current in a legal covenant of Moses' day, which bears many striking similarities to the Pentateuch.

Professor Kenneth Kitchen of Liverpool University, School of Archaeology and Oriental Studies, translated tablets and scripts from treaties in Hittite, Elamite, Sumerian and Aramaic languages, as well as Egyptian, Ugaritic, Akkadian and many others.

He found that the different literary styles found in the Pentateuch were, in fact, the legal way of compiling a covenant at the time of Moses. This method was called *The Hittite Treaty* and was established by the Hittites throughout the ancient Near East of Moses' day.

Nearly all the known treaties of the fourteenth to the thirteenth centuries B.C. follow this pattern closely. Soon after it dropped out of use and was completely unknown by the time the critics thought the first five Books of the Bible were put together. Professor Kitchen revealed the following clear pattern of the Hittite suzerainty treaties which bear many similarities to the Law of Moses:

1. The author of the covenant (*Jehovah*).
2. Reference to earlier relations (*Patriarchs*).
3. Stipulations; basic and detailed (*Ten commandments*, followed by more details from *Exodus to Numbers*).
4. Deposition of a copy of the covenant in the vassal's sanctuary (recorded in the *Book of Deuteronomy*).
5. Periodic reading of the covenant terms to the people (recorded only in the *Book of Deuteronomy*).
6. Witnesses, a long list of gods invoked to witness the covenant (*Exodus 24, sealed by sprinkling blood*).

7. Curses upon the vassal if he breaks the covenant and blessings if he keeps it (*Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 30*).

Kitchen concluded that all five Books of Moses are drawn up on the Hittite method and were certainly written in his time, as scribes of a later date would never have got the proceedings so accurate. The effects of these amazing discoveries of ancient laws and literary methods have done much to change the mode of biblical criticism. In response to those who adhere to the Documentary Hypothesis Professor Kitchen concluded:

It never seems to have crossed Astruc's mind, as a Frenchman and European of the 18th century A.D., that the literary peculiarities of the Old Testament text might be due to its origin in a distant antiquity and an alien Near Eastern culture. Failure to allow for the non-European, non-modern origin of the Old Testament text was a cardinal error of the first magnitude, fatally repeated by practically all his successors in conventional criticism.

In one of his works biblical scholar George Mendenhall described the ancient Suzerainty Treaties between Middle Eastern kings and their defeated captives. He too pointed out striking similarities between these treaties and the treaty patterns in the Old Testament. The renowned archaeologist G. Ernest Wright gives a small introduction to Mendenhall's work:

Another major discovery within the realm of law which I venture to predict will stand the test of time is George E. Mendenhall's pioneer work on the formal background of the Mosaic covenant. This background, he has shown is not to be found in the covenants of Bedouin society... Instead, it is to be found in the realm of international law, specifically

in the suzerainty treaties of the late Bronze Age found among the Hittite Archives.

Further evidence which proves Mosaic authorship comes from an extraordinary archaeological discovery of an immense library of ancient Ebla Tablets in Syria. These tablets reveal that all the writing styles of *J.E.D.P* were already in use in the Hittite legal method of recording covenants in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries B.C. They also reveal that the use of the divine names *Yah* and *El* appear together on some tablets in a harmonious account.

This is confirmed by Professor Cassuto, an Israeli scholar of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, who says that the use of various divine names does not indicate different authors, but follow certain principles which still exist among Jews to this day.

He explained how *Elohim*, and the abbreviation *El*, was an international name for God, used when involving foreigners, or when God is referred to as Creator of the Universe, as seen in Genesis chapter one. The name *Jehovah* (Yahweh) is used when referring to God's personal character and direct relationship to people, as can be seen in *Genesis 2:4*. The spectacular finds at Ebla, released to the media in 1977 by Professor Pettinato, fully justify these claims.

Finds at Syria Date Writing 2300 B.C.

Another major reason for the development of the school of Higher Critics was that the Pentateuch could not possibly have been written by Moses because the art of writing was not in existence in his day. But the findings from Ebla, which far out-date even Abraham, demonstrate that a thousand years before Moses' time, laws, customs and events were recorded in writing in the same area of the world where Moses and the Patriarchs lived.

Brief History of Ebla

The Empire of Ebla commenced in about 3500 B.C. and was literally unheard of until the city mound was unearthed in 1964 by two professors from the University of Rome, Dr Paolo Matthiae, an archaeologist, and Dr Giovanni Pettinato, an epigrapher.

Many of the thousands of clay tablets, each one containing hundreds of words, have now been translated. These fantastic finds show that as early as 2300 B.C., major cities were using cuneiform script and the Sumerian language for a variety of documents, and that from 1500 B.C. the alphabetical script was in use in Syria and Palestine.

The tablets paint a picture of life in the Middle East even before the time of Abraham. Moses would have had at hand not only cuneiform, the international script of the Near East at that time, but also Egyptian hieroglyphics and the primitive Semitic language. Luke recorded in the Book of Acts that Moses was powerful in word and deed and learned in all the wisdom of Egypt.

In Moses' day Egypt was littered with papyrus writings of philosophy, treaties and historical records. This means that Hebrew historical traditions need not have been handed down through oral transmission alone as many have strongly asserted.

Hammurabi Code Vindicates Priestly Laws

Not only have the critics taught that the period described in the Law of Moses was prior to all knowledge of writing, they have also taught that the priestly code and legislation recorded in the Pentateuch were far too developed to have been written in 1400 B.C., the biblical date ascribed to Moses.

They concluded that the Israelites were far too primitive at that time to have written these laws, and that it was not until the first

half of the Persian period, from 538 to 331 B.C., that such laws as these were recorded. However, the tablets discovered at Ebla demonstrate elaborate judicial proceedings and case law very similar to those revealed in the Book of Deuteronomy.

The famous Code of Hammurabi, written several hundred years before Moses' time, contains several laws which are similar to those of the Pentateuch. Further study shows that after 1200 B.C., this format was replaced by easier and less rigid treaty formulas. If the Books of the Pentateuch had been written late in the first millennium B.C., as the critics claim, there is absolutely no way that the authors would have known or used the earlier and more elaborate format.

In his much loved work, *Archaeology and Bible History*, Professor of history and archaeology Joseph P. Free brings forth compelling evidence which shows that the laws displayed in the Pentateuch do not have to be dated in accordance with the suppositions of the biblical critics.

Also the renowned scholar and archaeologist Dr Gleason Archer, whose areas of speciality included Egyptology and Semitic languages, refuted those who object to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch based on the compelling evidence brought forth by archaeology. He wrote:

It can hardly be objected that the Israelites were too primitive to be governed by laws such as those back in Moses' time, since according to their own explicit record they had been living in the midst of one of the most advanced civilizations of ancient times for over four hundred years, and would naturally have entertained more advanced concepts of jurisprudence than tribes indigenous to the desert.

That Moses was in a position to author such a work as the Jewish Pentateuch is greatly witnessed by the fact that he grew up in

Pharaoh's house and was trained in the highly developed academic disciplines of the royal Egyptian court. All scholars now agree that part of his learning would have included the ability to write, since even the uneducated slaves working in the Egyptian mines were inscribing their records on tunnel walls. The British assyriologist A.H Sayce evaluates the total lack of evidence to support the theories and presuppositions of those who support a late date for the development of writing. He concluded:

The supposed late use of writing for literary purposes was merely an assumption with nothing more solid to rest upon than the critics own theories and presuppositions. And as soon as it could be tested by solid fact it crumbled into dust.

First Egyptology, then Assyriology showed that the art of writing in the ancient East, so far from being of modern growth, was of vast antiquity, and that the two great powers which divided the civilized world between them were each emphatically a nation of scribes and readers.

Centuries before Abraham was born, Egypt and Babylon were alike full of schools and libraries, of teachers and pupils, of poets and prose-writers, and of the literary works which they composed.

Cyrus Gordon, former Professor of Near Eastern studies and a firm authority on the tablets discovered at Ras Sharma, the ancient Ugarit in Syria, said that the excavations at Ugarit revealed a high material and literary culture in Canaan prior to the emergence of the Hebrews:

Prose and poetry were already fully developed. The educational system was so advanced that dictionaries in four languages were compiled for the use of

scribes, and the individual words were listed in the Ugaritic, Babylonian, Sumerian and Hurrian equivalents. The beginnings of Israel are rooted in a highly cultural Canaan where the contributions of several talented peoples had converged and blended. The notion that early Israelite religion and society were primitive is completely false. Canaan in the days of the patriarchs was the hub of a great international culture. The Bible hailing from such a time and place cannot be devoid of sources.

The Samaritan Scroll and Siloam Inscription

In the days of King Hezekiah of Judah the Assyrians, under the leadership of King Sennacherib, conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C., and shortly after made their way south towards Jerusalem.

Hezekiah quickly secured the source of water for Jerusalem by cutting a tunnel through seventeen feet of rock under the city, from the spring of Gihon outside the city walls to the pool of Siloam within the city; so the water could flow freely underground into Jerusalem and at the same time deny water to the enemy (*2 Kings 20:20; 2 Chronicles 32:30*). This tunnel was re-discovered by archaeologists in 1880.

The Siloam Inscription, a tablet found inside the tunnel that was engraved a few years later in 701 B.C., commemorates the breakthrough in the tunnel by the workers. It states:

The tunnelling was completed...While the hewers wielded the axe, each man toward his fellow... there was heard a man's voice calling to his fellow... the hewers hacked each toward the other, axe against axe, and the water flowed from the spring to the pool, a distance of 1,200 cubits.

After Sennacherib had conquered the northern kingdom of Israel, he imported a group of colonists, the Samaritans, into the West Bank to repopulate the area. During this time the Samaritans had a copy of Moses' Law drawn up for them by a Jewish priest to teach them the laws of the land.

The descendant Samaritans claim to have in their care today one of the oldest manuscripts in the world: that is an ancient copy of the Law of Moses. They claim it is a copy of the one made at the time of the colonization.

You might be wondering at this stage what the Samaritan Scroll has to do with the Siloam Inscription. Well, scholars have suggested that the script of the ancient Samaritan Scroll is of the same general style as the script of the Siloam Inscription. This again disproves the argument which claims the Pentateuch was not completed until long after 400 B.C. Knowledge of ancient Hebrew styles show that the Siloam Inscription was written in the old pre-exilic Hebrew and reveals a great affinity with the Samaritan Scroll.

Another priceless piece of evidence was found some years ago in the Hinnom Valley near Jerusalem. Thousands of items of pottery and jewellery were discovered in burial caves by archaeologists. Among some of these precious objects were two silver charms, dating to about 600 B.C., made of fine silver and rolled up to be worn as neck charms. These little silver charms, though partly damaged, contain the oldest biblical inscription ever discovered. It is a quotation from the Book of Numbers:

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

(Numbers 6:24-26)

03

THE EARTH CONTINUES TO BRING FORTH TRUTH!

The word archaeology is composed of two Greek words: *Archaios* meaning old or ancient, and *Logos* meaning word, treatise or study. A literal translation is *the study of antiquity*. The dictionary defines archaeology as the scientific study of material remains such as fossils, relics monuments and artefacts of past human life and activities. There is also documentary evidence which can be written documents that confirm history directly or indirectly.

The discipline of archaeology is a relative newcomer among the physical sciences, but, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the many exciting and dramatic archaeological discoveries brought forth from the ancient Middle East over the last few decades have provided much substantial proof for the accuracy and historical reliability of the Old and New Testament documents.

Much of this evidence has been recorded in numerous books by some of the world's leading archaeologists. The renowned expert on ancient manuscripts, and former director and principle librarian of the British Museum, Sir Frederic Kenyon, described the important contribution archaeology has made in establishing the authority and historic value of the Bible in the following words:

It is therefore legitimate to say that, in respect of that part of the Old Testament against which the disintegrating criticism of the last half of the nineteenth century was chiefly directed, the evidence of archaeology has been to re-establish its authority,

and likewise to augment its value by rendering it more intelligible through a fuller knowledge of its background and setting. Archaeology has not yet said its last word; but the results already achieved confirm what faith would suggest, that the Bible can do nothing but gain from an increase of knowledge.

And William F Albright, Professor of Semitic Languages and known for his reputation as one of the greatest archaeologists, states:

There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of the Old Testament tradition... We may rest assured that the consonantal text of the Hebrew Bible, though not infallible, has been preserved with an accuracy perhaps unparalleled in any other Near Eastern literature.

Below and in the following chapters I have presented a small sample of these many fantastic discoveries by the most eminent archaeologists of our time, and the implications that these finds have had on authenticating the reliability of biblical history. However, in these chapters we are proving the historical reliability of the Bible and not its divine inspiration. This will be covered in other parts of this book.

DISPERSION AT TOWER OF BABEL

Indeed, archaeology has not yet said its last word! The story of the dispersion at the Tower of Babel, and the confusion of all languages, is one of the most captivating stories in the Bible. To the surprise of many critics, and Bible scholars alike, this apparently impossible story has been verified through additional

archaeological discoveries unearthed in the ruins of ancient Babylon over the last few decades.

The tower was originally built by Nimrod, the first king of Babylon and founder of several city states. The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, or Babylon, and under his rule the first united attempt to create a one-world government and religion was performed.

The building of the tower was probably intended as a temple to worship the stars and Moon. In essence, it was to serve as an astrological observatory. Indeed, many centuries later when God pronounced further judgement on Babylon through the prophet Isaiah, He said that she had laboured with sorceries and astrology from her youth; indicating that these were practiced in Babylon from her very beginning.

These people had united together in sinful pride against God Almighty in an attempt to “reach the heavens,” so the Lord scattered them from there over all the Earth:

Now the whole earth had one language and the same words, and as they migrated from the east, they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.” And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.”

The Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which mortals had built. And the Lord said, “Look, they are one people, and they have one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come let us go down, and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another’s speech.” So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth and they left off building the city. Therefore it was called Babel,

because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth.

(Genesis 11:1-10)

Nebuchadnezzar's Inscription Verifies Biblical Account

Recent archaeological discoveries revealed that hundreds of years after the destruction of the Tower of Babel, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon set out to rebuild its base in honour of the Chaldean gods. Since its destruction this magnificent construction was reduced from its original height to leave only the base of the tower remaining.

Seton Lloyd, an archaeologist of the University of London, said that the heat had been so great that in many cases the brickwork had actually melted in the forms of huge vitrified lumps. This fact may suggest that God used a great amount of heat to destroy the tower. King Nebuchadnezzar set about to resurface the base of the ancient ruins at great expense.

Archaeologists also found an inscription written by Nebuchadnezzar which describes the king's accomplishments and how he restored the lower platform of the tower. A French professor by the name of Oppert translated the inscription into French; and later it was translated into English by geologist and archaeological excavator, William Loftus. On the inscription the king makes reference to the tower in the Chaldean language. Remarkably, the word he used to describe the ancient platform is *Barzippa*, which literally means *tongue tower*.

Nebuchadnezzar goes on to confirm the exact account of this extraordinary historical event recorded by Moses in the Book of Genesis. It says: "A former king built it, but he did not complete its head. Since a remote time, people had abandoned it, without order expressing their words."

This inscription discovered in ancient Iraq provides incredible confirmation of how God prevented the original builders from completing the top of the Tower of Babel as recorded by Moses in the Book of Genesis. Nebuchadnezzar admits how his ancestors lost their ability to express themselves. They stopped building because they were unable to communicate to each other!!!

Furthermore, scientists who study the origin of languages have reached the conclusion that the many languages and dialects which exist in the world today can be traced back to one original language. Professor Alfredo Trombetti of the Bologna Institute claims that he can prove that all languages have one common origin.

THE UNIVERSAL FLOOD

Now the earth was corrupt in Gods sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw that the earth was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its ways upon the earth. And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; now I am going to destroy them along with the earth. Make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch...

For my part, I am going to bring a flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you..." Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

(Genesis 6:11-15,17-19,22)

The Bible's account of the Universal Flood, which literally wiped out the whole human and animal species, is without doubt the most controversial passage of Scripture. While there are still some scientists who deny the possibility of a global flood, much evidence has come to light from all over the planet that at one period in the past water did indeed cover the surface of the Earth. Archaeologists have also discovered numerous tablets of various ancient peoples of the Middle East who left a full account of the event, similar to the account given in Genesis:

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. The rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights...

The flood continued forty days on the earth; and the waters increased and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. The waters swelled and increased greatly on the earth; and the ark floated on the face of the waters. The waters swelled so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered... and all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, domestic animals, wild animals, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all human beings; everything on dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died.

(Genesis 7:11-13, 17-20, 21-23)

But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and all the domestic animals that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided; the fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained, and the waters gradually receded from the earth. At the end of one hundred and fifty days the waters had abated; and in the seventh month on the seventeenth

day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountain of Ararat.

(Genesis 8:1-5)

So Noah went out with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives. And every animal, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out of the ark by families.

(Genesis 8:18-20)

It is not difficult to imagine that such a devastating event would show up in the history and literature of ancient cultures and peoples. Scholars have discovered a number of extraordinary flood stories in the histories of almost every race throughout the continent which show amazing parallels with the Bible's account. One account comes from the Sumerians of south Mesopotamia, a culture which came into being soon after the Flood.

There are tablets also from the Eblaite society in Syria and the Babylonians, who were much later. In addition, there are Hindu, Japanese, Persian, Chinese, and Tibetan records of the same event. The famous French archaeologist Andre Parrot expressed his belief in how difficult it would be to doubt that such detailed and persistent records have a factual basis. He declared: "The memory of it remained vividly in man's mind as well as in Mesopotamia as in Palestine."

The Sumerian Account

The Sumerian Tablet consists of eighteen lines and gives the names of the ten kings who reigned before the Flood. Another mentions the name of the last king and those before him. Then it says, "*The flood came up,*" the exact wording of Genesis seven. This also confirms that the greater quantity of water came up from the oceans rather than as rain coming from the clouds. This tablet also gives a list of post-Flood cities and kings.

It is fascinating to know that all those cities described in Genesis chapter ten, unknown until recently, have been excavated by archaeologists. This again greatly proves the biblical account as a literal fact in pre-historic times. It could not have been written later when these separate independent city-states had united into one empire.

The Babylonian Account

The Babylonian account of the Flood is recorded on various tablets uncovered in the old city-states of Mesopotamia. It is evident that some of these tablets contain some deviations and omissions, while a number of the historical characters have become gods in the conception of their narrators.

Variations also in the different versions indicates the stories were passed on orally before being recorded in the Babylonian Tablets. However, these archaeological discoveries display astonishing parallels with the Bible and provide compelling evidence that this global cataclysm truly occurred.

The Epic of Gilgamesh

The British Museum of London holds an ancient Babylonian clay tablet, dating from 2200 B.C., known as *The Deluge Tablet*. The tablet is actually one of twelve which are part of a long poem called *Epic of Gilgamesh*. It records the story of a flood that was given to the legendary hero *Gilgamesh* by an older relative called *Nuh-napishtim*, the Babylonian name for Noah.

It is interesting to note that the Deluge Tablet also bears striking similarities to the Flood account recorded in the Book of Genesis. The Deluge Tablet describes the Flood as a punishment from the gods in response to the awful violence and corruption of humankind on the Earth, and says that Noah and his family exited

from the ark in the area of Mount Ararat and was commanded to build a boat for his family and a variety of animals.

In addition, both the Genesis account and the Deluge Tablet say that several birds were sent out to determine the external conditions, the final bird never returning, and that the survivors rested on a mountain top and left the ark to offer sacrifices to God. The Deluge Tablet says that Nuh-napishtim, also known as *Atrahasis*, started to repopulate the Earth in the area of Mesopotamia, and that the gods made a promise never to destroy humanity again by means of a flood:

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth."

(Genesis 9:8-12)

For those who do not believe the Bible to be inspired by God, these similarities in the Flood account, and the fact that the Epic was written earlier than the Book of Genesis, is proof that the biblical account is no more than a myth adapted from earlier accounts. However, such similarities are not proof that the biblical account is adapted from earlier accounts, but are due to both accounts going back to a common source.

The Epic of Gilgamesh, and many other accounts of the Flood story, displays the kind of distortion and embellishment to be expected when a historical account is recast to fit a polytheistic worldview. In the ancient Near East the rule is that simple accounts or traditions give rise to elaborate legends, but not the reverse. An example of such legendary development can be seen

when we compare the oldest known creation account outside the Bible – the *Ebla Tablet* – with the Babylonian record.

The Ebla version predates the Babylonian account by over six-hundred years and is strikingly similar to the account given by Moses in the Book of Genesis. It speaks of one Being who created the heavens, the Moon, the stars and the Earth. The tablet also shows a belief in creation out of nothing. It says: “Lord of heaven and earth; the earth was not, you created it, the light of day you created it, the morning light you had not (yet) made exist.”

The Blundell Prism

Another piece of valuable evidence unearthed in ancient Iraq is the *Blundell Prism*, named after the man who gave it to the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. The tablet is written in the cuneiform script, which was developed by the Sumerian people in around 3000 B.C. The writings on the prism record the names of the rulers of central and southern Iraq, known in ancient times as *Akkad* and *Sumer*, which later became Babylon.

The list begins with kings before the Flood and shows amazing parallels with the earlier sections of Genesis. The prism also contains close parallels with the biblical Flood story and the genealogies in Genesis five and eleven. The long life spans given in the Bible, which began to decrease after the Flood, are remarkably comparable to those in the inscription on the Blundell Prism.

BACKGROUND OF THE PATRIARCHS

While the lives of the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, do not present the same difficulties that the earlier chapters of Genesis present, they were for a long time considered by many historians to be artificial creations of Israelite scribes during the

monarch period, or tales told around Israelite campfires during the centuries that followed. But now this thinking has all been changed as a result of the many archaeological discoveries over the last few decades.

A large quantity of inscriptional material brought forth from a small archive of legal and social texts in the area of northern Iraq shows that the patriarchal stories fit perfectly into the background of that age. These fantastic finds reveal that the many peculiar customs which appear in the biblical stories prevailed in the world in which the Patriarchs are set. As a result it can no longer be said that the Genesis accounts of the career of Abraham and his descendants are untrustworthy and unhistorical.

Introduction to the Nuzi Tablets

In the year 1925 over 1,000 clay tablets were found during the excavation of an ancient site in Mesopotamia, known today as *Yorgan Tepe*. Additional diggings brought forth hundreds more tablets which revealed the ancient site as *Nuzi*, belonging to the Nuzians. These people were actually *Hurrians*, known as the *Horrites* in the biblical texts, and are now known as *Armenoid*, non Indo-Europeans, who flourished in the fifteen and fourteen hundreds B.C. Even though the Patriarchs were not of the Nuzian race, their cultures were very alike due to the similar time and place.

The Nuzian Tablets, written around 1500 B.C. in the cuneiform script, elucidate many of the customs which were typical of the time of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but not of Israelite life in the first millennium. In fact, some of the patriarchal episodes mentioned in the Old Testament seem unusual even to the later Israelites themselves, but the finds at Nuzi have thrown much light on the subject. Below are just a few examples.

Rachael Steals Father's Doll

When Jacob and his family left the home of Laban to return to the land of Canaan, his wife Rachael stole her father's family image and hid it in her tent. When Laban discovered this, he pursued Jacob and after a long journey came upon them. For a long time commentators have been puzzled as to why Laban would go to such great trouble to recover these idols that he could so easily have replaced. However, this unusual event has been explained by a similar custom described on a Nuzi tablet.

The text records an instance of a son-in-law who possessed the family images and had the right to lay legal claim to his father-in-law's property. This fact would certainly explain the episode in the Book of Genesis and fits the background of the account into the early period when the Patriarchs lived and not 1,000 years later, as some suppose, when such customs were unknown.

Siring Legitimate Children

The Nuzi documents also speak of other customs mentioned in the Law of Moses that were common in the second millennium B.C. and not in the first. For example, the documents speak of siring legitimate children by handmaidens, such as Abraham by Hagar, and later Jacob's wives by their two servants.

Today we know that this custom was not so unusual during the age of the Patriarchs because a Nuzi marriage contract from that period mentions a bride, Kelim-ninu, who promised in written form to give Shennima, her slave-girl, as a second wife if she should fail to give her husband children. This strange custom is not found in any other period besides the patriarchal age.

Adopting an Heir

It was also a custom among the Nuzians for childless couples to adopt a son who would serve them as long as they lived, and in exchange for his service the adopted son would become the heir. But if the couple should have a son after the adoption, the other must yield to the real son the right to be the chief heir. This sheds much light on God's answer to Abraham in Genesis:

But Abraham said, "O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abraham said, "You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir." But the word of the Lord came to him. "This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir."

(Genesis 15:2-5)

Why Isaac Did Not Take Back His Blessing

Another episode from the Book of Genesis which has long puzzled commentators is the fact that Isaac did not take back his blessing from Jacob when he discovered he had deceived him. This has been explained through another Nuzi tablet which tells us that such an oral declaration, as that from Isaac to his son Jacob, is perfectly legal and binding.

The tablet records a lawsuit involving a woman who was to marry a man but his brother contested the marriage and won the case because his father had orally promised the woman to him. Such oral statements carried a very different weight in that period than they do today and were considered serious matters and irrevocable. This explains why Isaac was prepared to maintain his promise even though Jacob had extorted the blessing through false pretence.

Arranged Marriages

Other Nuzi Texts have shown that a bride was chosen for a son by his father, as Abraham did for Isaac; that a man had to pay a dowry to his father-in-law, as Jacob had to do; that a bride received a slave girl from her father, as did Rachael and Leah; and that the theft of family idols was punishable by death to the one found in possession of the object, which would explain why Jacob consented to the death of the one with whom the stolen gods of Laban were found.

Due to these and the many other fantastic discoveries produced by archaeology over the years, most competent scholars and serious historians have let go of the old critical theory that the patriarchal events of Genesis are just tales told around Israelite campfires during the monarch period of Israel's history.

As long as there was nothing more than just ancient manuscripts available to evaluate the ancient customs and histories of the Genesis narratives, such a view might have been persuasive to some. But due to the rapid accumulation of archaeological data supporting the reliability and historicity of patriarchal tradition, it is no longer possible to reject the accuracy and authenticity of the biblical narratives.

Moreover, this data not only leads us to have confidence in the historical teaching of Scripture, but also in its spiritual teaching as well. If people are convinced that the Bible is reliable in historical matters, they will most likely accept its teaching on spiritual issues too, which is of much greater importance.

ARE THE KINGS OF ISRAEL REAL?

Only fifty years ago it was the fashion among biblical historians and secular scholars to totally reject the historical accuracy of the Bible, because they claimed that the Scriptures made mention of

numerous kings and individuals that were not confirmed by any other historical or archaeological records.

These so-called *minimalist* scholars accepted only the minimum of information found in the Bible and rejected all the rest, unless it could be established by some other non-biblical evidence.

First of all, insistence on external proof in this way is totally unreasonable, since only a small portion of what was made or written in ancient times can be expected to have survived to this day. Second, it is an absurd way to approach the study of any subject, especially the Bible, since it has been vindicated more than any other ancient book by the increasing discoveries of archaeology, and Israel's kings are no exception.

In fact, recent archaeological investigations have totally demolished the position of those who reject the biblical account of Israel's kings, especially of King David and his son Solomon. In 1993 a remarkable inscription from a stele was found during an excavation of the northern site of the ancient town of Dan. Fragments from the stele contain the first recognized extra-biblical reference to King David ever found.

The fact that the inscription refers not simply to David, but to the *house of David*, the dynasty of the great king, makes it even more important. The inscription dates to the ninth century B.C. and was discovered at a time when critics were insisting that David and Solomon were mere imaginary characters.

The Moabite Stone

Another stone slab of over three feet tall was found near Dibon, east of the Dead Sea, referred to as the *Moabite Stone*, or the *Mesha Stele*. Inscribed on this stone are the accomplishments of Mesha, king of Moab, in around 850 B.C., and it is one of the earliest finds that make mention of the kings of Israel. The stone says that King Omri and his son Ahab humbled Moab for many

years, but after Ahab's death, King Mesha triumphed over Ahab's family and Israel perished forever.

In addition to the Moabite Stone, Omri's name appears on the rock inscriptions of three kings of Assyria, the annals of both *Tiglath-Pileser III* and *Sargon II*, and the *Black Obelisk of King Shalmanesser III*.

Isaiah Mentions Rival King

Even though Sargon king of Assyria was unknown for some time, the historical Books of the Bible were vindicated when his palace was found revealing a wall painting of the battle mentioned in Isaiah chapter 20:

In the year that the commander-in-chief, who was sent by King Sargon of Assyria, came to Ashdod and fought against it and took it.

(Isaiah 20:1-2)

Assyrian Kings Invade Israel and Record Victories

Much was learned of the Assyrian conquests mentioned in Scripture when thousands of tablets were found in the palace of Ashurbanipal, son of Esarhaddon. Several of these records greatly confirm the Bible's incredible accuracy, as every reference to an Assyrian king and the kings of Israel has been proven correct.

In 1846 the great archaeologist and explorer Austen Henry Layard discovered an incredible black obelisk in the ruins of ancient Nimrud, the capital of the ancient Assyrian Empire that conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C.

This four-sided-six-and-a-half-foot-high inscription recorded the conquest of the Assyrian king *Shalmaneser III* over numerous foreign kingdoms, including King Jehu of Israel in 841 to 814 B.C.

King Jehu of Israel was among those who saved his life by paying tribute to the Assyrians. This payment is not recorded in the Bible, but is found in The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser and adds greatly to our knowledge of biblical figures. Moreover, the obelisk refers to Jehu as the son of Omri, indicating their awareness that his dynasty traced back to Omri, again confirming the accuracy of the Book of Kings.

Sennacherib's Record of Jerusalem Siege

Among the most interesting of the Assyrian invasions is Sennacherib's record of the siege of Jerusalem in 701 B.C., mentioned in the Book of Isaiah:

In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, King Sennacherib of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. The king of Assyria sent the Rabshakeh from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem, with a great army.

(Isaiah 36:1-2a)

King Hezekiah knew that the Assyrians would respond to his refusal to pay tribute to them and so began to prepare his country for war. Of all his preparations, Hezekiah's tunnel is the most famous. Thousands of Sennacherib's men died and the rest were scattered when they attempted to take Jerusalem, as the prophet Isaiah had foretold:

Thus says the Lord: "Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have reviled me. I myself will put a spirit in him, so

that he shall hear a rumor, and return to his own land; I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.”

(Isaiah 37:6-8)

However, not to admit defeat, the boastful king found a way to make himself sound victorious over Hezekiah. On a six-sided, fifteen inch baked clay prism he recorded: “As to Hezekiah, the Jew, he did not submit to my yoke. I laid siege to 46 of his strong cities, walled forts and to the countless small villages in their vicinity. I conquered them by means of well-stamped earth-ramps and battering rams brought near to the walls... I drove out of them 200... people, young and old, male and female.”

King Solomon’s Tribute

Some have said that the tribute King Solomon received at the height of his empire was a complete exaggeration until the finds at Ebla proved the opposite. From a defeated king of Mari alone, a tribute of 1,000 pounds of silver and 880 pounds of gold was exacted on one occasion alone. This makes the 666 talents of gold exacted by Solomon from his entire empire seem small in comparison.

Jehoiachin’s Ration Discovered in Babylon

In the Book of Kings we read that the Chaldean king, Evil-Merodach, released King Jehoiachin of Judah from house arrest and provided him with a regular allowance and treated him kindly:

In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the year Evil-Merodach became king of Babylon, he released Jehoiachin from prison on the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month. He spoke kindly to him and gave him a seat of honour higher than those of the older kings

who were with him in Babylon. So Jehoiachin put aside his prison clothes and for the rest of his life ate regularly at the king's table. Day by day the king gave Jehoiachin a regular allowance as long as he lived.

(2Kings 25:27-30)

Despite the astronomical odds against finding evidence of such a providence, a cuneiform tablet found in Babylon's famous *Hanging Gardens* reads: "For Jehoiachin, king of the land of Judah, for the five sons of the king of the land of Judah, and for eight Judeans, each one half sila of grain."

Shishak's Record Mentions Abraham

The Old Testament records that five years after the death of Solomon, an Egyptian army led by Pharaoh Shishak swept into the land of Judea and came up against Jerusalem because they had been unfaithful to the Lord their God:

Shishak king of Egypt attacked Jerusalem in the fifth year of King Rehoboam. With twelve hundred chariots and sixty thousand horsemen and the innumerable troops of Libyians, Sukkites and Cushites that came with him from Egypt, he captured the fortified cities of Judah and came as far as Jerusalem.

(2 Chronicles 12:2-5)

The Bible gives us an idea of the pressure the Egyptians placed on Jerusalem during the invasion, but archaeology adds much more detail. On the walls of the great temple of Karnak in Upper Egypt King Shishak had a picture carved of himself smiting the Asiatics in the presence of the god Amon, who, with a goddess, is depicted as presenting to him ten lives of captives. Each of these captives symbolized a town or locality that Shishak had defeated during his campaign.

The biblical account implies that only Judah was affected, but this list adds more detail and includes cities from all over Palestine. Interestingly, the relief makes a reference to the field of Abram, which probably refers to the area of Hebron. If this means anything, it would be the first non-biblical source to confirm Abraham's connection with a town in Palestine! As the Psalmist correctly prophesied:

*Truth shall spring out of the earth and righteousness shall
look down from heaven.*

(Psalm 85:11)

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THE EXODUS AND CONQUEST OF PALESTINE

The biblical record in the Book of Exodus, which describes the supernatural deliverance of the Jewish nation from their bondage in Egypt, is certainly one of the most miraculous accounts in the whole Bible. When we consider the nature of this event and the miracles surrounding it, it is very easy to understand why so many critics have written it off as pure myth with no historical basis.

But very few people are aware of the fact that we have numerous authentic records and ancient inscriptions that provide overwhelming evidence for these highly unusual historical events. *The New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology*, that was written by a number of experts from various fields, repeatedly shows how the biblical history of the events recorded in the Book of Exodus has been vindicated over and over by the many archaeological discoveries of the ancient world.

In this chapter we will examine a small portion of these discoveries that include some very important historical records and ancient inscriptions, which not only provide irrefutable evidence and confirmation for the extraordinary events recorded in the Book of Exodus, but for the other historical Books of our Bible also. We will start with how the sons of Israel came to be slaves in the land of Egypt.

Now is the time to open up your Bibles and read this beautiful story in the last chapters of Genesis. Jacob's sons had gone to get food in Egypt during a terrible famine in the land of Canaan. Joseph their brother had become prime minister there because he found favour with Pharaoh.

The first chapter of the Book of Exodus opens by saying that a Pharaoh arose who did not know Joseph:

Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. He said to his people, "Look the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase and, in the event of war, join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land."

(Exodus 1:8-11)

Who Was Pharaoh of the Exodus?

One of the most interesting questions about this Old Testament historical event is who might have been the Pharaoh at the time of the Exodus. To put the issue in perspective it must be pointed out that there are two generally accepted propositions among biblical scholars for the Exodus date.

The first places the event in the fifteenth century B.C., and the other in the thirteenth century B.C. Although both dates have much biblical and secular historical evidence to argue their case, a literal reading of the Old Testament places the Exodus of the Jewish people from the land of Egypt in the middle of the fifteenth century B.C.

In the four hundred eightieth year after the Israelites came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, he began to build the house of the Lord.

(1 Kings 6:1)

Although this passage does not specifically mention the Pharaoh of the Exodus by name, it does tell us the exact date the Exodus occurred. The Scripture says that Solomon began building the

Temple in the fourth year of his reign, 480 years after the Exodus. Most secular and biblical scholars agree that the fourth year of Solomon's reign was 967 B.C. When we add these dates together it can be mathematically concluded from a literal reading of the Book of Kings that the Exodus occurred in 1447 B.C. circa. Those who put the Exodus at a later date dismiss this date and argue that the Old Testament, an ancient Near Eastern Book, often uses numbers quite differently from a modern chronology. They conclude that the 480 years in the Book of Kings may be understood as a symbolic number.

While it is true that the Bible does use different literary devices, the context, however, usually dictates whether a term should be taken literally or figuratively. In his popular book, *Moses And The Gods Of Egypt*, Professor Emeritus J.J Davis made a valid point when he wrote:

At stake here is the locus of authority. The Bible speaks very clearly to the issue of the date of the Exodus, and if these statements represent revelatory authority then they are reliable and should constitute the foundation for chronological thought. If these dates are not found to be reliable, then all biblical numbers and chronological notices can be regarded as suspect.

When we accept the biblical date for the Exodus from a literal reading of 1 Kings, we find that all the archaeology of the Middle East falls perfectly into place and provides compelling evidence for the accuracy of every event which describes the liberation of the Jewish people from Egypt and their entrance into the land of Canaan.

According to *Exodus 7:7* Moses was eighty years old when he spoke to Pharaoh. By adding 80 years to the date of the Exodus, which took place in 1447 B.C., we are given 1527, the

approximate year in which Moses was born. The ruler of Egypt at that time was Pharaoh Thutmose I. According to the Bible this was the man who gave the command that every son born to the Hebrews should be cast into the river to be destroyed:

Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every boy that is born to the Hebrews you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live."

(Exodus 1:22)

Fearing for her child's life, the mother of Moses hid him in a basket in the reeds along the bank of the Nile River. While Pharaoh's daughter was walking along the riverside she found the infant and adopted him as her own son. Here is how Moses tells the story:

The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river, she saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maids to bring it. When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying and she took pity on him. "This must be one of the Hebrews' children" she said. Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?"

Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "yes" So the girl went and called the child's mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed it. When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses because she said, "I drew him out of the water."

(Exodus 2:5-11)

Evidence Reveals Queen Hatshepsut as Moses' Mother

The biblical description of how Moses was rescued from the river by Pharaoh's daughter is very intriguing, since it has many parallels with the known character of Queen Hatshepsut, who reigned in Egypt from 1504 to 1483.

According to historical records she was the only child who survived past infancy of Pharaoh Thutmose I and his queen wife, Ahmose. The king, however, had sons by secondary wives, one of whom was Thutmose II. In accordance with Egyptian customs at the beginning of Dynasty 18, Thutmose II married his half-sister Hatshepsut, who was of royal blood by both parents, in order to secure his legal right to the throne.

History tells us that even though her husband became Pharaoh, Hatshepsut was really in power and became one of Egypt's greatest rulers. She was known as a strong-willed woman who let nothing or nobody stand in her way. Instead of slipping into the background she took full control of affairs and crowned herself queen of Egypt not long after her husband's death.

A fascinating detail by G. Robins of how women of royal birth were titled in Dynasty 18 proves that Hatshepsut was the only woman in 1527 B.C., the date of Moses' birth, who could have had the title, "*Pharaoh's daughter*," the precise name the Bible designates to the person who saved the child Moses from destruction. Robins wrote:

Women of royal birth can be identified by the use of the title "*Kings daughter*," since there is no evidence in the 18th Dynasty of women who are known to have had non royal parents being given this title. This rules out the possibility that this title was sometimes awarded to enhance the status of non-royal women...

Egyptian records show that Thutmose II and Queen Hatshepsut had a daughter but no sons. But Pharaoh Thutmose II had a son by a secondary wife, Thutmose III. He became the next Pharaoh after his father died and co-reigned with his stepmother Hatshepsut until her death. We are told that Thutmose III hated Hatshepsut and that after she died he tried to erase her name from all Egyptian monuments but was not successful.

Thutmose III himself became a great conquer but never made any conquests under Queen Hatshepsut, as evidence reveals she did them herself. Josephus recorded that she made Prince Moses her commander and that he led the military forces for her.

Moses Flees to Midian

Queen Hatshepsut died in 1483 B.C. during the reign of Thutmose III. This would be the Pharaoh described in the Bible whom Moses fled from after he had slain the Egyptian slave driver. He fled to the desert until the king had died and his son Amenhotep II succeeded to the throne:

One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and saw their forced labour. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his kinsfolk. He looked this way and that, and seeing no one he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. When he went out the next day, he saw two Hebrews fighting; and he said to the one who was in the wrong, "Why do you strike your fellow Hebrew?"

He answered, "Who made you a ruler and judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid and thought, "Surely the thing is known." When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh. He settled in the Land of Midian.

(Exodus 2:11-16)

The New Testament tells us that Moses was forty years old when he fled from Egypt to the land of Midian, where he remained another forty years until Thutmose III had died:

When he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his relatives, the Israelites. When he saw one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian. He supposed that his kinsfolk would understand that God through him was rescuing them, but they did not understand.

The next day he came to some of them as they were quarrelling and tried to reconcile them saying, "Men you are brothers; why do you wrong each other?" But the man who was wronging his neighbour pushed Moses aside, saying, "Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?" When he heard this, Moses fled and became a resident alien in the land of Midian. There he became the father of two sons. Now when forty years had passed an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning bush.

(Acts 7:23-31)

From these Scriptures we again learn that Moses was 80 years old when he returned to Egypt to go before Pharaoh. This means he returned in around 1447 B.C., the date derived for the Exodus from a literal reading of *1Kings 6:1*.

The Egyptian chronological record shows that this corresponds with the death of Thutmose III in 1450 B.C. Moses would have returned to Egypt about three or four years into the reign of Amenhotep II; Pharaoh of the Exodus.

This person was known as a particularly proud and boastful ruler in Egyptian history, so his personality fits in well with the biblical portrayal of the Pharaoh with whom Moses and Aaron dealt with when he returned from Midian. He would also be the Pharaoh who suffered the plagues listed below, and who lost his firstborn

in God's final judgement on Egypt for his hardness of heart and refusal to respond to his Creator's instructions.

God Plagues the Egyptians

The Lord said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their task makers. Indeed, I know their suffering, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of the land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. So come I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites out of Egypt."

(Exodus 3:7-11)

Plagues Recorded by Ancient Historians

It is noteworthy that more than a century ago in the area of Memphis, near the pyramids of Saqqara, a person by the name of Anastasi discovered a very important Egyptian historical manuscript. The manuscript recorded the writings of an ancient Egyptian named Ipuwer. The papyrus scroll was translated and published in English by Professor Alan H. Gardiner for the first time in 1909, and was later acquired by the Dutch Museum of Leiden in 1928.

Gardiner stated that the ancient manuscript described a genuine historical catastrophe in Egypt and how the whole country was in distress and violence as a result. When we compare the historical events described by Ipuwer with the biblical passages quoted from the Book of Exodus, the parallels are extraordinary. The Papyrus reads:

Plague is throughout the land. Blood is everywhere...
The river is blood...

Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord commanded. In the sight of Pharaoh and of his officials he lifted up the staff and struck the water in the river, and all the water in the river was turned into blood, and the fish in the river died. The river stank so that the Egyptians could not drink its water, and there was blood throughout the whole land of Egypt.

(Exodus 7:20-22)

Men shrink from tasting... and thirst after water...

And all the Egyptians had to dig along the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink the water of the river.

(Exodus 7:24)

The fire ran along the ground... there was hail and fire mingled with the hail... trees are destroyed. No fruit or herbs are found...

Then Moses stretched out his staff toward heaven, and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and fire came down on the earth.. And the Lord rained hail on the land of Egypt; there was hail with fire flashing continually in the midst of it, such heavy hail as had never fallen in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation The hail struck down everything that was in the open field throughout all the land of Egypt, both human and animals; the hail also struck down all the plants of the field, and shattered every tree in the field.

(Exodus 9:23-26)

The land is not light...

So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was dense darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days. People could not see each other, and for three days they could not move from where they were.

(Exodus 10:22-24)

All animals their hearts weep... Cattle moan...

And on the next day the Lord did so; all the livestock of the Egyptians died, but of the livestock of the Israelites not one died.

(Exodus 9:6-7)

He who places his brother in the ground is everywhere. The children of princes are cast out into the streets...

It is groaning that is throughout the land, mingled with lamentation...

At midnight the Lord struck down all the first-born in Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh who sat on the throne, to the first-born of the prisoner who was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of the livestock. Pharaoh and all his officials and all the Egyptians got up during the night and there was loud wailing in Egypt for there was not a house without someone dead.

(Exodus 12:29-31)

Another ancient historian, Diodorus Siculus, a Greek from Agyrium in Sicily, who lived from 80 B.C. until his death in 20 B.C., makes references to the Exodus and the plagues on Egypt under the leadership of Moses. He reported:

In ancient times there happened a great plague in Egypt and many ascribed the cause of it to God who was offended with them because there were many strangers in the land, by whom foreign rites and ceremonies were employed in their worship of the deity.

The Egyptians concluded; therefore, that unless all strangers were driven out of the country, they should never be freed from their miseries. Upon this, as some writers tell us, the most eminent and enterprising of those foreigners who were in Egypt, and obliged to leave the country... who retired into the province now called Judea...

These emigrants were led by Moses, who was superior to all in wisdom and prowess.

Loss of Pharaoh's First-Born

At midnight the Lord struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the prisoner who sat in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock.

(Exodus 12:29-30)

It is quite impossible to explain the slaying of Egypt's first-born without admitting it to be a powerful demonstration of the power of God. To explain away the miraculous nature of the event some have suggested that an epidemic could have had a similar outcome.

But this suggestion seems quite inadequate when we consider the impossibility for germs to choose only the houses that did not apply the blood sacrifice to their door frames, and for all to occur precisely at midnight. An event such as this is completely beyond scientific explanation. So, to further help your faith we can again

turn to archaeology, not to explain the event, but to witness that it really did happen, and what an intriguing witness was found.

In 1936 an astonishing piece of archaeological evidence was discovered between the paws of the great Sphinx Statue just outside Cairo. After clearing away the sand from between the paws down to the brick pavement, a great memorial stone was discovered that recorded how Pharaoh's eldest son did not come to the throne but that his younger brother did instead.

The Pharaoh who succeeded to the throne was Thutmose IV, who according to Egyptian history was not the next heir. His eldest brother was not only the eldest son of Amenhotep II, but was of royal blood by both parents.

Thutmose IV placed this memorial stone at the chest of the sphinx between its front legs and recorded on the slab how one day, long before his father's death, he had fallen asleep in the shade of the sphinx and the sun-god, which the sphinx represented, spoke to him in a dream.

He told Thutmose that one day he would come to the throne and that when he was king of Egypt he must honour the God who foretold his succession. He was to clear away the sand and record the fulfilment of the prophecy.

This amazing archaeological find is certainly a powerful witness to the biblical story of the Exodus and the slaying of the first-born of the Egyptians, but there are many other remarkable instances where Egyptian history fits in precisely with the historical events recorded in the pages of the Old Testament. Below are a few more examples.

The Israelites Slave in Egypt

It has often been said that there is no existing evidence in either Egypt or Palestine that records the Israelite slavery in Egypt or their invasion of Canaan. These claims have been completely

disproved by further archaeological discoveries in the Middle East during the last century.

Egyptologists discovered from the tomb of Rekhmire, high officer under Thutmose III, ancient Egyptian murals which show foreign slaves making bricks and being exploited by task makers. These murals contain the words, “*You are lazy,*” “*You are lazy,*” the exact words spoken by Pharaoh to the Hebrew brick makers in the Book of Exodus.

The Canaanites’ Cry for Help to Egypt!

Another striking archaeological discovery comes from the *Tel Amarna Tablets*, that provide the first evidence of the Hebrew tribes entering into the land of Canaan in ancient times. Tel Amarna was in ancient Egypt near the Nile river between Memphis and Thebes. About four-hundred cuneiform tablets were discovered at this site that were part of the royal archives of Pharaoh Akhenaten, who reigned in Egypt not long after the Exodus took place.

This king introduced monotheism in Egypt and was labelled a heretic for doing so. It is very likely he came to believe in Jehovah, the God of Israel. Why do I say this? Well on these Tel Amarna Tablets were letters written to the Pharaoh of Egypt by various kings dwelling in Canaan and Syria. One major problem was the *Hapiru* (Hebrews) who were taking over their lands. The Bible speaks of these conquests and the fear the Israelites brought about in the whole country:

The time that the Israelites had lived in Egypt was four hundred thirty years. At the end of four hundred thirty years, on that very day, all the companies of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt. That was for the Lord a night of vigil, to bring them out of the land of Egypt.

(Exodus 12:40-42)

So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as they heard the sound of the trumpets, they raised a great shout, and the wall fell down flat; so the people charged straight ahead into the city and captured it.

(Joshua 6:20-21)

So Joshua defeated the whole land, the hill country and the Negeb and the lowlands and the slopes, and all their kings; he left no one remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed.

(Joshua 10:40)

When King Jabin of Hazor heard of this, he sent to king Jobab of Madon, to the king of Shimron, to the king of Achshaph, and to the kings who were in the northern hill country, and in the Arabah south of Chinneroth, and in the lowland, and in Naphtod on the west, so the Canaanites in the east and the west, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, and the Jebusites in the hill country, and the Hivites under Hermon in the land of Mizpah.

They came out with all their troops, a great army, in number like the sand of the sea shore, with many horses and chariots. All these kings joined their forces, and came and camped together at the waters of Merom, to fight against Israel. So Joshua came suddenly upon them with all his fighting force, by the water of Merom, and fell upon them. And the Lord handed them over to Israel, who attacked them and chased them as far as Great Sidon and Misrephothmaim, and eastward as far as the valley of Mizpeh. They struck them down, until they had left no one remaining.

(Joshua 11:1-9)

Then the people of Judah fought against Jerusalem and took it. They put it to the sword and set the city on fire.

(Judges 1:8)

We struck him down until not a single survivor was left. At that time we captured all his towns; there was no citadel that we did not take from them, sixty towns, the whole region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan.

(Deuteronomy 3:3b-5)

These Canaanite kings were pleading with the king of Egypt to send reinforcements lest they all be destroyed. The tablets also record that the invaders were approaching from trans-Jordan, the exact location described in Deuteronomy 2.

Other tablets speak of the utter devastation of the Canaanites which Joshua made. However, Pharaoh Akhenaten never did send his army to help them. The ten plagues, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the drying up of the Jordan River are good reasons why he chose not to do so. He knew by then that no Pharaoh could fight against the God of Israel. Here are some extracts of these anxious letters written to Pharaoh Akhenaten.

An extract from Jerusalem says:

The strong arm of the king seizes the land of Nahrima and the land of Cush; but now the Hapiru are seizing the cities of the king! There is not a single governor left to the king; all are lost...

The King of Sidon complains:

Behold all my cities which Pharaoh has given into my hands, have fallen into the hands of the Hebrews...

From Gezer:

Now the Hapiru are prevailing over us, so may the king my lord, take me away from the land of the Hapiru, so that the Hapiru will not destroy us...

The King of Gebal wrote:

He has conquered beyond the land of the Ammonites.
The city of Sidon has submitted to the occupation of
his allies. The lands are for this Hebrew, so none is a
friend to me...

More indisputable evidence reveals a letter found in Pharaoh's library which actually makes mention of Joshua. It reads: "As my lord the king lives, Job is not in Pella. For two months he has been hiding. Ask why from Benjamin, ask why from Joshua."

This letter is from the prince of Pella to the Canaanite Yanhamu, who was the Egyptian commissioner for Palestine and Syria. The prince of Pella denies that he has hidden Job the prince of Ashtaroth (in Bashan) who was wanted by Yanhamu for theft. The Tel Amarna Tablets are kept in the British, Berlin, and Cairo museums and are dated between 1400 and 1360 B.C.

This remarkable archaeological discovery provides abundant evidence for the historical accuracy of the Old Testament's account of the entrance of the Jewish nation into Palestine and assures us that we can trust the biblical writers as true historians as well as prophets, even when they describe such miraculous events as those described above.

Ancient Greek Historians Record the Invasion

It is interesting to note that also two Greek historians, Herodotus and Strabo, discussed the Jewish Exodus from Egypt in their ancient writings. Herodotus lived in the fifth century B.C. and has long been regarded as the father of history.

In his book, *Polymnia*, he wrote of the Jews' entrance to Palestine: "This people by their own account, inhabited the coasts of the Red Sea, but migrated thence to the maritime parts of Syria, all which district, as far as Egypt, is denominated Palestine." Strabo,

a pagan historian and geographer, writing in the first century B.C., confirmed the history of the Jews and their escape from Egypt under the leadership of Moses. He wrote:

Among many things believed respecting the temple and inhabitants of Jerusalem, the report most credited is that the Egyptians were ancestors of the present Jews. An Egyptian priest named Moses, who possessed a portion of the country called lower Egypt, being dissatisfied with the institutions there, left it and came to Judea with a large body of people who worshipped the Divinity.

More Evidence of Palestine Invasion

Another important archaeological discovery which relates to this event is the *Merneptah Stele*, which dates to about 1210 B.C. The Stele is a seven-and-a-half-foot high stone inscription discovered in 1895 at Pharaoh Merneptah's temple in Thebes, Egypt. On the inscription Merneptah the king of Egypt boasts that he has destroyed his enemies in Canaan. He states: "Plundered is the Canaan with every evil; carried off is Ashkelon; seized upon is Gezer... Israel is laid waste his seed is not."

Most scholars believe that this inscription refers to a military victory over the nation of Israel at a point in time after their entry into Canaan. Before the discovery, scholars placed the date of the Exodus and entry into Palestine much later. They are now forced to admit that the nation of Israel was already in Canaan at the time of Merneptah and big and strong enough to challenge him in battle.

The Walls of Jericho Fall Down Flat!

During the excavations of Jericho between 1930 and 1936, Professor John Garstang discovered one of the most incredible confirmations of the conquest of the Promised Land recorded in the Old Testament. This find was so startling that he and two members of the team prepared a written declaration of the discovery.

In reference to the find Garstang said: “As to the main fact then, there remains no doubt; the walls fell outwards so completely that the attackers would be able to clamber up and over the ruins into the city. Why so unusual? Because the walls of cities do not fall outwards, they fall inwards.”

This fact is important because the evidence from all other archaeological digs around ancient cities in the Middle East reveal that walls always fall inwards as invading armies push their way into a city. But in the biblical account from the Book of Joshua we read:

The wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city every man straight ahead, and they took the city...

(Joshua 6:20b)

According to Professor Garstang only God could have caused the walls of Jericho to fall outward as described in Joshua’s account of the conquest of the city of Jericho.

How Could God Ordain this?

But as for the towns of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, you must not let anything that breathes remain alive. You must annihilate them... So that they may not teach you to do all the abhorrent things that they do for their gods.

(Deuteronomy 20:16-17a,18)

The total destruction of the Canaanites is one of those biblical passages over which many Bible students have stumbled. How could a loving God command that certain peoples be utterly exterminated, sparing neither sex nor age. And how are we to reconcile such harsh commands as these with the teaching of Jesus in the New Testament on mercy and love?

This severe treatment of the Canaanites has long provoked much controversy. However, God's command to Joshua can be justified when we consider some of the vile and wicked acts of these people, which included burning their babies alive to the satanic god Moleck, and the practice of unlawful homosexual acts, to mention only a few. The archaeological excavations of religious literature at Ras Sharma verifies the wickedness of the Canaanite people as recorded in the Book of Leviticus, and the blood-thirsty immoral nature of the gods they revered.

They were the Baals, and the three goddesses, *Ashtoreth*, *Ashera*, and *Anath*, known for their love for war and unlawful sexual acts. The great Evangelist and writer Reuben Archer Torrey justifies the biblical account of God's destruction of these people in this way:

There is nothing more appalling than that the iniquity of any people should have become so full, their rebellion against God so strong and so universal, their moral corruption and debasement so utter and so perverse even down to babes just born, as to make such treatment absolutely necessary in the interest of humanity...

We learn not only from the Bible but also from other sources, how unfathomable were the debts of moral pollution to which these nations had sunk. They had become a moral cancer threatening the very life of the whole human race. That cancer was to be cut in every fibre, if the body was to be saved.

Why the Exodus Is Not an Invention

The biblical account of the Exodus is absolutely fundamental not only to the Christian faith, but to the very identity and history of the Jewish race. If the Egyptian captivity and Exodus were a mere invention by an unknown creative writer, it would be impossible to imagine how such a story could be incorporated into the three annual Jewish festivals of *Passover*, *Pentecost*, and the festival of *Tabernacles*.

The Jews have celebrated these three great festivals year after year for almost 3,500 years in commemoration of their Exodus from Egypt. Therefore, it would be impossible to explain why the Jewish people would universally adopt these complicated religious regulations unless they were practiced by their ancestors and transmitted from generation to generation down through the centuries.

05

EVIDENCE FOR JONAH AND HIS UNUSUAL MINISTRY

If ever there was a Book in the Bible which is unlikely to be true, it is the Book of the prophet Jonah. Are we to understand the biblical account of Jonah's supernatural experience with the great fish and the miraculous repentance of Nineveh literally, as a historical account, or, as some sceptics declare, a myth or symbolic truth that is not based on historical facts?

Despite what many people believe there is ample proof provided through historical, archaeological, and scriptural evidence that supports the biblical account of Jonah's ministry as recorded in the Old and New Testament. The Bible declares that God called the prophet Jonah telling him to:

“Go at once to Nineveh that great city, and cry out against it, for their wickedness has come up before me.” But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid his fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and such a mighty storm came upon the sea that the ship threatened to break up. Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried to his god. They threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten it for them.

Jonah meanwhile, had gone down into the hold of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. The captain came and said to him, “What are you doing sound asleep? Get up, call on your god! Perhaps the god will spare us a thought so that we do not perish.”

The sailors said to one another, “Come let us cast lots so that we may know on whose account this calamity has come

upon us.” So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. Then they said to him, “Tell us why this calamity has come upon us. What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?” “I am a Hebrew,” he replied. “I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.”

Then the men were even more afraid, and said to him, “What is this you have done!” For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them so. Then they said to him, “What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?” For the sea was growing more and more tempestuous. He said to them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you; for I know it is because of me that this great storm has come upon you.”

Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring the ship back to land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more stormy against them. Then they cried out to the Lord, “Please O Lord, we pray, do not let us perish on account of this man’s life. Do not make us guilty of innocent blood; for you O Lord have done as it pleased you.”

So they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the Lord even more, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

(Jonah 1:1-17)

Some biblical commentators say that Jonah did not run away on a sunny cruise to the West because of fear. But he embarked on a long sea voyage to Gibraltar because if God was going to destroy this hard and cruel nation in forty days, it would take much longer to bring him back, and by that time the hated city and threat to Israel would have been destroyed.

However, God in his mercy desired to change Nineveh through repentance and a change of heart, which would involve Jonah risking his life and reputation to preach to them. But Jonah did not want the cruel Ninevites and their great city to hear about the

coming judgement, repentance and salvation, he wanted God to put an end to Israel's enemy once and for all. Nevertheless, we learn from archaeological history that Nineveh's repentance saved Israel from invasion for forty years, until Israel itself needed to repent. The disobedient prophet saved Israel as well as Nineveh from God's judgement.

God Prepares a Fish for Jonah

But the Lord provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

(Jonah 1:17)

Then the Lord spoke to the fish and it spewed Jonah out upon the dry land.

(Jonah 2:10)

Sceptics usually reject the story of Jonah on the basis that no known sea creature could possibly swallow a man whole, and the survival of a human being in the stomach of such a creature for three days is simply beyond the realm of possibility or of human experience. But in spite of what some critics assert, it may surprise you to learn that there are several well reported authentic cases of individuals being swallowed by large sea creatures and surviving to recount the tale.

The first case is of a man, Marshall Jenkins, who belonged to an eighteen-century U.S whaler. On October 14 1771 the *Boston Post Boy* newspaper reported that during a whale hunt in the south seas, a whaling vessel from the port of Edgartown Massachusetts harpooned a sperm whale that turned and attacked its pursuers throwing the crew into the sea. The crew members witnessed Jenkins being ingested by the creature and immediately chased after it. Fortunately, they managed to harpoon the large whale and

rescue the victim, who to everyone's surprise was still alive after several hours, much bruised but not seriously injured.

The second case was in 1891 in the vicinity of the Falkland Islands. One morning the lookout of the whaling ship *Star of the East* sighted a whale and eventually succeeded in harpooning it, but the creature managed to swim away at great speed dragging the small whaling boat after it.

This time the victim was James Bartley, who was thrown into the sea when the enormous whale struck the boat with great force. Later on the rest of the crew managed to kill the creature and rescue Bartley, who was still alive but unconscious, from the dead carcass. A bucket of seawater revived him but the gastric juices of the whale had turned his skin a leathery white. Bartley had been alive and breathing inside the whale for a whole day.

Several huge sea creatures, including sperm whales, blue whales, whale sharks and great white sharks, grow to such enormous size that they could easily swallow a human being whole. Fourteen different types of whales have been discovered, and the cachalot species, which frequents the Mediterranean, has been reported to swallow extremely large sized articles.

In his book, *Sixty-Three Years of Engineering*, Sir Francis Fox reported that the manager of a whaling station once reported how a sperm whale can swallow lumps of food up to eight feet wide. In one incident, after examining a large whale they found inside its stomach the skeleton of a shark almost sixteen feet long.

The third case of a man being ingested by a whale occurred in 1927 in the English Channel. *The Literary Digest* reported how a sailor fell overboard and was swallowed by a whale shark while he was attempting to harpoon it. After 48 hours the trawler fleet managed to hunt down and slay the fish rescuing the sailor from the dead carcass. He was rushed to hospital and discharged a few hours later. All the casualties mentioned above claimed that it was possible to breathe inside the creature's stomach.

In 1928 the *Daily Mail* newspaper reported the testimony of Mr G.H. Henn, who described his experience when a whale's carcass was displayed in Birmingham for a week. Henn himself was one of the twelve men who was allowed to explore inside the creature's carcass.

He described how he could move about freely inside the creature's stomach after passing through its throat. "Its throat was as large as a door" he declared, "And it would be quite easy for a whale to swallow a man." So we can conclude that the biblical account of a great fish swallowing the prophet Jonah and spewing him out alive after a few days is extremely unusual but not impossible.

Scriptural Evidence Supporting Jonah

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to him, "Teacher we wish to see a sign from you." But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it, except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so for three days and three nights the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth."

(Matthew 12:38-41)

The first thing to point out here is that the prophet Jonah is clearly a historical figure and is mentioned as so in other biblical narratives. The first reference to Jonah as a real personage is found in the historical Book of Kings. God spoke through him in the reign of the northern king of Israel, Jeroboam II. Jonah was contemporary with Hosea in about 765 B.C.

Besides this, references to Jonah by Jesus Christ provide evidence that the prophet was a historical person and that the account of his survival within the stomach of the great fish is true. In fact, Jesus compared Jonah's experience to the literal truth of His own resurrection from the dead after three days and nights. It would be

unimaginable to think that Christ could be mistaken in His identification of Jonah as a real person if he were only a myth. Our Lord also declared that on Judgement day the people of Nineveh who repented would rise and condemn a generation who did not repent at the preaching of Jesus, who was greater than Jonah.

Archaeological Evidence of Jonah's Ministry

The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying, "Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you." So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days' walk. And he cried out, "forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small put on sackcloth.

(Jonah 3:1-6)

The great ancient city of Nineveh was rediscovered in the nineteenth century after more than 2,500 years of obscurity. The archaeological discoveries of the ancient ruins of the great city prove that it was indeed an enormous city during biblical times. The re-discovery has proved to be a remarkable vindication for the Old Testament, which makes mention of Nineveh several times and dedicates the Book of Jonah and Nahum to its fate. According to renowned archaeologist Sir Austen Henry Layard, the circumference of Nineveh was exactly a three days' walk, as recorded by the prophet Jonah.

Dr Layard was a higher critic at first and was among those who believed the story of Jonah to be just a myth with a moral attached. Then Layard set out on an expedition to ancient Nineveh to excavate its ruins. Very soon his archaeological finds started to correct all the strongly asserted criticism and corrupted concepts that he himself had accepted without question. The

public were amazed when he released his famous book, *Nineveh and its Remains*, where he admitted that Nineveh was all that the Bible said it was. Layard found that Nineveh was indeed a mighty city with walls bigger than Babylon's, wide enough for four traffic lanes and providing the possibility for chariot races on them.

Bas-relief sculptures on the walls showing soldiers, chariots, shields and projectiles also reveal what a powerful culture Nineveh was. The semi-relief panel pictures which Layard unearthed at Nineveh show the Assyrians cutting off the hands of conquered people and skinning them alive. This confirms why the prophet Habakkuk described them as a hard and bitter nation. Interestingly, on one of the walls which Layard excavated is an engraving of a human being looking out of the mouth of a large fish.

Another fascinating fact is that the lost city of Nineveh was found buried beneath a pair of tells in the vicinity of Mosul in modern day Iraq. These mounds are known by their local names, *Kuyunjik* and *Nabi Yunas*, which is actually Arabic for the prophet Jonah. The lost city of Nineveh was found buried beneath an ancient tell named after the prophet Jonah!

Prior to these discoveries, sceptics scoffed at the possibility that so large a city could have existed in the ancient world and even denied its existence altogether. However, the evidence discovered by Dr Layard strongly supports the historical truth of the biblical account of Jonah and his ministry to the ancient city of Nineveh.

Why Nineveh Would Listen to a Foreign Prophet

When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

(Jonah 3:6-7)

When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he said he would bring upon them.

(Jonah 3:10)

Archaeologists also discovered in the ancient ruins of Nineveh numerous statues and bas-relief clay engravings that recorded the supreme position of a pagan deity in ancient Assyria known as Dagon. It is interesting to note that this pagan god was depicted as being a creature *partly human* and *partly a fish*. Occasionally the creature was represented in Assyrian art as a figure standing upright with the head of a fish above a human head.

The ancient Babylonian historian Berosus, writing in the third century B.C., recorded the traditions as to the origin of the Assyrian worship of the fish-man. Remarkably, at the very time of Jonah's ministry to Nineveh, the Assyrian people believed that their deity sent them messages through a special being who rose out of the sea, appearing in the form of a fish-man. This tradition helps to explain why the cruel, hard people of Nineveh would have listened to Jonah's prophetic message once they realised that he had been swallowed and vomited out of a fish.

In fact, Nineveh's repentance makes perfect sense when you consider the extraordinary nature of Jonah's arrival on the shores of the Mediterranean, and the prominence of Dagon worship in that area. Archaeologists discovered images of this fish-god at the palace entrance in the ancient city of Nineveh and also on many ancient Babylonian seals.

Orientalist Henry Clay Trumbull pointed out why the people of Nineveh would have listened to Jonah, giving the extraordinary nature of his arrival in their region:

What better heralding, as a divinely sent messenger to Nineveh, could Jonah have had, than to be thrown up out of the mouth of a great fish, in the presence of witnesses, say on the coast of Phoenicia, where the

fish-god was a favourite object of worship? Such an incident would have inevitably aroused the mercurial nature of Oriental observers, so that a multitude would be ready to follow the seemingly new avatar of the fish-god, proclaiming the story of his uprising from the sea, as he went on his mission to the city where the fish-god had its very centre of worship...

Other scholars agree with Professor Trumbell and have speculated that Jonah's appearance, no doubt bleached white from the fish's digestive acids, would not only have convinced the people of Nineveh to listen to his preaching, but would also have helped him gain admittance to the king. James Bartley's experience gives us another clue.

As I mentioned earlier, the gastric juices of the whale had turned Bartley's skin white. Jonah was three times longer in the whale's stomach than Bartley. It must have terrified the superstitious citizens of Nineveh to hear this ghastly man's message of imminent doom upon their city. Given these circumstances, Nineveh's repentance follows from a very logical progression.

A Final Word

The Bible does not actually specify what sort of marine creature swallowed Jonah. Most people have assumed that it was a cachalot or a white shark. The Hebrew of the Old Testament uses the phrase *gadowl dag*, which literally means *great fish*. The Greek of the New Testament is *Kètos*, which simply means *sea creature*.

So the Word of God says that the Lord provided a great fish to swallow up Jonah. We can conclude that God either prepared the sea creature specially for this purpose, or that He caused an existing sea creature to be there at that moment. Whatever the case, the overwhelming archaeological, scriptural and scientific

evidence we have provided in this chapter reveals that the Bible's account concerning the mystery of Jonah and his supernatural experience is a credible historical fact.

06

SECULAR EVIDENCE FOR THE HISTORICAL JESUS

Over the last few centuries many assertions have been made that the picture portrayed of Jesus Christ in the New Testament is not a factual one. These radical claims were often backed up with the assertion that there is little or no evidence in history about Him outside the Bible. In his essay, *Why I Am not a Christian*, philosopher Bertrand Russell boldly declared: “Historically, it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all, and if he did we do not know anything about him.”

One would have great difficulty today to find knowledgeable people who would agree with Russell’s claims. Many have raised questions about Christ and criticized what the Bible says about Him, but the number of those who claim Jesus never existed at all, or that if He did, we have no evidence for Him outside the New Testament, make assertions that are completely without foundation.

We have a great number of secular historians of the first century who casually refer to our Lord and the movement He founded. The fact that these casual references are usually antagonistic to Jesus and His followers makes them especially good witnesses to His ministry, since they had nothing to gain from admitting the historicity of the events surrounding the life, death and resurrection of the religious Leader whom they scorned and ridiculed.

These non-Christian writers referred to Jesus casually because it related to the incident they were writing about. Professor Emeritus at the Boston University, Howard Clark Kee, said that the results of the examination of these secular sources, that bear directly or indirectly on our knowledge of Christ, are to:

Confirm Christ's historical existence, His unusual powers, the devotion of His followers, the continued existence of the movement after His death at the hands of the Roman governor in Jerusalem, and the penetration of Christianity into the upper strata of society in Rome itself by the latter first century.

Similarly, Dr Habermas, a leading researcher and writer on the historical events surrounding Christ, concluded after much research that the ancient extra-biblical sources present a surprisingly large amount of detail concerning both the life of Jesus and the nature of early Christianity. "It is quite extraordinary," he said, "That we could provide a broad outline of the major facts of Jesus' life from secular history alone."

One particular reference to Jesus and Christianity comes from the well-known Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus (A.D. 55-120), who lived through the reigns of many Roman emperors. His most acclaimed works are the *Annals* and the *Histories*. Writing of the reign of Emperor Nero, Tacitus makes reference to the death of Jesus and the existence of Christians at Rome:

Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular.

Many biblical scholars have speculated that the “*mischievous superstition*” to which Tacitus refers is most likely a reference to the resurrection. The same is true for one of the references made by Suetonius. Cambridge lecturer Markus Bockmuehl declared that the reports of Tacitus provide us with independent confirmation that Jesus Christ lived and was formally executed in Judea in the reign of Tiberius, and during Pontius Pilate’s office as procurator.

Suetonius, another well-known Roman historian, and chief secretary to Emperor Hadrian, mentions the sect under one named Chrestus. He wrote that the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus so Hadrian expelled them from Rome. This writer, although an enemy to Christianity, still recognised its existence.

In another of his works, *The Lives of the Caesars*, Suetonius makes reference to the fire that swept through Rome in 64 A.D. under the reign of Nero: “Punishment by Nero was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition.”

Lucian of Samosata, a Greek satirist of the latter half of the second century, spoke scornfully of Christ and said He was the Man who was crucified in Palestine because He introduced a new cult called Christianity into the world. Lucian wrote of Jesus never once assuming that He or His followers were unreal or imaginary. In his work, *The Death of Peregrine*, he wrote:

The Christians you know, worship a man to this day, the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rights, and was crucified on that account.. You see, these misguided creatures start with the general conviction that they are immortal for all time, which explains the contempt of death and voluntary self-devotion which are so common among them; and then it was impressed on them by their original

lawgiver that they are all brothers, from the moment that they are all converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the crucified sage and live after his laws. All this they take quite on faith, with the result that they despise all worldly goods alike, regarding them merely as common property.

Pliny the Younger, a Roman official and governor of Bithynia in Asia Minor (A.D. 112), wrote a rather detailed report to Emperor Trajan to seek counsel as to how he must treat the Christians who refused to acknowledge the emperor as God. He explained that he had been killing so many that he wondered if he should continue to kill all who were Christians or only certain ones. Pliny goes on to say that he had made some to curse Christ. In the same letter he also describes early Christian worship practices:

They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to do any wicked deeds, never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, not to deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it.

The Testimony of a Jewish Historian

Another magnificent tribute comes from the writer Josephus, the greatest of Jewish historians. Writing about the middle of the first century, he further attests to the truth that Christ was not just an invention of the Christian Church, but a real historical figure. Flavius Josephus was born in A.D. 37 and was the son of a priest. Because Josephus was a well-educated man, he rose to a well-respected position in the Jewish community, and at the age of nineteen was led to join the Pharisee movement. Some years later

he travelled to Rome to plead before Nero for the release of some fellow priests and returned to Jerusalem greatly impressed by the great power of the Roman Empire.

As a result, he tried everything to prevent the Jewish revolt against Rome in 66 A.D., but being unable to restrain the rebellion he himself joined it and was captured by the Romans at the fall of Jotapata. However, Josephus later became friends with Vespasian, and after being released from prison he returned to Jerusalem with Titus, Vespasian's son, where he served the Roman commander as interpreter and mediator. But once again he failed to convince the Jews to surrender and in A.D. 70 the city fell to the Romans and was completely demolished.

Soon after, Josephus returned to Rome with Titus and settled there, having gained the rights of a Roman citizen, and adopted the emperor's family name – Flavius. There he began his literary work and became the author of the most significant extra-biblical writings of the first century. In A.D. 94 he published the second and longest of his major works, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, which has been for Christians one of the most fascinating contributions to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He wrote:

Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ and, when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine Prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians so named from him are not extinct at this day.

This passage from Josephus' *Antiquities*, which has come to be known as the *Testimonium*, is considered by many Bible critics to be an interpolation, since, they declare, it is unlikely that Josephus, a Pharisee and Jew, would affirm that Jesus was the Christ and had been proven to be so by fulfilled prophecy, by His miraculous powers and by His resurrection from the dead. In other words, they concluded that Josephus' reference to Jesus could not possibly be genuine.

However, in their defence, none of the critics who criticize this passage can produce a single, ancient copy of Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* that does not contain this passage on Jesus Christ. Neither can they explain how a Christian editor could have altered each of the widely distributed versions during the centuries following their publication.

In his popular work, *History of the Christian Church*, the famous historian Philip Schaff declared that all ancient copies of Josephus' book, including the early Slavonic and Arabic language versions, contain this passage about Jesus.

It can also be said that if the events surrounding the life, death and resurrection of our Lord actually occurred, as recorded in the four Gospels, it would be very unlikely that the historian Josephus would have failed to mention them in his narrative of that turbulent period.

Professor F.F Bruce suggested that the phrase, "*If it be lawful to call him a man,*" may indicate that the text is authentic, but that Josephus is writing in sarcastic reference to the Christian belief that Jesus is the Son of God.

Josephus Makes Reference to James and John the Baptist

Following the *Testimonium* Josephus also refers to Jesus as the brother of James, who was martyred under the high priest Ananias. He wrote: "He assembled the Sanhedrin of the judges, and brought

before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some of his companions, and when he formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned.” This passage undoubtedly confirms the New Testament reports that Jesus was a real Person of the first century and was identified by His followers as the Christ. The historian also confirmed the Gospel’s account of the existence and martyrdom of John the Baptist:

Now some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod’s army came from God, and very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John, who was called the Baptist; for Herod slew him, who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism.

Greek Historians Witness to Darkness at Noon

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour... at that moment... the earth shook and the rocks were split.

(Matthew 27:45,51b)

One of the most intriguing biblical mysteries is the account of the supernatural darkness that covered the light from the Sun for three hours during the afternoon when Jesus’ body hung on the Cross. Three of the Gospel writers recorded this extraordinary miracle (*Matthew 27:45, Luke 23:45, Mark 15:33*) and, amazingly, two Greek, pagan historians, Thallus and Phlegon. Thallus wrote his historical book in Syria around A.D. 52, only twenty years after the resurrection of Christ. He tried to explain away the great darkness which fell upon the land during the

crucifixion, that reached Rome also where he lived. He wrote: “It must have been an eclipse.”

Julius Africanus, a North African Christian leader writing in A.D. 215, mentions Thallus’ account of the supernatural darkness. He explained that Thallus’ theory was impossible because an eclipse of the Sun cannot occur at the same time there is a full moon. Though Thallus’ explanation was certainly wrong, his historical reference greatly confirms the Gospels’ account regarding this miraculous event which was well known and required a naturalistic explanation from those outside the Church.

But not only, many centuries in advance the prophet Amos recorded a prophecy that accurately predicted that a day would come when the Sun would appear to *go down at noon*:

And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day: and I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation.

(Amos 8:9-10)

The other first-century secular authority comes from Phlegon. He also recorded that an unprecedented darkness, and a devastating earthquake, occurred at noon. The Christian historian Eusebius quoted from Phlegon’s historical records as follows:

And so writes Phlegon ... “In the fourth year of the two hundred and second Olympiad there was a great and extraordinary eclipse of the sun, distinguished among all that happened before. At the sixth hour (12.00 am) the day was turned into dark night so that the stars in heaven were seen, and there was an earthquake in Bithynia which overthrew many houses in the city of Nice.”

In the first few centuries of the early Christian era the official Roman government archives were available to be studied by scholars and government officials. Every year the governor of each Roman province had to submit an official report to the Roman Senate concerning the wars, laws, taxes, trials, and unusual events that occurred during their watch.

The Christian writer Tertullian (A.D. 160-220) wrote a book entitled *Apology*, where he defended the Christian faith and the Gospels' account of the events surrounding Christ's crucifixion. In his work he wrote:

At the same time at noon day there was a great darkness. They thought it to be an eclipse, who did not know that this also was foretold concerning Christ. And some have denied it, not knowing the cause of such darkness. And yet you have that remarkable event recorded in your archives.

The Christian martyr and teacher Lucian of Antioch also stated that the Roman Empire's public archives contained a record of this supernatural event that established the miraculous nature of Christ's death on the Cross: "Look into your annals; there you will find that in the time of Pilate, when Christ suffered, the sun was obscured, and the light of day was interrupted with darkness."

The fact that these Christian teachers and writers, in an attempt to defend their faith, appealed to their readers to check out the extraordinary events surrounding Christ's trial and death on the Cross in the Roman public archives provides compelling evidence that such official records existed in their day.

Syrian Philosopher Makes Reference to Jesus

The British Museum has a letter written in around 73 A.D. by a non-Christian named Mara Bar Serapion to his son in prison,

encouraging him to pursue wisdom. In his letter he compares Christ to the philosophers Socrates and Pythagoras. Although this man was not a Christian, his reference to Jesus indicates that he did not question the fact that Christ was a historical character. His letter says:

What advantage did the Athenians gain from putting Socrates to death? Famine and plague came upon them as a judgement for their crime. What advantage did the men of Samos gain from burning Pythagoras? In a moment their land was covered with sand. What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their wise king? It was just after that that their kingdom was abolished.

God justly avenged these three wise men: the Athenians died of hunger; the Samians were overwhelmed by the sea, the Jews ruined and driven from their land, live in complete dispersion. But Socrates did not die for good; he lived on in the teaching of Plato. Pythagoras did not die for good; he lived on in the statue of Hera. Nor did the wise king die for good; he lived on in the teaching he had given.

References Found in Jewish and Muslim Writings

Similar to the secular historical records that mention Jesus Christ, the ones found in ancient Jewish and Muslim religious sources are just as unfriendly and hostile towards Christianity and its Founder and beliefs. But all these remarks, however kind and unkind they may be, only serve to give more convincing proof that the Man Jesus Christ did exist.

The Talmudic Writings

The Talmudic writings are an ancient collection of rabbinical laws and comments on the Law of Moses that preserve the oral tradition of the Jewish people. The Talmud was gradually compiled between A.D. 100 and A.D. 500. One compilation was made in Jerusalem and another more expanded compilation was made in Babylon in A.D. 500 circa. The most significant text that bears witness to the life and ministry of Jesus is found in the Babylonian Talmud. It says:

On the eve of Passover Yeshu was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, “He is going forth to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy. Anyone who can say anything in his favour let him come forward and plead on his behalf.” But since nothing was brought forward in his favour, he was hanged on the eve of Passover.

In another translation of this text it says *Yeshu the Nazarene*, which makes the reference to Jesus Christ even stronger. Moreover, the word *hanged* used in the above text is another way to refer to death by crucifixion, as can be seen from the following passages recorded in the New Testament:

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”

(Galatians 3:13-14)

The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. Though they found no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to

have him executed. When they carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb.

(Acts 13:27-30)

In the above account the Jewish Talmud clearly affirms the historicity of Jesus and His death by crucifixion. The text also makes reference to the fact that Jesus was crucified on, “The eve of Passover,” which completely agrees with the Gospel of John. Finally, it attests to Christ’s miracles, even though attempts are made to explain them away as the work of a sorcerer or magician, of which the Gospels also make mention:

While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus. And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, “Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.” But the Pharisees said, “It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons.”

(Matthew 9:32-35)

The Jewish rabbi Moses Maimonides (A.D. 1200) wrote about Jesus in his *Mishnah Torah*. In another of his works, *The Laws of Kings and their Wars*, he wrote: “Jesus of Nazareth who aspired to be the Messiah... was executed by the court.”

We find another reference to Christ in the Muslim Quran, where also His mother Mary is mentioned. It refers to Christ as a messenger and totally denies His deity. It says: “Christ the son of Mary who was no more than a messenger, many were the messengers that passed away before him. His mother was a woman of truth” (Surah 5:75).

In light of all these testimonies, and the many other independent secular accounts available, many modern scholars and professors

of history claim we have more and better historical documentation for Him today than for any other religious founder who ever lived. Even if we did not have in our possession the records of the New Testament writers, we would be able to conclude from the many non-Christian sources at hand that: (1) Jesus Christ was from Nazareth; (2) He was a wise and holy Man; (3) He was crucified in Jerusalem under Pontius Pilate; (4) He was believed to have been raised from the dead by His followers; (5) His enemies admitted that He performed unusual miracles and wonders, which they called sorcery; (6) after His death His disciples multiplied rapidly even as far as Rome; (7) His disciples worshipped Jesus as God.

A Final Word to the Faithful Enquirer

As can be seen from the above analysis, at hand we have a clear and remarkably consistent display of hostile, non-Christian historical evidence about the most remarkable Person whose life, teachings, death and resurrection have made a dramatic unparalleled impact on the course of history and on the whole human race itself.

Therefore, it is safe to say that any attempts from those who assert the Lord's non-existence, or deny His life and ministry, can be refuted at every turn. The 1974 edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica reached the same conclusion:

These independent accounts prove that in ancient times even the opponents of Christianity never doubted the historicity of Christ, which was disputed for the first time and on inadequate grounds by several authors at the end of the eighteenth, during the nineteenth, and at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Consequently, every fair-minded historian and earnest seeker of truth will agree with the conclusion of Professor F.F Bruce when he said:

Some writers may toy with the fancy of a Christ-myth, but they do not do so on the ground of historical evidence. The historicity of Christ is as axiomatic for an unbiased historian as the historicity of Julius Caesar. It is not the historians who propagate the Christ-myth theories.

07

LITERAL FULFILMENT OF ANCIENT BIBLICAL PROPHECIES

For I am God and there is no other; I am God and there is no one like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done...

(Isaiah 46:9b-10c)

See the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them...

(Isaiah 42:9)

When we closely examine each Book of the Bible, we discover an overwhelming number of precise and detailed predictions that were prophesied hundreds of years before the events occurred, and have been fulfilled over the centuries with such accuracy and precision that can only be explained by divine inspiration.

No one else has repeatedly told of things to come and had them come true exactly as forecasted. In fact, from a close examination of all other spiritual texts we see that not one of them contains such detailed prophecies that have been so accurately fulfilled as those presented in the Bible. This is quite obvious. Since no one but God can know the future, other religious writers and philosophers were smart enough to refrain from including material that would quickly show them to be mistaken.

No other religious literature of the ancient world has ever ventured to make predictions of the coming of a religious leader, or of the rise and fall of any world empires and kings. In contrast, the Old Testament prophets precisely predicted numerous details about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and of the great empires that were to rule the world from ancient times to

this very day. The Scriptures themselves declare that the evidence of fulfilled prophecy is the unmistakable proof of divine inspiration. God promised one hundred per-cent reliability in His predictions of the future and has done so in order that people may know that He alone is Lord:

The former things I declared long ago, they went out from my mouth and I made them known; then suddenly I did them and they came to pass... I declared them to you from long ago, before they came to pass I announced them to you so that you would not say, "My idol did them."

(Isaiah 48:3,5)

Many false prophets have attempted to make predictions in the past and continue to do so also today. Most of these predictions, with the exception of a few, have always been way off the mark. On the other hand, the biblical prophets are recognised as truly sent by God only when their predictions never fail to come true.

Daniel Vindicated

The Book of Daniel has naturally been another one of those Books that destructive critics have hated most. No other Book of the Bible has undergone more severe or more continual attacks on its authenticity and credibility. This is because the prophecies of Daniel contain the most convincing evidence that proves the divine inspiration of Scripture. They give the exact date of the coming and crucifixion of Jesus Christ and accurately foretell many historical events leading up to modern times and the end of the world.

As a result, Daniel has been under attack for centuries from liberal theological scholars and philosophers who deny God's supernatural intervention in history, the incarnation of Jesus Christ, and most of all the phenomenon of prophetic revelations

regarding future historical events. They assume that the future cannot be foretold and so the predictions so accurately given must have been written after the events described and then fraudulently presented as a prophesy.

One of the arguments used against the authenticity and veracity of the Book of Daniel was that such a person as *Belshazzar* (*Daniel 5:1*) was unknown to history. It was disputed that all historians agreed that Nabonidus was the last king of Babylon and that he was absent from the city when it was captured. Therefore, it was claimed that Belshazzar must be a purely mythical character and the whole story legendary and not historical.

This argument seemed unanswerable until Sir Henry Rawlinson discovered at Mughier, and other Chaldean sites, clay cylinders on which *Belshazzar* (*Belzarazur*) is named by Nabonidus as his eldest son. Doubtless, he reigned in the city during his father's absence, an indication as to why he proposed to make Daniel third ruler in the kingdom (*Daniel 5:16*), he himself being second, and Daniel would be next to him.

Further archaeological evidence for Daniel came through the discovery of ancient Eastern literary methods which demonstrate that the Book is not of a later date, but was written as indicated by Daniel himself, from 580-540 B.C. onwards.

One pagan critic of the third century A.D. by the name of Porphyry ironically argued against the authenticity of Daniel's prophecies based on the accuracy of the predictions. They were so precise that Porphyry argued that the prophetic writings must have been composed after the historical events occurred.

He claimed that the Book of Daniel was written by an unknown author in 165 B.C. to encourage the Jews in their struggle with the Syrians after the Jewish oppression by King Antiochus Epiphanes and his defeat by the Jewish rebellion.

Yet numerous references to the prophecies of Daniel appear in documents that were written long before the Maccabean revolt against Antiochus. The Greek Septuagint translation of the Old

Testament further proves that Porphyry's claims are incorrect. The Septuagint was translated in 250 B.C. circa, more than a century before the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, and includes all the prophecies of Daniel in our modern Bible. This inclusion in the Greek translation shows that Daniel's Book was in existence and universally accepted by the dispersed Jews as part of the Bible at least one hundred and twenty years before 165 B.C.

The Four World Empires Perfectly Predicted

More than three thousand years ago God gave His servant Daniel a revelation of the future that we recognize as one of the most incredible prophetic revelations ever given to man. The humble prophet was given a revelation that revealed, not the next year, or even the next hundred years, but what now has been more than 2,500 years. Of course Daniel did not receive every detail, but was shown the major flow of world history from his own day until the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Due to his ability to interpret prophetic dreams and visions Daniel rose from the position of an exiled slave to the respected prime minister of Babylon. During his reign God sent Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon a dream of an image that perfectly describes the empires that would rule the Earth from the time of the Babylonian king until the end of the world. Here is Daniel's perfect description and interpretation of that dream:

You O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendour was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.

You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the

silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth; this was the dream; now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king.

You O king are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, he has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all – you are the head of gold.

But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others.

Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potters' clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay.

And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold – the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.

(Daniel 2:31-46)

History has proven Daniel's interpretation of the king's dream to be accurate to the smallest detail. The empire which supplanted Nebuchadnezzar's "*head of gold*" was the Medo-Persian Empire, the "*chest and arms of silver*," which in turn was displaced by Alexander the Great of Greece, the "*belly and thighs of bronze*." Alexander's empire then fell to the Roman Empire, the "*legs of iron*," a powerful symbol that accurately characterizes the very nature of this empire.

For centuries historians have used the term *iron* when describing Rome and its imperial rule: "Rome's iron grip," "Rome's iron hand," "Rome's iron rule" and so on. The Roman Empire came into existence almost sixty years before Christ was born and it continued in power until 1453 A.D., when the Byzantine Eastern Roman Empire was finally conquered by the Islamic forces.

The two iron legs of the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream are very significant, as they accurately predict Rome's division into Eastern and Western Rome. By A.D. 395 the Roman Empire had split into two political areas of rule: the Latin speaking West with its capital in Rome, and the Greek speaking East with its capital in Constantinople (modern Istanbul).

However, this division of the empire into two political units was not to be the last division that kingdom would go through, as Daniel pointed out to the Babylonian king when he described the statue's feet and toes. According to the above prophecy, there is to be yet another division. But this will not be a division of two, as indicated by the statue's legs, but a division of ten, as indicated by the feet and ten toes. Here Daniel predicts a time when the Roman Empire will consist of ten kingdoms or leaders.

Many scholars have debated as to which kingdoms or nations these ten toes actually represent. But most careful students of Bible prophecy agree that they refer to a final form of power from the old Roman Empire which will exist in the last days, and that will be the power base for the coming Antichrist's world government. He is the *little horn* in Daniel chapter seven.

One Bible scholar suggests that the final form of the old Roman Empire will be a federation composed of autocracies and democracies, represented by the iron and clay that does not mix, which will be crushed by the “*Stone cut out of the mountain without hands*” – the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Another interpretation of the unstable mix of iron and clay in the newly constituted empire is that they represent the diverse racial, religious and political backgrounds of the final form of the Roman Empire, which is what we see today in the European Union.

Since the movement from one section of the statue to the next represents the passage of time, we can conclude that the feet and toe stage of the statue must follow the leg stage. However, there is nothing in past history which corresponds to a Roman coalition of ten nations or leaders. This being the case, it is correct to say that this fifth and final kingdom in Daniel chapter two is yet to come and perform its role in human history.

This same prophecy of Daniel chapter two, together with those in Daniel chapter seven and the Book of Revelation, strongly support this interpretation. Remember the prophet tells us that this final and revived form of the ancient Roman Empire will be on Earth when God sets up His earthly kingdom:

And in the days of these kings [the rulers of the ten divisions of the Roman kingdom] the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Inasmuch as you saw that the stone [Jesus Christ] was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this.

(Daniel 2:44-46).

According to this prophecy the Roman Empire will experience sudden destruction which did not happen at Christ's First Coming. The Roman Empire of Christ's day did not end suddenly, but gradually deteriorated and declined over many centuries until the Eastern part fell in A.D. 1453. So we must conclude that the final form of the Roman Empire will emerge in the end times and be in place before the Second Advent of Jesus Christ, when He comes to rule and reign over the Earth.

Daniel's Dream of Four Beasts

Years after Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the giant metallic statue, and shortly before Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians, Daniel had a vision of his own that further expands on Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Below is how he describes it:

I Daniel saw in my vision by night the four winds of heaven stirring up the great sea, and four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then as I watched, its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a human being; and a human mind was given to it.

Another beast appeared, a second one, that looked like a bear. It was raised up on one side, had three tusks in its mouth among its teeth and was told, Arise, devour many bodies! After this as I watched another appeared, like a leopard. The beast had four wings of a bird on its back and four heads; and dominion was given to it.

After this I saw in the visions by night a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth and was devouring, breaking in pieces and stamping what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that had preceded it, and it had ten horns.

(Daniel 7:2-9)

God foretells to His prophets all that is to happen and why. Not only did He grant to King Nebuchadnezzar a vision of future events, years later He repeated the same sequence of events with Daniel, this time using animals rather than metals. In Daniel's vision above the four great beasts represent the same Gentile kingdoms as those depicted in chapter two, only this time the character of those kingdoms is revealed. These animals clearly portray the profiles and personalities of the coming world empires and their kings.

The first beast in Daniel's dream was "*like a lion and had eagles' wings,*" a precise representation of the Babylonian national symbol. Daniel had already witnessed part of this vision. Nebuchadnezzar, who had risen to the heights of success, was puffed up with pride, but God struck him to the ground in a supernatural display of power (*Daniel 4:28-34*) until he learned to worship the true God. However, Babylon's days were numbered; King Cyrus of Persia moved to capture the Empire in 538 B.C. and defeated her on the Tigris River south of Bagdad.

The second beast, "*that looked like a bear ... raised up on one side,*" represents the Medo-Persian Empire. It was lopsided because the Medes were more prominent than the Persians. The "*three tusks in its mouth*" represent the three prominent conquests of the empire: Lydia 546 B.C., Babylon 539 B.C., and Egypt 525 B.C.

The third beast, "*like a leopard... that had four wings of a bird on its back and four heads,*" represents Greece, led by Alexander the Great. The speed of which Alexander's military forces attacked their enemies is portrayed by the winged-leopard, an extremely swift animal. However, in 323 B.C. Alexander died a sudden death at the early age of thirty two.

When on his deathbed he was asked to whom he willed his kingdom, to everyone's surprise he replied, "Give it to the strong." So Alexander's four senior generals of his army, Lysimachus, Cassander, Ptolemy, and Seleucus took over his

kingdom and divided it into four kingdoms, represented by the “*four heads*” in Daniel’s vision.

The fourth beast, “*terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong,*” represents the Roman Empire and the final form of Gentile power on Earth. The most important fact that distinguishes this empire from those before it is not its strength, ferocity or power, but that it has “*ten horns.*”

These ten horns correspond to the “*ten toes*” of Nebuchadnezzar’s statue, and the “*ten horns*” of *Revelation 13:1, 17:3*, which will take the form of the coalition or confederation of ten world leaders spoken of above, and will encompass the same territory as the ancient Roman Empire. Today, almost twenty-five hundred years later, we can see that coalition taking place right before our eyes. Gradually and steadily the nations of Europe have come together again, creating a modern copy of the ancient Roman Empire.

Cause to Wonder

The events of history here are incredible in their importance, as they reveal how amazingly Daniel’s predictions were literally fulfilled. At the time of this vision Babylon was the undisputed military power on Earth. The Medes and Persians had not yet even formed an alliance and were no match for the mighty Babylonians.

Yet long before, Daniel not only predicted the future Medo–Persian alliance, he also foretold that the Medes, who were at first the strongest, would be taken over by the Persians later. Daniel also correctly predicted that after Persia had become a wealthy and mighty world empire they would be suddenly destroyed by the Greeks, who at the time of Daniel’s vision showed no sign of ever launching a military campaign against a world power.

Even though the Greeks were a brave people and extremely advanced in knowledge, technology, and culture, they were too

busy fighting each other to even consider launching a military campaign, and they even spoke different dialects. This will help you understand how seemingly impossible Daniel's prediction was.

The Power of Rome Described

Remarkably, Daniel also predicted that Rome, the fourth empire, would become the greatest the world had ever seen and was destined to conquer all the ancient nations that stood in its way. This too is quite remarkable, because when Daniel wrote down his divinely inspired prophecy, Rome, like Greece, was a small city state of little importance in Italy. Unless divinely inspired, it would have been impossible to predict that such a small state would rise to dominate the entire world.

Most other empires accepted the culture and tradition of their subjects, but as Daniel predicted, the Roman Empire was distinct from all other empires in that its policy required its governors to crush the laws, religions and languages of every nation it conquered. In fact, after centuries of human history, Europe, the Middle East and North America have retained forms of government, language, laws and culture that were derived from ancient Rome.

This astonishing prophecy of Daniel also foretold how no fifth world empire would ever succeed in replacing Rome. A knowledge of world history proves that all the plans and ambitions of the world's kings, generals, emperors and dictators over the last two-thousand years have utterly failed in their aim to construct a fifth world empire.

More Remarkable Details on Alexander

Close to the end of the seventy-year dominance of the Babylonian Empire in 538 B.C., Daniel received another vision which further

describes the sudden conquest of the Persian Empire by Alexander the Great. In this prophecy Daniel is given a vision of a male goat and a ram which symbolized the two world empires that would follow Babylon and set the stage for the First Coming of Jesus Christ:

I looked up and saw a ram standing beside the river. It had two horns. Both horns were long, but one was longer than the other, and the longer one came up second. I saw the ram charging westward and northward and southward. All beasts were powerless to withstand it, and no one could rescue from its power; it did as it pleased and became strong.

As I was watching a male goat appeared from the west, coming across the face of the whole earth without touching the ground. The goat had a horn between his eyes. It came towards the ram with the two horns that I had seen standing beside the river and it ran with savage force. I saw it approaching the ram. It was enraged against it and struck the ram breaking its two horns.

The ram did not have power to withstand it; it threw the ram down to the ground and trampled upon it, and there was no one who could rescue the ram from its power. Then the male goat grew exceedingly great but at the height of its power, the great horn was broken, and in its place there came up four prominent horns towards the four winds of heaven.

(Daniel 8:3-9)

The prophet Daniel saw a vision of a ram which had two horns, the second horn higher than the other. Also this prophecy accurately foretold that the Medo-Persian Empire, which was soon to defeat the Babylonians, was composed of two kingdoms, one more dominant than the other (see *Daniel 7:5*). Interestingly, the identifying symbol of the Persian Empire was the ram. Archaeologists have discovered numerous ancient Persian coins

that show a ram lying down on one side of the coin, and on the other side a ram's head.

In the same vision Daniel saw a male goat coming across the face of the whole Earth without touching the ground that had a notable horn between its eyes. Here again we see described the future Greek Empire of Alexander the Great, which would rise to defeat the Medo-Persian Empire.

This was truly a very appropriate description for the Greek conqueror. The national symbol of ancient Macedonia, the initial kingdom of Alexander's empire, was a goat. The empire's capital was called *Aegae*, which means *Goat City*, and the sea between Greece and Turkey is still known by its ancient name Aegean, meaning *Goat Sea*.

Daniel also saw in his vision that the goat charged at the ram with great rage and fury and completely demolished him. This prophecy was literally fulfilled two-hundred years later when the Greek army destroyed the large military forces of King Darius III, also known as Codomannus, at the battle of Arbela in 331 B.C. Later the angel Gabriel appeared to Daniel to explain him the meaning of the vision in chapter eight and is repeated again in chapter eleven:

As for the ram that you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia. The male goat is the king of Greece, and the great horn between its eyes is the first king. As for the horn that was broken, in place of which four others arose, four kingdoms shall arise from his nation, but not with his power.

(Daniel 8:20-23)

Then a warrior king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion and take action as he pleases. And while still rising in power his kingdom shall be broken and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not to his posterity,

nor according to the dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be uprooted and go to others besides these.

(Daniel 11:3-5)

These prophecies clearly describe Alexander the Great and his short-lived career and final destiny. They even predict his premature death at the height of his career and the division of his empire into four spheres of power. Alexander, though powerful as a conqueror, would “*at the height of its power*” be “*broken,*” a prophecy that was fulfilled when the king died after only twelve years of rapid and brilliant conquests.

The prophecy that “*four prominent horns*” came up in the place of the great horn predicted that Alexander’s rule would be replaced after his death with a fourfold division of his empire. Normally a king would leave his empire to a son, but Alexander wished it to the strongest. Daniel’s description of an unusual twist in normal tradition – “*but not to his posterity*” – was precisely fulfilled in this extraordinary historical event.

The four leading generals of Alexander’s army took over his empire and divided it into four kingdoms. Lysimachus then murdered Alexander’s son and his wife so that no heir could survive to contest the new order.

The phrase “*but not with his power*” (*Daniel 8:22*) foretold that the four independent Greek kingdoms that followed Alexander’s rule would lack his military power, ambition and political genius. While his four generals maintained the territories won by Alexander, they did not continue his conquests.

The four kingdoms represented by the “*four horns,*” into which Alexander’s Greek Empire was divided, included Macedonia, Syria, Egypt and Asia Minor. So Daniel’s prophecy of Alexander and Greece came to pass despite the odds against it happening.

Daniel Predicts Crucifixion of Messiah

Seventy weeks are decreed for your people and your holy city; to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. Know therefore and understand from the time that the word went out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the time of an anointed prince, there shall be seven weeks; and sixty two weeks; it shall be built again with streets and moat, but in a troubled time.

After the sixty two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing, and the troops of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. His end shall come with a flood, and there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. He shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, in the middle of the week he shall make sacrifice and offering cease; and in their place shall be an abomination that desolates until the decreed end is poured out upon the desolator.

(Daniel 9:24-27)

Daniel's future vision of the seventy weeks is probably the most widely discussed and best known of all his prophecies. This is mainly due to the fact that it presents the most precise prophetic timetable of events culminating in the last days. As far back as the sixth century B.C., Daniel perfectly outlined Israel's future destiny, the exact date of her rejection of Jesus Christ as the Messiah, and many identifying characteristics of the coming Antichrist at the end of the age.

To help you better comprehend this important portion of prophecy it is necessary to explain a number of key facts. The "seventy weeks" of Daniel's prophecy are 490 years, composed of 360-day years, bearing in mind that the Jewish calendar was based on a biblical lunar-solar year of 360 days.

Just as it is natural for Western nations who use the decimal system to divide extended periods of time into decades, the ancient Jews used *heptads*, or weeks of years, to indicate a period of seven years. Therefore, the word *week* could be used by biblical writers to refer to either years or days.

In the above prophecy these weeks of years began when word went out to restore and rebuild the city of Jerusalem. From a close analysis of biblical history we learn that the only official government decree which authorized the city of Jerusalem and its walls to be rebuilt was given by the Persian king Artaxerxes in the twentieth year of his reign, 445 B.C.

So from 445 B.C. to 396 B.C. we have *seven weeks*, or 49 years. This covers Artaxerxes' decree up to the time of Nehemiah and the covenant renewal celebration in Jerusalem. *Daniel 9:25* reads: "*There shall be seven weeks; and sixty-two weeks.*" These sixty-two weeks equal 434 years or 396 B.C. to A.D. 32. This time period began with the dedication of the Second Temple and continues to the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Anointed One.

Almost five centuries after Daniel's prediction, on the tenth day of the month of Nisan, April A.D. 32, Israel's religious leaders openly rejected their promised Messiah. As our Lord Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey on Palm Sunday He knew that this was the exact period prophesied by Daniel where Israel must accept or reject their King (*Daniel 9:26*).

However, Jesus already knew that He would be rejected by the political leaders and was overcome with emotion as He foresaw and contemplated the terrible destruction on Jerusalem and her children that would follow (*Luke 19:41-44*).

This is quite remarkable because even if the critics were correct in saying that the Book of Daniel was composed later, in 165 B.C., Daniel's prophecy concerning the coming and cutting off of the Messiah, which took place at least two hundred years later

than the supposed date of authorship, was accurately fulfilled to the smallest detail.

This leaves “*one week*” of seven years that has not yet been fulfilled. This last seven-year period is known in biblical terminology as *the time of Jacob’s Trouble*, or *the Great Tribulation*, described in great detail in the last Book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation.

Events in the Final Week

There is a long gap between the sixty-ninth week of Daniel’s prophecy and the final seventieth week, which will begin when the terror and tyranny of the Antichrist is revealed. The apostle Paul warned believers about him in his Epistle to the Thessalonians:

Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first and the lawless one is revealed, the one destined for destruction. He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God declaring himself to be God.

Do you not remember that I told you these things when I was still with you? And you know what is now restraining him, so that he may be revealed when his time comes. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but only until the one who now restrains it is removed. And then the lawless one will be revealed.

(2 Thessalonians 2:3-8)

Many biblical scholars have interpreted the above prophecies of Daniel chapter nine, and those of Paul, to mean these seven years will be characterized by the Antichrist’s signing a seven-year peace treaty with Israel, which he will violate half-way through and cause the daily sacrifice to cease in a newly built Temple in

Jerusalem (see *Daniel 9:27*); referred to in Scripture as the abomination of desolation (see *Matthew 24:15*).

08

FULFILLED PROPHECY CONCERNING THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Many details in the history of the Jewish people were precisely prophesied throughout the Old Testament Scriptures hundreds, and even thousands, of years before the events ever came to pass. Each of their three long captivities were accurately foretold by the ancient prophets of long ago. They include the first Jewish exile in Egypt, which lasted four hundred and thirty years; their seventy-year captivity in Babylon; and their final world-wide dispersion, which lasted almost two thousand years, from A.D. 70 to 1948.

To further prove the inspiration of the Bible we will closely examine the fulfilment of these amazing biblical prophecies that provide overwhelming proof of God's hand operating behind the scenes of human history to bring about His divine plans, which He foretold through His prophets long ago.

The Babylonian army conquered Israel in the year 606 B.C. and according to its government policy took many Jews from their native land and resettled them in and throughout the far reaches of its empire. The Babylonian king ordained the policy of moving the various conquered peoples to distant parts of his kingdom to break the captive's spirit of nationalism and independence and unite them into a homogeneous people. As a result, Nebuchadnezzar transferred the entire Jewish population in various stages to the far northern province of Babylon.

Some years later King Nebuchadnezzar returned to capture Jerusalem and took more exiles to his capital city to be trained as scholars and intellectuals in order to elevate the standard of living in Babylon. After this first victory he returned to Jerusalem for the second time in 586 B.C. and brought about the total destruction of the Holy City. The great walls surrounding Solomon's Temple

were torn down and burned to the ground and the magnificent Temple itself was utterly destroyed. Centuries before these events occurred, King David accurately prophesied the mood of the exiles from Zion as they remembered the great city of Jerusalem that had long remained in their hearts while captive in Babylon:

By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our harps. For there our captors asked us for songs, and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" How could we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?

(Psalm 137:1-5)

It is a known fact that Babylon's great splendour and military might were also accompanied by great cruelty and idol worship. Consequently, after just a few decades the kingdom, which at that time had conquered the known ancient world, fell to the united empire of the Medes and Persians. Both secular history and the Bible reveal that the Babylonian captivity ended exactly seventy years later, as the prophet Jeremiah had accurately predicted. Long before the events took place Jeremiah foretold the total amount of years that the Jewish people would remain captives in the foreign lands of Babylon where they had been driven on account of their sin and rebellion against God:

This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years...

(Jeremiah 25:11-12)

This prophecy was precisely fulfilled in 536 B.C. when King Cyrus of Persia reversed the harsh Babylonian policy and allowed the captured exiles of various different nations to return to their own homelands.

King Cyrus the Great was the founder of the Persian Empire and he merged his kingdom with the older and smaller kingdom of Media, which was led by Darius the Mede (see *Daniel 5:31*). In the year 538 B.C. the Medo-Persian army, led by Cyrus himself, came against the gates of Babylon and took the fortified city totally by surprise. Ancient records from the Greek historian Herodotus record details of this military conquest.

Apparently, the Babylonian king had ignored the Persian armies that were besieging the city, believing it to be impenetrable. But the Persians had devised a great military strategy which totally opposed the city's defences giving them victory over Babylon and making Cyrus the ruler of a vast empire covering the known ancient world.

Cyrus the Great was a very unique character in Bible prophecy in that he was actually named in Scripture almost two-hundred years before he became emperor. Not only did the prophet Isaiah identify the king of Persia by name, he also foretold that he would deliver the Jewish people from Babylon and play a part in the restoration of the Second Temple:

Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer...who frustrates the omens of liars, and makes fools of diviners; who turns back the wise, and makes their knowledge foolish; who confirms the word of his servant, and fulfills the prediction of his messengers, who says of Jerusalem, "It shall be inhabited" and of the cities of Judah, "They shall be rebuilt, and I will raise up their ruins, I will dry up your rivers," who says of Cyrus, "He is my shepherd, and he shall carry out all my purpose," and who says of Jerusalem, "It shall be rebuilt," and of the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid."

(Isaiah 44:24a, 25-28d)

Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped to subdue nations before him... so that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who

call you by your name. For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I surname you, though you do not know me.

(Isaiah 45:1a, 3b-5)

My purpose shall stand, and I will fulfil my intention, calling a bird of prey from the east, the man for my purpose from a far country...

(Isaiah 46:10c-11c)

The historian Josephus recorded how these prophecies were shown to the Persian king and that is why he brought the exile to an end. Critics often deny that Isaiah was written as early as 722 B.C. because they refuse to believe that God exists and reveals to His prophets His future plans.

To prove this they often quote the above passages which tell of Judah's return from its exile in Babylon to show that the prophecy must have been recorded later. But as we stated previously, the central purpose of biblical prophecy is just that, to reveal the One true God, and that a knowledge of the future is proof that He alone is Lord. No one else in the records of human history has consistently told of things to come and then had them happen exactly as forecasted:

Remember the former things of old, for I am God and there is no one else. I am God and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done...

(Isaiah 46:9-10c)

The former things I declared long ago, they went out from my mouth and I made them known; then suddenly I did them and they came to pass.

(Isaiah 48:3-4)

Cyrus' Decree Discovered by Explorers

In the last century explorers in Iraq unearthed an ancient inscribed clay cylinder bearing the very decree of King Cyrus and his allowing the various captured exiles to return to their native homelands. Two years after Cyrus had conquered Babylon, in the year 536 B.C., he issued a decree allowing the Jews to freely return to their homeland in Israel bringing to an end their seventy year captivity. The cylinder inscription began with these words: "I am Cyrus, king of the world, great king... I gathered all their former inhabitants and returned to them their habitations."

This incredible archaeological discovery, which is on display in the British Museum in London, also confirms the detailed accuracy of the following historic decree recorded in the Book of Ezra:

In the first year of king Cyrus of Persia, in order that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of king Cyrus of Persia so that he sent a herald throughout all his kingdom, and also in a written edict declared; "Thus says king Cyrus of Persia: The Lord God of Heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem in Judah. Any of those among you who are of his people – may their God be with them! – are now permitted to go up to Jerusalem in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord."

(Ezra 1:1-3)

Jesus Warns His Disciples to Flee

When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that it's desolation has come near. Then those in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those inside the city must leave it, and those out in the country must not enter it; for

these are days of vengeance, as a fulfilment of all that is written.

(Luke 21:20-23)

In A.D. 66 the wicked Roman governor of Judaea Gessius Florus let loose his troops onto the upper market in Jerusalem with instructions to kill and plunder all they met. Josephus recorded how: “The troops not only plundered the quarter which they were sent to attack but plunged into every house and slaughtered the inmates...The total number of that day’s victims including women and children, for they did not even abstain from infants, amounted to about three thousand six hundred.”

It was this ruthless robbery and sacrilege that sparked off the war of the Jews with Rome and began a cycle of increasing violence that would end just over four years later in the total destruction of the Second Temple and the entire city of Jerusalem.

The violence provoked by Florus continued until the Roman governor of Syria Cestius Gallus arrived from Antioch to pitch his camp on Mount Scopus – overlooking the Temple – and begin an attack on the city of Jerusalem. The deep valleys around the east, south, and west of Jerusalem made the great walls surrounding the city impossible to penetrate, so Cestius attacked from the north. His troops surrounded Jerusalem for five days, battering heavily against the city walls. But without any reason General Cestius ordered a retreat and withdrew back to Caesarea.

The contemporary writer Josephus informs us that the Jewish rebels were greatly encouraged by their victory over Cestius and rejoiced at their unexpected relief, while: “After this calamity had befallen General Cestius, many of the most eminent of the Jews swam away from the city as if from a ship when it was going to sink.”

We need not ask who these people were. Some years earlier the Gospel writer Luke had recorded Jesus’ warning to His followers to flee Jerusalem when it would be surrounded by armies.

The Christians knew better than the joyful zealots and deserted the whole country, taking refuge east of the Jordan in the mountains of Pella. It is Hegesippus, another historian, who recorded that those who evacuated the city were Christians: “Having read an oracle left by Christ.” To siege a city as well defended as Jerusalem was not a lightly task, so, in the course of events, it was to be another three-and-a-half years after the failure of Cestius before Roman troops again sought to break through the city walls.

Woe to Chorazin, Capernaum and Bethsaida!

Woe unto you Chorazin! Woe unto you Bethsaida, for if the mighty miracles I did in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago. And you, Capernaum, proud and exalted up to heaven, shall be brought down to hell, for if my mighty miracles done in you had been done in Sodom, the Sodom sinners would have been spared.

(Matthew 11:20-23)

In the early spring of A.D. 67 a large army of over sixty thousand troops, led by the future Emperor Vespasian and his military son Titus, spent the next two years gaining full control of the surrounding countryside in Galilee, Samaria and northern Judea. The Roman soldiers began their military campaign in Bethsaida, Chorazin and Capernaum of Galilee and from there moved southwards from town to town burning and devastating entire villages, as Jesus Christ had so accurately predicted.

This campaign lasted almost three years and by A.D. 70 the Roman soldiers had completely wiped out the whole of northern Israel and its inhabitants. Shortly after this victory news reached the Roman army in Palestine that Nero had died, so Vespasian's troops proclaimed him to be the next emperor. Vespasian immediately left for Rome and ordered his son Titus to begin the attack on Jerusalem.

Jesus Foretells Destruction of Second Temple

As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, “If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. Indeed, the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on every side. They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you and they will not leave within you one stone upon another.”

(Luke 19:41-44)

The terrible siege of Jerusalem led by Titus began in the spring of A.D. 70 during the Passover Feast. Thousands of men women and children had gone up to the city from the surrounding villages to celebrate the annual festival. The Romans trapped them inside the city by closing all exits from Jerusalem, even the tunnels under the walls.

Titus ringed the city with a continuous stone wall manned by armed guards to cut off supplies and starve the population, exactly as Luke had recorded in his Gospel some years before. The siege continued for many months and the horrors of the famine inside the city reached beyond the imagination of humans to comprehend. Josephus’ description of these horrors are lurid: “Nowhere was any table laid; they snatched the food half cooked from the fire and tore it to pieces. Pitiful was the fare and lamentable the spectacle, the stronger taking more than their share, the weak whimpering...Wives would snatch the food from husbands, children from fathers and most pitiful sight of all—mothers from the very mouths of their infants.”

The most appalling story of all involved a woman named Mary who had fled to Jerusalem from her home village of Bethzuba in Transjordan. Josephus wrote how she, impelled by hunger: “Killed her son, an infant at the breast, and roasted him. She had eaten part

of the body and stored the rest for later consumption when she was betrayed by the smell of roasted meat.”

After months of siege the brutal power of the Roman army had finally crushed Jerusalem. Titus set the gates of the Temple on fire and ordered the complete destruction of the city, even the tearing down of the walls, so that not one stone was left upon another. Oxen and ploughs were harrowed over the remaining rubble making it impossible to imagine that a city had ever existed. Only the Western Wall and towers survived.

Herod’s Temple was a magnificent structure and richly adorned with gold. When it was on fire, the gold ran down between the cracks of stone in the building making it necessary to remove every single stone, one from the other, in an attempt to get all the gold that had melted, exactly as Jesus and the prophet Micah had foretold long before the event occurred:

Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. ”Do you see all these things?” He asked. “I tell you the truth not one stone here will be left on another; everyone will be thrown down.”

(Matthew 24:1-3)

Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.

(Micah 3:12)

Jesus Predicts the Diaspora

There will be great distress on the earth and wrath against this people; they will fall by the edge of the sword and be taken away as captives among all nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

(Luke 21:23b-25)

No wonder Jesus wept over the city when He foresaw this disaster. If only they had recognized on that day the things that make for peace, “*yet they were not willing.*” Indeed, their house was left to them, desolate (*Luke 13:35*). Almost three million Jews fell that day by the sword and ninety-seven thousand were taken away captive.

Most of the prisoners were taken to Rome where they were fed to lions to amuse the blood-thirsty Roman citizens, or to Egypt to work the mines. Others were given as presents or sold as slaves. Josephus recorded that Prince Titus chose out the tallest and most handsome of the young men and reserved them for the March of Triumph.

There is a carved panel in Rome on the Arch of Titus showing Rome’s celebration of this victory over Jerusalem. The soldiers are shown to be carrying the seven-branched lampstand from the Temple in Jerusalem. This beautiful piece of furniture is exactly as described in the Book of Exodus, once again demonstrating the accuracy of Scripture.

Since A.D. 70, and the destruction of their sacred Temple, the Jewish people have been scattered throughout the whole world to this very day. They did not dwell in a homeland of their own, and Israel was occupied and governed by Gentile rulers from A.D. 70 to May 15 1948, the year the United Nations announced that they had formally recognized the State of Israel.

It is without doubt an amazing reality that you and I can see the name *Israel* back on the world’s map after almost eighteen hundred years absence. Ironically, it was to be two drastic world wars that would eventually realise a home for the Jewish people.

During World War I, the British army sought support from the Jews for the war effort. In return for their cooperation the British foreign secretary, Arthur J. Balfour, issued a new policy, which has since become known as *The Balfour Declaration*, on November 2, 1917.

This declaration was contained in a letter from Balfour to a Lord Rothschild, who was a wealthy entrepreneur. In that letter Secretary Balfour gave approval to the Zionist aim of reclaiming a homeland for the dispersed Jews. It read: “His Majesty’s Government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.”

Then, in 1947, following World War 2, and the despicable treatment of the Jewish people by the Nazis, the International Community began to discuss the possibility of a Jewish state as an act of compensation for the Holocaust. Hitler’s atrocities actually provided the greatest momentum for the establishment of a national homeland for the Jews than any other event in history!

On the fifteenth of May 1948 the British government, that had despaired of ever working out a plan to reconcile the very different political problems of Arab and Jewish groups, announced that they were leaving Palestine. As a result, six Arab states joined together in an attempt to slaughter the Jewish population living in Palestine and gain control of the areas assigned to them in the partitioning territory plan proposed by the United Nations.

But within days of the invasion the six Arab countries that had intervened to support the Palestinian Arabs were routed; the Egyptians were pushed back to the Nile; Jordan’s legions lost their area on the West side of the Jordan River; and Israel gained possession of Lebanon and the Golan Heights.

By November the Jewish forces had secured not only the zone assigned to them by the UN, but larger additional areas. This sent a flood of Arab refugees – Palestinians – into neighbouring Arab states in the Middle East where they still remain today.

Importance of the Six-Day War

When the Jews of Jerusalem were forced to surrender in the early phases of the 1948 War of Independence, they relinquished one of their most sacred treasures – the sacred Wall that encircled the

Temple Mount site of the two ancient Jewish Temples. The recapture of the Western Wall almost nineteen years later in the 1967 Six-Day War is extremely important in New Testament prophecy, for it is the day of which the Gospel writer Luke spoke when he wrote:

And Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles, until the time of the Gentiles are fulfilled...

(Luke 21:24b)

An eyewitness report of this event described that after the Israeli troops had fought their way to the Wall, thousands of soldiers streamed in to wait their turn to kiss the stones. “Some of them wounded and sweating, they covered their heads with anything, even bits of paper, some borrowed from the reporter’s notebook,” as they made their way in tears to their most sacred roots.

The Western Wall is part of the structure of the two ancient, destroyed Temples of Jerusalem and is the most sacred place in the world for the Jewish people. After a long absence, Israeli soldiers finally regained the Jewish quarter which had been captured by the Jordanians during Israel’s 1948 War of Independence.

It was during the Six Day War and the recapturing of the Western Wall that the prophecy of Jesus concerning Gentile rule in Jerusalem became a reality. Up to that time Jerusalem had been governed for hundreds of centuries by non-Jewish powers. But Jesus prophesied that their control over Jerusalem would continue “*Until the time of the Gentiles are fulfilled.*”

Therefore, dear reader, if you ever have the occasion to visit the Wailing Wall at Jerusalem and you see the Jewish people there saying their prayers, remember that you are witnessing one of the most important prophetic events in world history.

Can a Nation Be Born in One Day?

*Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things?
Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? For as
soon as Zion was in labour she gave birth to her children.*

(Isaiah 66:8-9)

The physical rebirth of Israel is one of the most extraordinary and unthinkable of all biblical prophecies. After almost two thousand years of exile, thousands of Jews from around the globe have returned to the land that God promised to their ancestors as an inheritance.

At the time the prophet Isaiah predicted this unlikely events no one had ever heard of a nation being born in one day. Yet his prophecy was precisely fulfilled on May 14 1948 in a moving ceremony at the Tel Aviv Museum when new Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion, proclaimed the establishment of the Jewish State of Israel in Palestine.

No other nation has ever ceased to exist for centuries and then returned to take its place in the events of world history in a single day. During the last seventy years, since the birth of the State of Israel in 1948, more than three million Jewish immigrants have returned home from seventy countries around the world.

The greatest number of all came from the former Soviet Union, almost 900,000, and the momentum is ever increasing. Jews are still flooding into Israel at a rate of over a thousand a day, to this very day, as the ancient prophets accurately foretold:

*I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I
will gather you; I will say to the north, "Give them up," and
to the south, "Do not withhold; bring my sons from far
away and my daughters from the end of the earth."*

(Isaiah 43:5b-7)

Therefore behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that they shall no longer say, “As the Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt” but, “As the Lord lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel from the north country and from all the countries where I had driven them.” And they shall dwell in their own land.

(Jeremiah 23:7)

Ezekiel’s Valley of Dry Bones

Two of the major Jewish prophets, Daniel and Ezekiel, were both taken as captives from Jerusalem during the Babylonian captivity. Naturally, Ezekiel was aware of Jeremiah’s prophecy that the Jews would return to Israel after seventy years in 536 B.C. However, God gave Ezekiel a new vision that looked beyond the Babylonian captivity and much further into the future where he predicted the return of the Jews from the Gentile lands (*graves*) to which they had been scattered for almost two thousand years.

More than 2,600 years ago God gave Ezekiel a vision of a valley full of lifeless dead bones that were very dry and scattered – a physical portrayal of Israel during the Diaspora. This peculiar prophecy of the prophet Ezekiel was fulfilled in our generation with such remarkable precision that we are forced to marvel at the power of God to foresee human events and bring about their outcome:

The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were many lying in the valley; and they were very dry. He said to me, “Mortal can these bones live?” I answered “O Lord God, you know.” Then he said to me, “Prophecy to these bones and say to them; O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones; “I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay

sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord.”

(Ezekiel 37:1-7)

Ezekiel probably had some difficulty in seeing life being restored in this lifeless valley. But by faith he boldly proclaimed that God was going to do a supernatural work that would make those dead bones live again, and he prophesied:

So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked and there was sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had come upon them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal and say to the breath; thus says the Lord God; come from the four winds, O breath and breath upon these slain, that they may live.”

I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. Then he said to me, “Mortal these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.’ Therefore prophesy and say to them, Thus says the Lord God; I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel.

And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord have spoken and will act,” says the Lord.

(Ezekiel 37:7-15)

In the nineteenth century a very focussed movement known as *Zionism*, led by the Hungarian Jewish journalist Theodor Herzl, began to campaign for a return of the Jews to their homeland and argued for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine.

It was at this point that Israel's gradual restoration began and thousands of Jews began to return to Palestine to establish their roots. However, Herzl and his fellow Zionists were greatly disappointed that more Jews around the world did not respond in greater number to his campaign.

The Jews of Palestine lived under the confines of the Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate from 1917 to 1948. The British general Edmund Henry Allenby released Jerusalem from Muslim occupation in 1917 and at that time the British government permitted the Jews to return to their original homeland. The Balfour Declaration became a basis movement to create a Jewish state in Palestine and opened the way for the return of many more Jews fleeing from the rise of Hitler's devastating Holocaust in Europe.

A Most Unusual Prophecy

Happy are those who persevere and attain the thousand three hundred thirty – five days. But you go your way and rest; you shall rise for your reward at the end of the days.

(Daniel 12:12)

When the British drove the Turks out of Jerusalem in 1917, the newspapers of that period had two dates on them. In one corner was the 1917 Western date, and in the other was the Eastern date, 1335 – the figure of Daniel's prophecy. It was in that year that the Balfour Declaration established a home for the Jews in Palestine. Some Bible scholars have pointed out how prophecy often has both a primary literal fulfilment, in this case of 1,335 days, and a

secondary symbolic fulfilment perhaps in this case, years. If it is possible for this verse of Daniel to have a-year-to-the-day fulfilment, then we have seen it come to pass with the release of Jerusalem from Muslim rule in 1917.

Islam began in A.D. 622, and shortly after that Jerusalem was taken and occupied by Muslims until A.D. 1917, the year the British government proclaimed that the Jews were allowed to return to Palestine. This proclamation was issued exactly thirteen-hundred and thirty-five years later according to the Islamic system of reckoning time.

In fact, the coins of the Ottoman Empire minted in that year bore the date 1335 on one side and 1917 on the other. According to some scholars, Daniel's prophecy could well mean that after 1,335 years, the beginning and end of Muslim rule in Palestine, a time of blessedness would come to the land of Israel.

Those who watched and waited would have the opportunity to enjoy great blessing and avoid Hitler's genocide. As we already mentioned, many Jews returned to Israel in this period while others turned down the opportunity and remained in Europe.

Did these Prophecies not Refer to the Return from Babylon?

The prophecies that we have seen concerning the return of the Jewish people to Israel in 1948 do not refer to their return from exile in Babylon. The Bible contains many other numerous prophecies that tell us of a remnant from *all* the tribes of Israel that will return to the Promised Land in the last days. But the Book of Ezra clearly states that it was only from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin that a remnant returned to Jerusalem after the seventy-year exile in Babylon:

The heads of the families of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, everyone whose spirit God had

stirred, got ready to go up and rebuild the house of the Lord in Jerusalem.

(Ezra 1:5)

When the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned exiles were building a temple to the Lord, the God of Israel, they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of families.

(Ezra 4:1-2)

The rest of the twelve tribes remained in the lands where they had been scattered and returned to Jerusalem only for the annual Jewish feasts. We see evidence of this from the Book of Acts when the apostle Peter preached to the Israelites who had come from all over the world on the day of Pentecost:

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place... Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.

(Acts 2:1,5)

We also see in the Book of Hosea that in the year 770 B.C. God warned the prophet that the ten tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel would be taken away and scattered for many days, and that they would be left without king or prince, without temple sacrifice and priest and without idolatry.

At this point the southern kingdom of Judah had not yet fallen under God's judgement, but was to be spared for a little while longer. In the latter days, however, both the ten tribes of the northern kingdom, and the two tribes of the southern kingdom, would be brought back together:

For the Israelites shall remain many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or teraphim. Afterward the Israelites shall return and seek the

Lord their God and David their king; they shall come in awe to the Lord and to his goodness in the latter days.

(Hosea 3:4-5)

The people of Judah and the people of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head; and they shall possess the land.

(Hosea 1:11)

As we powerfully demonstrated above, in our day God has fulfilled these very prophecies. For almost 2,000 years the Jewish people have lived without a king or a prince, and without temple sacrifice. Since the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., Israel has never offered another animal sacrifice. To this very day for the annual Passover meal no lamb is sacrificed in Jewish homes. This is quite an amazing fact, when you consider that the sin offerings were at the very heart of the Jewish religion.

God also told His prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel, who prophesied during the exile of Judah, that both Ephraim and Judah would return united in the last days. This is the reason why the State of Israel calls itself Israel and not Judah. Only Judah returned after the previous exile:

On that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that is left of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Ethiopia, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath and from the coastlands of the sea. He will raise a signal for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

(Isaiah 11:11-13)

Thus says the Lord God: I am about to take the stick of Joseph (which is in the hand of Ephraim) and the tribes of

Israel associated with it; and I will put the stick of Judah upon it, and make them one stick, in order that they may be one in my hand. When the sticks upon which you write are in your hand before their eyes, then say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from every quarter, and bring them to their own land. I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all. Never again shall they be two nations, and never again shall they be divided into two kingdoms.

(Ezekiel 37:19-23)

New Jewish State Calls Itself Israel

During a ceremony on May the fourteenth 1948, at the Tel Aviv Museum, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion declared the following statement in fulfilment of these ancient prophecies:

Accordingly, we the members of the National Council, representing the Jewish people in Palestine and the world Zionist movement, are met together in solemn assembly today, the day of termination of the British Mandate for Palestine; and by virtue of the natural, national, and historic right of the Jewish people and the resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations, we hereby proclaim the establishment of the Jewish State in Palestine to be called *Medinat Israel* (The State of Israel).

The organizers of the ceremony developed the plans under very tight security, for fear that if word about the plans got out, the Arabs would immediately attack during the event. To ensure safety no foreign journalists were allowed in the meeting and only a small audience was invited.

When the National Council met in the early afternoon, the members could not agree on the wording to be used in the proclamation of statehood. Some demanded it spell out the new state's frontiers but Ben Gurion refused. Religious Jews wanted a reference to the God of Israel but the secularists disagreed. In the end Ben-Gurion decided the new state would be called Israel.

On that day the morning newspapers announced that the event would take place at 4:00 pm. The Jewish people of Tel Aviv placed the flags of Israel outside their homes, excited and thrilled at the possibility of establishing the first Jewish state in more than eighteen hundred years.

On the afternoon of May fourteenth 1948, as a rabbi blew on the traditional shofar, the Jewish people celebrated the end of their tragic worldwide dispersion and captivity in precise fulfilment of the ancient prophecies made thousands of years earlier through the prophets.

God Keeps His Promises

Despite the worldwide dispersion and persecution of the Jews from the first century to this very day, God has kept His sacred promises and has restored them to their native land. But not only have we seen the divine hand of God in the national restoration of the Jewish people, but also during their five major wars against their surrounding enemies who far outnumber them.

These victories are powerful illustrations of how God keeps His promises and fulfils the predictions of His prophets. But why should this people be so favoured by such divine intervention? Scripture teaches us that God did not do it because the Jews are any better than any of the other nations; it was because of their sin that they were exiled and scattered in the first place.

The first reason, as I have said above, is because God honoured His promises to their father Abraham. Second, God has not finished with the Jews yet in His plan of salvation through Jesus

Christ. In the Book of Romans chapter nine to eleven the apostle Paul explains the election, rejection and also national restoration of the Jewish people as a whole. The next phase, according to the ancient prophecies, is that many shall get saved. Paul wrote:

For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead.

(Romans 11:15-16)

Fifty to sixty years ago there were only a few hundred Jewish believers living in the Promised Land. Today that number has grown to thousands, with a large increase in Messianic congregations. The apostle Paul referred to Jewish believers as the *believing remnant*.

As God foretold in ancient times through His prophets, Israel has been physically resurrected and has a constitution, a prime minister, a police force, a military army and intelligent agencies. They have everything but spiritual life.

Between 1984 and 1985 a massive airlift was carried out by the Israeli Government to rescue 10,000 Ethiopian Jews from civil war, and in 1991 more than 14,000 were airlifted in a single day. Many Bible scholars see this as a fulfilment of the ancient prophecy of Zephaniah:

At that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suplicants, my scattered ones shall bring my offering.

(Zephaniah 3:9-11)

They look forward to the day when the second part of that prophecy will be fulfilled and many more Jews will call upon the name of the Lord Jesus and “*serve Him with one accord.*”

Why Did God Choose the Jews?

God called Abraham out of Assyria almost four-thousand year ago and presented him with several fantastic promises and some big responsibilities. He promised the elderly patriarch a son of whom would come a unique race of people formed by God and separated in a unique way from other nations. There were many reasons why God chose the Jews for Himself.

For one, it was their responsibility to receive and record His revelations to man. The recipients had to be closely connected by race and faith to enable their collecting, assembling, preserving and distribution of the Sacred Scriptures. This task was accomplished perfectly. Almost every Book of the Old and New Testament was written by a Jew under the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

In spite of the adversity, turbulence, and even their many devastating wars and exiles, the Jews have carried out this task with incredible care and respect; as we discovered in chapter 10 of this book.

Finally, and most important of all, Israel was needed to provide a human family through whom the Messiah, the Saviour of humanity, could be born. It was also their mission to witness to the pagan world that there is only One true God and to show the Gentiles how to know Him.

The survival of the Jewish nation, scattered for centuries, re-gathered and re-born as a nation in our generation is without doubt a great testimony to the truth of the Bible.

09

HOW THE OLD TESTAMENT CAME DOWN TO US

As for you continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ.

(2 Timothy 3:14-16)

When a person wishes to become knowledgeable of God's Word, he usually desires to know when and how the Bible was written and compiled, and if there is any evidence to support its claim to be God's message to man. As I mentioned in the previous chapters, the historical reliability of the Old Testament has long been proven through the many archaeological excavations in the Middle East during the last century.

Part of these discoveries, as we will see also in the next chapter, have to do with the examination of the textual transmission of the Old Testament manuscripts. By this I mean the path from the original writings to the many copies of Scripture in our possession today. Much like all other ancient literature we do not have the original documents, but the accuracy of the Hebrew copyists is astonishing when compared to other literature of antiquity. Scholar and author Dr Gleason Archer commented:

It should be clearly understood that in this respect the Old Testament differs from all other pre-Christian works of literature of which we have any knowledge. To be sure, we do not possess so many different manuscripts of pagan products, coming from such widely separated eras, as we do in the case of the Old

Testament. But where we do, for example, in the Egyptian Book of the Dead, the variations are of a far more extensive and serious nature... Apart from divine superintendence of the transmission of the Hebrew text, there is no particular reason why the same phenomenon of divergence and change would not appear between Hebrew manuscripts, produced centuries apart.

In this chapter we will examine a small part of this fascinating evidence which strongly supports the integrity of the Old Testament and the implications for the authority of these ancient documents. We will also examine the wonderful manner in which the Scriptures grew from the first five Books of Moses to include the entire Hebrew Bible.

The Compilation

The Books of the Hebrew Old Testament are, traditionally, twenty-four in number. Although the Christian Church has the same Old Testament canon, the number of Books differ from that of the Hebrew because we divide *Samuel*, *Kings*, *Chronicles*, *Ezra* and *Nehemiah* into individual Books, and we separate the Books of the Minor Prophets rather than combining them into one as the Hebrew Old Testament does.

The Hebrew canon of Scripture is divided in three main parts; *The Law of Moses*, *The Prophets* and *The Sacred Writings*. These three sections of the Hebrew Canon reflect the three occasions in history when the existing Scriptures of that time were brought together. Jesus made reference and authenticated these divisions in the New Testament era:

These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

(Luke 24:44)

THE LAW OF MOSES

The first section of Scripture, The Torah, or Pentateuch in Greek, includes the first five Books of the Bible. It contains *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy*. Originally, they were one work, but were later divided for the Greek translation at Alexandria in 250 B.C. circa. The title of each Book arises from the opening words of each section.

The Torah describes Creation and the Fall, the Universal Flood and God's selection of a nation through which the Messiah would descend, and the giving of the Law at Sinai. These writings were composed by Moses in around 1440 to 1400 B.C., with the epilogue by Phinehas, Aaron's grandson.

God Speaks to Moses Face to Face

To Moses I speak face to face, with words that he can hear.. with others I speak in dreams and visions.

(Numbers 12:7-8)

Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.

(Deuteronomy 34:10)

When Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with the Lord, he would hear the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the covenant from between the cherubim.

(Numbers 7:89)

As we see from Scripture, a great part of the Pentateuch is represented as a direct record of what God spoke directly to Moses His prophet. Scripture also reveals that Moses had the habit of recording current events along his many travels of forty years leadership in the wilderness. The Bible declares:

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Write this as a reminder in a book and recite it in the hearing of Joshua.”

(Exodus 17:14)

Moses wrote this song the same day...

(Deuteronomy 31:22)

And Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord.. Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people.

(Exodus 24:4,7)

Moses wrote down their starting points, stage by stage, by commandment of the Lord.

(Numbers 33:2)

And Phinehas wrote in Deuteronomy:

When Moses had finished writing down in a book the words of this law to the very end, Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord saying, “Take this book of the law and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God. Let it remain there as a witness against you.”

(Deuteronomy 31:24)

THE PROPHETS

The second section of the Old Testament is of *The Prophets*. This is not just a reference to the Books of the prophets from Isaiah to Malachi that bear their names, but it includes also the history of God's chosen people which the former prophets recorded as part of their duty.

These Books are referred to as the *Former Prophets* and contain; *Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings*. They record the entry and conquest of Canaan, the establishment of the monarchy, and conclude with the exile of the southern kingdom of Israel.

The Bible gives clear indications, as can be shown from Scripture below, that the writers were contemporary and include Samuel, Nathan and Gad, among others:

Now the acts of king David, from first to last, are written in the records of the seer Samuel, and in the records of the prophet Nathan, and in the records of the seer Gad.

(1 Chronicles 29:29)

Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, from first to last are they not written in the history of the prophet Nathan, and in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the visions of the seer Iddio concerning Jeroboam son of Nebat.

(2 Chronicles 9:29)

Now the acts of Rehoaboam from first to last, are they not written in the records of the prophet Shemiah and of the seer Iddo.

(2 Chronicles 12:15)

The rest of the acts of Abijah his behaviour and his deeds are written in the story of the prophet Iddo.

(2 Chronicles 13:22)

Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah from first to last, the prophet son of Amoz wrote.

(2 Chronicles 26.22)

The rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his good deeds, are written in the vision of the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.

(2 Chronicles 32:32)

Also the foundation of a school of prophets by Samuel is a further assurance that records were kept as a witness for the following generations. Since the time of Moses the habit of adding the latest Scriptures to those already in the sanctuary was maintained. It was initiated by Joshua and later imitated by Samuel:

Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the recorder...

(2 Samuel 20:24b)

So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made statutes and ordinances for them at Shechem. Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law.

(Joshua 24:25-26b)

Samuel told the people the rights and duties of the kingship; and he wrote them in a book and laid it up before the Lord.

(1 Samuel 10:25)

Eliakim son of Hilkiyah who was in charge of the palace, and Shebnah the secretary, and Joab son of Asaph, the recorder.

(2 Kings 18:18b)

It is a Jewish tradition that Jeremiah was responsible for collecting together the history recorded by the former prophets and compiling it into one consecutive narrative. Supporting this tradition are link phrases throughout the Books themselves and repeated only in the Book of Jeremiah. His main sources would have been from the records of the school of prophets mentioned earlier. The Bible indicates that Israel's secular historical records were also used as sources for the divine account. They include:

The book of the wars of the Lord...(Numbers 21:14).

The book of Jashar...(Joshua 10:13b).

Acts of Solomon...(1 Kings 11:41).

The book of the annals of the kings of Judah (1 Kings 15:7c).

We must not confuse these books with the Book of Kings and Chronicles that are part of our present Bible. These were the official court records kept by Middle East nations in ancient times. We learn from *2 Samuel 20:24* that such records existed. Therefore, the history recorded by the prophets in our Bible is also God's viewpoint on secular historical records.

The use of non-biblical sources must not be considered inconsistent with the divine inspiration of the Bible. All truth comes from God and He is completely sovereign in His choice of the instruments He chooses to portray this truth.

Within the second main section of the Hebrew Bible are also the individual Books of prophecies written by the *Latter Prophets*, which include Isaiah through to Malachi and are divided into

major and minor prophets. To summarize: *The Former Prophets*, Joshua to 2 Kings and the *Latter*, Isaiah to Malachi.

The Book of Joshua was composed by Phinehas in around 1300 B.C.; and Judges to 2 Kings were compiled by Jeremiah around 700 to 600 B.C., using the contemporary accounts of Samuel, Nathan, Gad etc. Baruch, Jeremiah's secretary, appended the epilogue, possibly in Babylon. The remaining prophetic Books were composed by those who bear their names.

THE SACRED WRITINGS

The third section of Scripture in the Hebrew Bible, and referred to by our Lord Jesus in the New Testament, are the *Psalms*, or the *Sacred Writings*. These include 1 and 2 Chronicles up to the Book of Ester, Lamentations and the poetical and wisdom Books from Job to the Song of Solomon.

These beautiful writings were compiled by Ezra and Nehemiah at the end of the Jewish exile in Babylon. 2 Maccabees refers to the writings and commentaries of Nehemiah and the fact that he established a library and collected the writings of David and letters of the kings concerning offerings, and books about the kings and prophets:

These same facts are found in the royal records and in the memoirs of Nehemiah, who established a library and collected the writings of David, letters of the kings concerning offerings, and books about the kings and prophets.

(2 Maccabees 2:13)

The Question of Canonicity

The question concerning how it was decided which books would become part of the Bible is the question of *canonicity*. Many inquirers of the Word of God would want to know why some books were included in the canon while others were rejected. The word *canon* comes from the root word *reed* which is equivalent to the English word *cane*.

The reed was used as a measuring rod and came to mean *standard*. The Church Father Origen used the word canon in the third century to denote what we call the *rule of faith*, that is the standard by which to measure and evaluate. Later on the term meant a list or index, and when applied to Scripture canon meant an officially accepted list of Books.

The Church Did Not Create the Canon

It is important to understand that the Church did not create the canon; by this we mean that the Church did not decide which books would be called Scripture, the inspired Word of God. The publication of a list of accepted Books by the Jewish Council did not make them inspired.

These Books were inspired the moment God gave His message to the prophets. Instead, the Jewish Council recognized which books had been inspired from the beginning, and the divine authority that God had given to them.

From the writings of early Church history Geisler and Nix have presented some main principles that guided the recognition and collection of the inspired Books of the Old and New Testament, which are as follows: (1) Was the book written by a prophet of God? (2) Did the message tell the truth about God? (3) Did the message come with the power of God? (4) Was it accepted by the people of God?

Miracles and signs frequently authenticated the prophets message and separated the true spokesmen of God from the false prophets. God gave the prophets Moses and Elijah miraculous powers to prove their ministry and the apostle Paul's ministry was attested to by signs and wonders:

The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, signs and wonders and mighty works.

(2 Corinthians 12:12)

The Council at Jamnia

Before the Old Testament canon was made, each Book was written and circulated separately. Then a list of inspired Books was acknowledged and combined into one volume. This list of Old Testament Scriptures was completed in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah in the fifth century B.C. and authorized by Jesus in A.D. 33. It was then later approved by the Jewish Council at Jamnia in A.D. 98.

Many liberal scholars have theorized that the council of rabbis met at Jamnia to agree upon which books would be included in the Hebrew canon and which would not, but this is not the case. The real motive for the convention was not to fix the canon of Scripture, but to question the presence of certain books that were already there.

In other words, the primary concern of the Council was to determine the right of certain books to remain in the canon and not the acceptance of new ones. The fact is that no human authority and no council of rabbis ever made a biblical Book inspired. The Books that make up our modern Bible were inspired by God and through long usage in the Jewish community their authority was recognized.

Hebrew Canon Established in Fourth Century B.C.

The last Books written and recognized as canonical were *Chronicles* and *Malachi*, the last Book of the Old Testament. Both of these appear with the rest of the Hebrew canonical Books in the Greek translation of the Hebrew canon which was composed in Alexandria in around 250 to 150 B.C. This supports the fact that the Hebrew canon was fixed long before the Council of Jamnia in A.D. 98

Another reason which supports the conclusion that the Hebrew canon was fixed as early as the fourth century B.C. comes from the Jewish people themselves, who from the fourth century on were convinced that the voice of God had ceased to speak directly to the people. From the four hundred years between the close of Old Testament Scripture and the events of the New Testament, the prophetic voices had been silenced and no revelation was given. Books that were written after the prophetic period had closed were considered outside the realm of inspired Scripture.

Jesus Authenticates the Old Testament

The fact that God *inspired* the Books of the Old Testament is repeated throughout the Scriptures themselves. The apostle Paul tells us that, “*All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness*” (2 Timothy 3:16). I have written more on this subject in chapter twenty-three of this book.

All the New Testament writers, and most importantly Jesus Himself, powerfully demonstrated the authority of the Old Testament Scriptures as being direct statements from God. In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus states that Isaiah was the author of the Book that bears his name, and in the Gospel of Luke He approves the authenticity of the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms.

As God in the flesh Jesus Christ is omniscient, and in this authoritative position He authenticated the literal and historical accuracy of the Old Testament manuscripts, including those narratives most often considered mythological by the critics, such as the story of Creation, Noah's Flood, Jonah and the whale and the Book of Daniel and so on.

Jesus often affirmed the accuracy of Scripture and left no room for any such supposition as that of degrees of inspiration and fallibility. It is of the Old Testament, without any exception, that He said, "*The scripture cannot be broken.*"

If the Old Testament had contained uninspired books or errors, Jesus would have informed us and proceeded to correct them. Christ also confirmed His belief in the Old Testament miracles when He made reference to Elijah, Lot's wife, and the Exodus, to mention only a few. The apostle Paul literally based his entire argument on one single letter, showing the strict literal accuracy of Scripture:

Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made; it does not say, and to seeds, as of many, but it says and to your seed, that is to one person.

(Galatians 3:16)

Surviving Copies of Old Testament Hebrew Manuscripts

The most important discoveries of Hebrew manuscripts in modern times are the Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in 1947 and the following years, and the Cairo Geniza collection discovered in the 1890s.

The Dead Sea Scrolls, which date from the third century B.C. to the first century A.D., are the oldest and most significant Hebrew Old Testament manuscripts we have today. Of these remarkable documents we have copies of every Book of the Old Testament

except Ester. These manuscripts are highly significant because they confirm the extraordinary accuracy of copies made much later.

The Cairo Geniza Manuscripts:

At the close of the nineteenth century numerous fragments dating from the sixth century A.D. to the eighth century were discovered in an old synagogue in Cairo, Egypt. The documents were found in a *geniza*, a storage room where faulty or worn out manuscripts were hidden until they could be disposed of. This little storage room had been sealed off and forgotten until it was re-discovered in the 1890s.

It has yielded as many as 200,000 fragments which include a large quantity of biblical texts in the Hebrew and Aramaic language. The biblical texts from the Cairo Geniza date from the fifth century A.D. and are housed in various universities and libraries around the world.

A large amount of them are in the Cambridge University and some of the better ones are kept in the Enelow Memorial Collection at the Jewish Theological Seminary of New York.

Codex Babylonicus Petropolitanus:

One of the earliest complete Old Testament manuscripts is the Codex Babylonicus Petropolitanus which dates from A.D. 800. This document was prepared from a corrected text of Rabbi Aaron ben Moses ben Asher and is located in the public library of Leningrad.

The Aleppo Codex:

The Aleppo Codex, dated A.D. 900, is another of the oldest complete Masoretic manuscripts of the entire Old Testament.

This exceptionally valuable work was rediscovered in the year of 1958, but had been partially destroyed in the Israeli riots of 1947.

The Second Firkovitch Collection:

The largest collection of Hebrew Old Testament manuscripts in the world is the *Second Firkovitch Collection* in Leningrad. It contains 1,582 biblical items on parchment and fourteen Hebrew Old Testament manuscripts dated from between the years 1121 A.D. and 929 A.D. which originated from the Cairo Geniza.

Museum Catalogues:

The British Museum Catalogue lists almost 161 Old Testament manuscripts, and the Bodleian Library Catalogue lists 146 Old Testament manuscripts, each containing a large number of fragments. In the United States there are thousands of Semitic manuscript fragments, about five per-cent of which are biblical. The British Museum Codex, dated at A.D. 950, contains parts of the Book of Genesis through to Deuteronomy. The Codex of the Prophets of Leningrad, dated to A.D. 916, contains the Book of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve minor prophets.

The Art of Accurate Copying

Even though the Hebrew Old Testament does not have the same quantity of manuscripts that the New Testament has, there are several lines of evidence to support the conclusion that their quantity and textual quality is nothing less than remarkable when compared to other documents of antiquity.

Over the last four thousand years Jewish and Christian scribes were unbelievably precise and accurate in copying the original manuscripts of the Scriptures. In Judaism a succession of scholars were charged with the difficult task of standardizing and

preserving the biblical texts, taking extreme measures and great care to fence out all possible introduction of errors.

The scribes who were responsible for this work were called *Masoretic*, which comes from the Hebrew word used for *wall* or *fence*. These God-fearing scribes used extreme care in meticulously and painstakingly counting every letter of the Bible text. When a copy was completed, a master copy examiner would count over every individual letter to make sure no errors had crept in. If one was found, the whole copy was destroyed to prevent it being used in the future.

Sir Frederic Kenyon better describes the great discipline and overwhelming respect these Masoretes exercised in copying the Old Testament Scriptures. He wrote:

Besides recording varieties of reading tradition or conjecture, the Masoretes undertook a number of calculations which do not enter into the ordinary sphere of textual criticism. They numbered the verses, words, and letters of every book. They calculated the middle word and the middle letter of each..

These trivialities, as we may rightly consider them, had yet the effect of securing minute attention to the precise transmission of the text; and they are but an excessive manifestation of a respect for the sacred Scriptures which in itself deserves nothing but praise. The Masoretes were indeed anxious that not one jot, nor title, not one smallest letter nor one tiny part of a letter of the Law should pass away or be lost.

According to the Talmud there were even specifications for the kind of skins to be used and the exact size of each column. Certain rules were made to govern the kind of ink the scribes used and to dictate the spacing of words. This extreme care the Jewish scribes exercised in copying the Holy Scriptures down through

the centuries would explain, at least in part, for the scarcity of early Hebrew manuscripts. The strict rules and reverence for the biblical texts demanded the destruction of any faulty or defective copies that were made.

Non-Hebrew Old Testament Manuscripts

The Septuagint:

Just as the Jewish people were obliged to abandon their native Hebrew language for Aramaic in ancient times, likewise, they were forced to abandon the Aramaic language for Greek in the Hellenistic centres throughout the Mediterranean where they had been taken and dispersed during the military campaigns of Alexander the Great.

However, Alexander showed considerable favour towards the Jewish people and it is even said that when he besieged Jerusalem, the high priest requested an audience and showed him from the second, seventh and eight chapters of the Book of Daniel that his whole life and career had been predicted by the God of Israel more than two-hundred years before his birth. As a result, Alexander spared Jerusalem and took with him many from the royal family of Judah and made them royal administrators of his conquered kingdoms.

As the people of God were now scattered from their native homeland, there was a great need for the Scriptures to be translated into the common language of that time. This translation, known as the *Septuagint*, or *LXX*, for the seventy translators who translated it, was composed in around 250 B.C. in a city founded by and named after Alexander the Great – Alexandria, Egypt.

The Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament provided the entire Gentile world with the hundreds of prophecies concerning the Messiah's coming as a humble servant who would provide salvation and a way to God for all peoples. It also provided a

precedent for Christian missionaries to make translations of the Bible into the various languages and dialects of the ancient world.

The Apocrypha:

Even though the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament provides overwhelming support for the textual integrity of the Old Testament, it does differ slightly in terms of its contents and arrangements. In addition to the original number of Books in the Hebrew canon, the translators of the Septuagint included fourteen books which were never part of the Hebrew text.

These books are the Apocrypha and they continue to appear in Christian Bibles in spite of doubts to their spiritual value. St. Jerome expressed such doubts and included them in his Latin Vulgate only because of their presence in the Septuagint.

The historian Josephus supports the view of those who reject the Apocrypha as being part of the Old Testament canon. He actually lists the names of the Books in the Hebrew Bible and groups them into twenty-two volumes. He stated:

For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, but only twenty-two books, which contain records of all past times; which are justly believed to be divine, and of them, five belong to Moses, which contain his laws... The prophets who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life.

Further, renowned experts Geisler and Nix give many testimonies that argue against the recognition of the Apocrypha:

1. The Alexandrian Jewish philosopher, Philo (20 B.C. - 40 A.D.) continually quoted the Old Testament, and even recognized the threefold classification, but never quoted from the Apocrypha as inspired.
2. Josephus (A.D. 30-100) explicitly excludes the Apocrypha, numbering the Books of the Old Testament as twenty-two. Neither does he quote the apocryphal books as Scripture.
3. Jesus and the New Testament writers never once quote the Apocrypha, although there are hundreds of quotes and references to almost all the canonical Books of the Old Testament.
4. The Jewish scholars of Jamnia did not recognize the Apocrypha.
5. No canon or council of the Christian Church recognized the Apocrypha as inspired for nearly four centuries. Many of the great fathers of the early Church spoke out against the Apocrypha. For example, Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem and Athanasius.
6. Jerome (A.D. 340-420) the great scholar and translator of the Latin Vulgate, rejected the Apocrypha as part of the canon. He said that the Church reads them for example of life and instructions of manners, but does not apply them to establish doctrine. He disputed with Augustine across the Mediterranean on this point. At first Jerome refused even to translate the apocryphal books into Latin, but later made a hurried translation of a few of them. After his death the

apocryphal books were brought into his Latin Vulgate directly from the old Latin version.

7. Many Roman Catholic scholars rejected the canonicity of the Apocrypha through the reformation period.
8. Not until A.D. 1546, in a polemical action at the counter Reformation Council of Trent did the apocryphal books receive full canonical status by the Roman Catholic Church.

Ancient Translations Provide Valuable Witness

The various ancient translations of the Old Testament that we have mentioned above provide the textual scholar with a valuable witness to the original text. The Septuagint preserves a textual tradition from the third century B.C., and the Samaritan Pentateuch no later than the fifth century B.C.

The text that the Masoretes preserved is called the *Masoretic Text* and is the standard Hebrew text used today. However, the earliest Masoretic copy of the Old Testament dates from around A.D. 1000. It was not until the turbulent year of 1947 that confirmation of its amazing accuracy was revealed through an incredible discovery off the shores of Israel's Dead Sea.

10

ANOTHER GREAT ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERY

The Scrolls of Qumran

Thus says the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel... Put them in an earthenware vessel, that they may last for a long time.

(Jeremiah 32:14)

I will gather them from all countries where I have driven them and I will bring them back... I will plant them in this land.

(Jeremiah 32:37-38, 41b)

In the turbulent year of 1947, just before Israel became a nation, a most extraordinary discovery occurred among the barren hills near the northwest shore of the Dead Sea. A Bedouin shepherd boy, Muhammad ed – Dib, went hunting in the Judean Desert in search of a stray goat.

Believing it to have wandered into one of the caves, he threw a rock inside to scare it out and instead heard the sound of breaking crockery. Intrigued, he and his friends went to explore and climbed up into a cave where they discovered some earthenware jars containing several scrolls of leather parchment covered in ancient Hebrew writing.

Immediately, Muhammad brought his finds to an antiquities dealer named Kando in Bethlehem. Kando was very puzzled by the script on the scrolls and sought the assistance from the head of St Mark's Monastery in Bethlehem, Mar Athanasius Yeshua Samuel.

The scrolls greatly impressed Mar Samuel, and even though he was no expert in ancient Semitic languages, he believed the scrolls to be of great value and purchased four of them from Kando. The

other three scrolls were sold to another antiquities dealer, Feidi Salahi, who in turn sold them to Professor Eleazar Sukenik of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In February 1948 the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem were shown Mar Samuel's scrolls and the resident scholars John Trevor, William Brownlee, and Millar Burrows were permitted to study and photograph them.

It was not long before this great archaeological find was announced to the *London Times*, which resulted in the publication of Mar Samuel's and Eleazar Sukenik's scrolls in the following years.

The discovery, acquisition, and publishing of these remarkable discoveries took place during a turbulent time in Israel's history. When the Arab – Israeli war broke out in 1948, Mar Samuel took his scrolls to the United States and offered them for sale in an advertisement in the *Wall Street Journal*. They were soon purchased by archaeologist Yigael Yadin on behalf of the State of Israel. Today they are on public display at the *Shrine of the Book* in Jerusalem.

The monumental discovery by the young Bedouin shepherd boy initiated further archaeological explorations, and by 1956 eleven caves yielding thousands of priceless manuscripts had been discovered.

What the Scrolls Contain

We can refer to the Dead Sea Scrolls as a large ancient library consisting of twelve scrolls, along with innumerable fragments of papyrus and parchment that represent hundreds of religious and secular documents. They were written mostly in Hebrew, with a smaller part in Aramaic and Greek, and were composed between the third century B.C. and first century A.D.

The most intriguing discovery was the immense library of biblical manuscripts in Cave 4, which contained fragments of every Book

of the Hebrew Bible except Ester. Multiple copies of biblical texts such as Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, Deuteronomy, Isaiah and Genesis had laid hidden in these desert caves for almost two-thousand years. They are not of course the original documents that make up the Hebrew Bible, but are the oldest copies of the original that we possess today.

The Dead Sea Scrolls remain our most reliable, historical, and theological sources dating back to the New Testament period. They also throw much light on the religious beliefs and events during the Second Temple period, those four-hundred years of Jewish history from the end of the Old Testament to the beginning of the New Testament period, of which the Bible is literally silent. All the scrolls discovered in the caves at Qumran have been edited and published and are available to the academic world today to view and study.

What the Scrolls Tell Us About the Old Testament

The most significant single contribution of the discovery at Qumran has been its witness to the earliest known text of the Hebrew Bible. Until this amazing find it might have been difficult for any Bible scholar to prove that the original Hebrew Scriptures from the Old Testament were accurately copied without error over the last two-thousand years.

The oldest complete Hebrew Manuscript was a Masoretic text (*The Ben Asher Codex*) which dates to about 1008 A.D. Being the oldest existing Old Testament Hebrew Bible, the Ben Asher Codex served as a basis for the standard edition of the Hebrew Bible, *Kittel's Biblia Hebraica*, as well as for Christian translations such as the King James version.

The Dead Sea Scrolls give incredible proof for the accuracy of Bible translations down through the centuries. Scholars discovered that the manuscript copies of the most authoritative Hebrew texts

were practically identical to these scrolls, aside from some small variations consisting mainly in spelling alterations.

All doubts were settled with the discovery in Cave 1 of the entire Book of Isaiah, dated to around 125 B.C., which is almost 1,000 years earlier than the Masoretic Ben Asher Codex. When both copies were compared they proved to be identical in more than ninety-five per-cent of the case, again containing very small insignificant variations.

This incredible accuracy proved to be the case for all the other biblical scrolls discovered at Qumran and gives us a glimpse of the overwhelming respect that impelled the Jewish scribes to faithfully copy the Scriptures down through the centuries.

In the previous chapter I shared with you the methods the Masoretic scribes used to meticulously copy the Bible through the intervening years. The Dead Sea Scrolls further prove the fidelity of this system of copying. When the Hebrew Bible of today is compared with scroll copies originating two centuries before Christ, the accuracy is amazing. There is absolutely no evidence of careless work or meddling with the original texts.

Sir Frederick G. Kenyon, former director of the British Museum, wrote concerning the importance the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has in authenticating the Old Testament Manuscripts in our possession today. He said:

It is reassuring at the end to find that the general result of all these discoveries and all this study is to strengthen the proof of the authenticity of the Scriptures, and our conviction that we have in our hands, in substantial integrity, the veritable Word of God.

Who Wrote Them?

Scholars have made various suggestions as to the identity of the community responsible for the writing, collecting, and preserving of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Those most commonly named were of the three most important Jewish religious communities of that time, the *Essenes*, the *Pharisees*, and the *Sadducees*. Archaeology shows the Essenes to be the most convincing of these suggestions and remains the most dominant view among scholars today.

The Essenes were a Jewish community of ascetics who lived mainly in three communities; Qumran at the Dead Sea, the Essene Quarter at Jerusalem and at Damascus. They appear to have existed from around 300 - 200 B.C., until the destruction of their communities at Qumran and Jerusalem in the wars of A.D. 68.

These men of God established their religious community near the shores of the Dead Sea where they faithfully copied each Old Testament Scroll and composed numerous secular writings including; Bible commentaries, rules for religious rituals and community life, texts to prepare the Qumran sect for war at the end of time, and writings that claim to foretell the future.

On my second visit to Israel in 2007 I had the privilege to visit the breath-taking ancient remains of the Essene settlement at Qumran. This large desert area consisted of a watchtower, a refectory, a large area for assemblies and ritual baths, and a scriptorium where the scribes would spend long hours copying the Old Testament Manuscripts.

The Essenes were withdrawing from society to purify themselves and to get ready for the Messiah, whose time was approaching. It is interesting that many of the Qumran writings condemn the ritual abuses of the Temple priests at Jerusalem, who were the same group of Pharisees that Jesus was so often at odds with.

The fact that Daniel's prophetic date of chapter nine was drawing near could also have influenced the creation of the Qumran sect. According to Dr Schonfield, a Dead Sea Scrolls expert, one of the

scrolls contain a discussion among the Pharisees as to why the Messiah had not yet come, as his time was due. “No one except this Nazarene” they said.

This might explain the questions posed to John the Baptist, “Are you the Christ?” “Are you the Prophet?” All the Jews had been expecting the Messiah to appear at the time of Christ.

Why the Scrolls Were Deposited

Hebrew scholar Yigael Yadin thought it very significant that the scrolls would be made public at the time the recreation of the State of Israel was announced. Yadin is the son of Professor Sukenik, who bought the first three scrolls for the University of Jerusalem. Yadin quoted a very unusual and significant statement in one of the Dead Sea Scrolls in his book, *Message of the Scrolls*. It is called *The Assumption of Moses*, and the writer is instructing the preservation of some of the scrolls. It says:

Preserve the scrolls which I shall deliver unto you...
anoint them with oil and put them away in earthen
vessels... until his name should be called upon, until
the day of repentance, in the visitation wherewith the
Lord will visit them in the consummation of the end
of days.

The Roman military had decided to wipe out Jewry in Palestine. This campaign started in A.D. 66 and lasted until the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Jesus had warned His followers of this siege in Luke 21.

New evidence suggests that the Essenes were aware of the new religious leader in Israel known as Jesus of Nazareth and the group of writings about Him known as the New Testament. The Christian historian Eusebius, writing around 300 A.D., believed that the Essenes were influenced in their beliefs by Christianity.

It is very probable that Christ's warning of the coming destruction of Jerusalem had compelled the Qumran community to rescue the sacred texts and place them in a safe place. In A.D. 68 cave eight was sealed with its safely preserved Scriptures inside. Scores of Scriptures were sealed in jars in other caves bringing the total number of caves to eleven.

Delayed Publishing of Cave 4

While the scrolls found in Cave 1 were all published within ten years of their discovery, and those of the other caves by 1962, Cave 4 proved to be different. After forty-five years the original team responsible for the huge number of scrolls discovered in this cave, approximately 15,000 fragments representing some 600 manuscripts, had published only twenty per-cent of the Dead Sea Scrolls in their possession since 1947.

The large amount of material found in Cave 4, together with the poor condition of the fragments, which were not found in storage jars but beneath the cave floor, led the editor in chief Roland de Vaux to set up an international editorial committee of eight men in the spring of 1953. But, unfortunately, the funding for the project eventually dried up and the scholars were forced to return to their academic institutions, further slowing down the editing and publishing process.

This delay was unacceptable not only to the scholarly community, but to the general public also. Moreover, mismanagement of the original editorial team, and the absence from its list of an Israeli representative, led to many suspicions of academic scandal.

Not until decades later were Israelis invited to join the team, when Emmanuel Tov of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem was appointed editor in chief of the project and expanded the editorial team to sixty members, which included many Jewish scholars. There were, in fact, no conspiracies or scandals, only incompetence and pride on the part of the initial editorial team.

When the scrolls were first discovered, many Christian scholars wondered if they might contain evidence of early Christianity or of Jesus Christ. Despite their genuine interest, all hopes were frustrated by the decision of the original small team to withhold publication and release of a large number of these manuscripts. Finally, after a series of events and much public pressure, photographic negatives of all Cave 4 Scrolls were released to the public over the following years.

Access was given to any qualified scholar interested and able to read Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. No longer were they under the exclusive control of a small editorial team. Almost a decade later, several different English translations and textual editions were published.

Revelations About Christianity

Since the Dead Sea Scrolls generally come to us from a time before the founding of Christianity, they offer a context for understanding the expected nature and role of the Messiah in Judaism. Many of the scrolls in Cave 4 reveal a high view of the coming Messiah as being a divine agent with supernatural powers and qualities. The quotation below from one of the scrolls illustrates this understanding:

His spirit will hover over the humble, and He renews the faithful in His strength. For He will glorify the pious with the throne of His eternal kingdom, free the captives, open the eyes of the blind, raise up those oppressed... For He shall heal the critically wounded, He shall resurrect the dead, He shall proclaim good news to the poor.... He shall lead the holy ones, and the hungry He shall enrich... Scroll 4Q521... The Messianic Apocalypse.

Cave 4 Reveals Dual Role of Messiah!

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

(Isaiah 11:1)

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the rulers staff from between his feet.

(Genesis 49:10a)

When they look on the one whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him.

(Zechariah 12:10b)

He was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole.

(Isaiah 53:5c)

For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgressions of my people.

(Isaiah 53:8)

In 1991 the world was amazed and Christian hopes realized to hear that one of the unpublished scrolls from Cave 4 made direct references to a *Messiah* who suffered crucifixion for the sins of men. This intriguing five line scroll also referred to the Messianic prophecy of the prophet Isaiah quoted above, who identifies the Jewish Messiah as one who will suffer for the sins of His people and be rejected and killed.

Doctor Eisenman, Professor of Middle East Religions of California State University, translated this precious scroll and concluded that the text was extremely significant because it shows that whatever person or group was responsible for these writings was operating in the same Messianic framework of early Christianity!

The religious Jews of the time of Christ did not want to see that the Messiah would first come to be rejected and crucified for their sins. They got confused by combining the characteristics of His two main events into one.

The prophets of long ago spoke both of a *Suffering Servant* and a *Kingly conquering Messiah*. This Nazarene was not the ruler they had in mind. The discovery of this scroll, however, reveals that the Essene writer understood the dual role of the promised Messiah as Christians did.

The scroll also identifies the Messiah as the *Shoot of Jesse* and the *Branch of David* and declares that He was *pierced* and *wounded*. In addition, it describes the Messiah as a leader of the community who was put to death, and as the *Sceptre*, which refers to the prophecy of *Genesis 49:10*.

This remarkable discovery confirms the historical accuracy of the New Testament records about the crucifixion of Jesus and disproves any arguments that assume the Gospel accounts to be only a myth.

Son of the Most High Scroll

*He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.
The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David.*

(Luke 1:32)

*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the
Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born
will be called the Son of God.*

(Luke 1:35)

Another of the unusual Cave 4 Scrolls that was unpublished for many years, known as *Scroll 4Q246*, also makes extraordinary references to the future Messiah as *The Son of God* and *The Son of the Most High*.

It is quite fascinating to consider the appearance of these statements inside a Jewish text when we consider the current view of Christian and Jewish conceptions of the promised Messiah. While most Jews believe the Messiah will be a great *man* like Moses with a mission from God, Christians believe the biblical teaching that the Messiah would be the *Son* of God.

This scroll suggests that either some of the Essenes accepted the claims of Jesus to be the Son of God or predicted this concept based on a correct interpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Another possibility is that the 4Q246 Scroll is a direct quote from the Gospel of Luke quoted above, which according to biblical experts was already circulating among the Christian community at the time the scroll was composed.

If we compare the words in the scroll text to those in the Gospel the parallels are identical. It says: “He shall be called son of God.. they shall designate him son of the Most High” (Scroll 4Q246).

Cave Seven May Contain New Testament Quotes

In 1971 a Spanish biblical scholar named Jose O Callaghan studied some small fragments found in Cave 7, which according to him appeared to be the following New Testament quotes, which I have listed below. However, the fragments are quite small and damaged and required hard work to determine the precise text:

And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship.

(Acts 27:38)

All by itself the soil produces corn.

(Mark 4:28)

He saw the disciples straining at the oars.

(Mark 6:48)

For if anyone be a hearer of the word, and not a doer...

(James 1:23a)

And Jesus answering said to them, "Render to Caesar..."

(Mark 12:17a)

*And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord
Jesus Christ...*

(Romans 5:11a)

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness...

(1 Timothy 3:16a)

An article appeared in *The New York Times*: "If O'Callaghan's theory is accepted, it would prove that at least one of the Gospels, that of St. Mark, was written only a few years after the death of Jesus." As with other matters connected with the scrolls, many disagree with O'Callaghan's conclusions and more work needs to be done. If, on the other hand, these texts are actually portions of these Christian writings they would be the earliest New Testament texts ever discovered.

11

WHO IS JESUS OF NAZARETH?

Throughout history many liberal scholars and the general public itself have given a variety of answers to the question: “Who is Jesus of Nazareth?” Some hold on to claims that reject His deity as scriptural teaching and maintain that the Trinity was never part of the teaching of Jesus or His disciples, but a mere invention of the Church centuries later.

Others see our Lord as a good moral teacher, but totally reject the Bible’s claim for His deity and atoning death on the Cross for our redemption. These opinions, as we will see in the following chapters, are totally contradicted by historical records and plain logic.

We already examined in chapter six the abundant evidence from the many first-century secular sources whose writings bear testimony to the fact that the early Church worshipped Jesus as God from the very beginning. Nevertheless, it is the New Testament evangelists who give us the strongest evidence concerning the life, death and resurrection of the most famous and controversial Person in world history – Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

These first-century writers encourage us to examine for ourselves the importance of their witness to the identity of Christ and His relevance to each one of us today. They challenge us to consider not only what He did and taught but, more importantly, who He claimed to be.

Jesus Claims Equality with the Father

When Jesus was here on Earth, He spoke of Himself in the most extraordinary terms. He claimed to be the bread of life, and promised that, “*He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he*

who believes in me will never be thirsty.” He claimed to be the light of the world, and pledged that whoever followed Him would never walk in darkness but would have the light of life. He also claimed to be the “*way the truth and the life,*” and that no one could come to God except through Him.

These are quite remarkable statements, as no other person in human history has ever made the incredible claim to be the means by which other peoples’ spiritual hunger could be satisfied, or the means by which they could enter into a right relationship with God the Father.

Yet Jesus made many other claims which transcend even these. Although He is never reported as using the phrase *I am God*, there are many instances in which He made the same stupendous claim using other terms. He taught that all men should honour Him as they honour the Father, and that to know and see Him was equal to knowing and seeing the Father:

Philip said to him, “Lord show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?”

(John 14:8-10b)

Then Jesus cried out: “Whoever believes in me, believes not in me, but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me, sees him who sent me. I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness.”

(John 12:44-47)

What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father’s hand. The Father and I are one. The Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus replied, “I have shown you many good works from the

Father. For which of these are you going to stone me?" The Jews answered, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you, but for blasphemy, because you, though only a human being, are making yourself God."

(John 10:29-34)

In the above account it is clear that the Jews understood our Lord's words as a direct claim to deity. Their response shows that they fully understood that He was making Himself equal to God the Father. According to the Jewish Law, claims like these were regarded as blasphemy and worthy of a crime punishable by death. Again in chapter eight of John's Gospel Jesus is in a dialogue with His opponents and they claim Abraham is their father. Our Lord responds by saying:

Your ancestor Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day; he saw it and was glad. Then the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old and have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am." So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

(John 8:56-59)

By relying on the Old Testament we see that in the above passage Jesus is referring to chapter three of Exodus where God reveals Himself to Moses as *I AM*. This is a title which speaks of absolute timeless self-existence and qualities which can be true only of God.

By using the divine name *I AM*, Jesus is again making a clear claim to deity and pre-existence, and the reaction of His opponents prove that they understood His references to mean exactly this. Their knowledge of Moses' Law prompted them to take the judgement into their own hands and they set about to stone Him to death for blasphemy.

Jesus also used the divine name during the last day of His life; just before being taken into custody by the detachment of soldiers sent to arrest Him. In John chapter eighteen Christ asked the approaching troops, “*Whom are you looking for?*” When they replied, “*Jesus of Nazareth,*” He told them, “*I am he.*”

This all seems quite normal, yet the soldiers’ reaction was incredible. When Jesus said, “*I am he,*” they drew back and fell to the ground. At that point there was no resistance from Jesus and His followers and yet an entire detachment of troops collapsed to the ground in a heap.

The only credible explanation for this seems to rest in the phrase that our Lord used to identify Himself. Biblical translators have added the word *he* in order to round out the sentence, but what Jesus actually said was *I AM*. There was something about the majesty and glory of these words and the way in which they were spoken that brought the squad of armed soldiers to the ground in a spectacular demonstration of the presence and power of God.

It is also very clear from the four Gospel accounts concerning Jesus’ trial that the main crime He was convicted of was blasphemy:

Then the high priest said to him, “I put you under oath before the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.” Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming in the clouds of heaven.” Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your verdict?” They answered, “He deserves death.”

(Matthew 26:63-67)

Knowing that the prophet Daniel had spoken of the Messiah as one like *a son of man*, Jesus deliberately referred to Himself in this manner several times in the New Testament. According to

Jewish custom, the only occasion when a high priest was permitted to tear his garment was to express the horror of any blasphemy uttered in his presence. It was only to Jesus' reply that the high priest did so, in this case, and proceeded to have Him condemned to death. The accusation against Jesus would have been correct if He was not who He claimed to be.

Jesus Makes Indirect Claims to Deity

In addition to openly declaring His equality to God the Father, Jesus said and did a lot of things which, although not direct claims to be God, show that He regarded Himself as being in the same position. On one occasion He asked the Pharisees a very clever and important question:

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: "What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." He said to them, "How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, 'The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet?' If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?"

(Mark 12:35-37b)

Here Jesus puts His shallow-minded opponents into a difficult situation. The only explanation was that the Lord whom God addressed was His divine Son who could only become the Son of David later through the incarnation.

Unlike any other religious leader, Jesus also frequently appealed to His ability to prove equality with God the Father by predicting the future or by performing spectacular miracles. On one occasion He forgave a man of his sins and appealed to His miracles to prove His divine authority to do so:

And just then some people were carrying a paralyzed man lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." Then some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." But Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and walk?' But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" – he then said to the paralytic – "stand up, take your bed and go to your home."

(Matthew 9:2-7)

Such a question as that posed by Jesus to the religious leaders would have been impossible for the Jews to answer. Statements like these are easy to say, but to accompany them with performance would require the power of God. Christ was aware that His audience had doubts about His statements so He proved His authority to them by healing the paralytic.

If Jesus were an impostor, He would have found it easier to just say to the paralyzed man, "Go your way, your sins are forgiven." However, in healing him, Jesus proved that He not only had the power to heal the illness, but the authority to deal with what is often its root cause – sin. At this He was again accused of blasphemy by the scribes for taking to Himself a position reserved for God alone.

Endorsements of Jesus' claims to deity are not only found in the four Gospels, but in many other parts of the Bible as well. I have written about them elsewhere, but we can mention one or two of them here, as they speak of Jesus doing things which only God could do – create and sustain the Universe. The apostle Paul says of Him:

For by him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions

or rulers or powers – all things have been created through him and for him.

(Colossians 1:16-17)

Paul then goes on to say that Jesus is *before all things* and that *by Him all things hold together*. In other words, it is *His* power and wisdom which holds our cosmos together and prevents it from becoming a chaos. It would be difficult to make these statements of Paul clearer or more comprehensive, and to no other person, but to God, could they be referred.

If Jesus Wasn't God, He Wasn't Good

It is very significant that not one recognized religious leader has ever claimed to be God; that is with the exception of Jesus Christ. Jesus actually taught that the entire world revolves around Himself and that the eternal destiny of every living soul is dependent on their acceptance or rejection of Him.

These were stupendous claims for anyone to make and would certainly need to be tested. C.S Lewis, former Professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge University, pointed out how anyone making such claims as those made by Jesus Christ could not be considered a “*good man*” if such claims were false. Lewis claimed that either Jesus was who He claimed to be, or else He was completely insane:

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him. “I am ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.” That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things that Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic on the level with the man who says he is a poached

egg, or else he would be the devil from hell. You must make your choice. Either Jesus was, and is, the Son of God: or else He was a madman or something worse... So let us not come up with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us.

We can also say that if Jesus' claims to deity were false, then He was not only a lunatic, but also a liar and hypocrite, because He taught others to be honest while He Himself was living a great lie. However, this alternative is quite impossible when we consider the miracles and deeds our Lord performed, the words He spoke and the profound impact He has had on the entire world over the last two thousand years.

After examining the evidence for Christ's deity, especially in light of the things we just mentioned, the renowned historian Philip Schaff described how absurd it would be to even contemplate the idea that Jesus was anyone other than God's Divine Son. He wrote:

This testimony if not true, must be downright blasphemy or madness. The former hypothesis cannot stand a moment before the moral purity and dignity of Jesus revealed in His every word and work, and acknowledged by universal consent. Self-deception in a matter so momentous and with an intellect in all respects so clear and so sound, is equally out of the question.

How could He be an enthusiast or a madman who never lost the even balance of His mind, who sailed serenely over all the troubles and persecutions as the sun above the clouds, who always returned the wisest answers to tempting questions, who calmly and deliberately predicted His death on the cross, His

resurrection on the third day, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the founding of His Church, the destruction of Jerusalem – predictions which have been literally fulfilled?

A character so original, so complete, so uniformly consistent, so perfect, so human and yet so high above all human greatness can neither be a fraud nor fiction.

As we continue to examine the evidence for the deity of Jesus Christ in the following chapters, I am fully convinced that you also will conclude that He could not possibly have been a madman or a liar, or a mere human teacher, as some accept. Therefore, we must carefully consider the final remaining possibility of this analysis that C.S Lewis left us with: “We are faced with a frightening alternative. Either Jesus was exactly what He said, or else He was insane or something worse. However strange or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that He was and is God.”

12

EVIDENCE SUPPORTING JESUS' CLAIMS

HIS TEACHING:

If we reject the New Testament witness to the identity of Jesus Christ, it would be quite impossible to account for the fact that He left the world with the most profound moral instructions and example that any other human being has ever left. His words and moral laws have been the foundation for entire civilizations in the Western World and beyond. Of this great unprecedented influence the great historian Kenneth Scott Latourette wrote: “As the centuries pass, the evidence is accumulating that, measured by His effect on history, Jesus is the most influential life ever lived on this planet and that influence appears to be mounting.”

In *Books that Changed the World*, former president of the American Library Association, Robert B. Downs, concluded similarly:

The Bible has exercised a more profound and continuous influence upon Western civilization than any other literary work... The Jurisprudence and customs of the West have been shaped by the legal and ethical precepts of the Bible.

Despite the amazing progress and advances in the field of science, medicine and technology over the last twenty centuries, no one has ever improved on the wise words of Jesus of Nazareth. To this very day millions of people live with presuppositions based on New Testament literature without even knowing it. Scholar Griffith Thomas continues these thoughts:

When Jesus left this earth, He told His disciples that after His departure they should do greater works than He had done, and the centuries of Christianity have borne out the truth of this statement. Works greater in kind have been done, and are being done.

Jesus Christ is doing more wonderful things today than ever He did when on earth, redeeming souls, changing lives, transforming characters, exalting ideals, inspiring philanthropies, and making for the best, truest, and highest in human life and progress ... We are therefore justified in calling attention to the influence of Christ through the age as one of the greatest, most direct, and most self-evident proofs that Christianity is Christ, and that Christ has to be accounted for. It is impossible to consider this question solely as one of history, it touches life at every point today.

Many modern people are totally unaware that Christianity deserves much credit for many of the political, social, educational, humanitarian and cultural advances present in Western society today. When we examine these benefits of the Christian faith to humankind, we must remember that it is the New Testament teachings lived out in practical ways that play the central role. Examples of these benefits can be seen in:

- 1.The founding of nearly all major American universities, such as Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth, and Princeton.
- 2.The protection of the importance of family life, which greatly contributes to the stabilization of society.
- 3.The development of medicine and healthcare, involving the establishment of many of the first hospitals.

- 4.The founding of political freedom and human rights, which include the protection of women and the abolition of slavery.
- 5.The establishment of humanitarian organizations that embrace the sick, the lonely, the dying, the mentally ill, the homeless and the uneducated.
- 6.The advances of modern science.
- 7.The civilizing of many barbarian and primitive cultures.
- 8.The inspiration for the greatest works of art, music and so forth.

Some Bible critics have tried to counter all of this by quoting instances of the Bible being used as justification for many appalling actions over the centuries. The notorious Inquisitions which the Roman Catholic Church set up to punish the alleged heretics, that reached its peak in Spain from 1481 to 1517, are frequently quoted.

So are the Crusades, the so-called holy wars of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which the same church organized to recover the Holy Land from the Muslims, to mention a few.

In recent times there are many other smaller examples of professing Christian organizations that frequently quote the Bible to support their erroneous doctrines. But there is absolutely no justification in the Bible for any of these events. In fact, the Word of God gives a clear warning against those who distort the plain teaching of Scripture, and it cannot be blamed for the cruel behaviour of misguided religious leaders who have misinterpreted and misapplied its teaching.

So, while it is true that Christianity has had its share of corrupt leaders and religious zealots who have introduced policies and practices that are completely at odds with the ideals established by Jesus Christ, the Bible's track record for transforming lives for

the better in a dying world is still unparalleled in human history. Of its impact the mighty and well respected Jew Benjamin Disraeli pays this tribute: “Has not Jesus conquered Europe and changed its name to Christendom?”

Again, speaking of the permanent value of the life-giving words of Jesus of Nazareth, Bernard Ramm wrote:

Statistically speaking, the Gospels are the greatest literature ever written. They are loved more, read by more people, quoted by more authors, translated into more tongues, represented in more art, set to more music, than any other book or books written by any man in any century and in any land.

But the words of Christ are not great on the grounds that they have such a statistical edge over anybody else’s words. They are read more, quoted more, loved more, believed more, and translated more because they are the greatest words ever spoken. And where is their greatness?

Their greatness lies in the pure lucid spirituality in dealing clearly, definitively, and authoritatively with the greatest problems that throb in the human breast; namely, who is God? Does He love me? What should I do to please Him? How does He look at my sin? How can I be forgiven? Where will I go when I die? How must I treat others?

No other man’s words have the appeal of Jesus’ words because no other man can answer these fundamental human questions as Jesus answered them. They are the kind of words and the kind of answers we would expect God to give.

As we continue to examine the incredible influence and impact that the moral teachings and words of Jesus Christ have had on subsequent history, we can only conclude that it is nothing short of incredible. In an essay called, *The Incomparable Christ*, an anonymous nineteenth-century writer puts it wonderfully:

More than nineteen hundred years ago there was a Man born contrary to the laws of life. This Man lived in poverty and was reared in obscurity. He did not travel extensively. Only once did He cross the boundary of the country in which He lived; that was during His exile in childhood. He possessed neither wealth nor influence.

His relatives were inconspicuous, and had neither training nor formal education. In infancy He startled a king; in childhood He puzzled doctors; in manhood He ruled the course of nature, walked upon the billows as if pavements, and hushed the sea to sleep. He healed the multitudes without medicine and made no charge for His service.

He never wrote a book, and yet all the libraries of the country could not hold the books that have been written about Him. He never wrote a song, and yet He has furnished the theme for more songs than all the song writers combined. He never founded a college, but all the schools put together cannot boast of having as many students.

He never marshalled an army, nor drafted a soldier, nor fired a gun; and yet no leader ever had more volunteers who have, under His orders, made more rebels stack arms and surrender without a shot fired. He never practiced psychiatry, and yet He has healed more broken hearts than all the doctors far and near. Once each week the wheels of commerce cease their

turning and multitudes wend their way to worshipping assemblies to pay homage and respect to Him.

The names of the past proud statesmen of Greece and Rome have come and gone. The names of the past scientists, philosophers, and theologians have come and gone; but the name of this Man abounds more and more.

Though time has spread nineteen hundred years between the people of this generation and the scene of His crucifixion, yet He still lives. Herod could not destroy Him, and the grave could not hold Him. He stands forth upon the highest pinnacle of heavenly glory, proclaimed of God, acknowledged by angels, adored by saints, and feared by devils, as the living personal Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

HIS MIRACLES AND DEEDS:

During His short ministry on Earth Christ performed some of the most remarkable miracles ever seen to man. Missing limbs began to grow; blind eyes were opened; the deaf and dumb began to hear and speak; the lame walked; empty eye sockets miraculously received an eye; and the demon possessed were set free from evil spirits and became God worshippers.

So great were the crowds that followed Jesus that an invalid had to be lowered through a hole in the roof to get near Him and receive healing:

And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

(Mark 6:56)

They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

(Luke 6:18-20)

As we stated previously, our Lord said that these miracles were in themselves evidence that He was from God:

Do not believe me unless I do what my father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.

(John 10:37-39)

Jesus' miracles demonstrated a supreme authority over nature and the elements that could belong only to God, the author of those forces. All things were created by and through Him, and He alone is able to supplement, adjust and recreate as only an intelligent Creator can do.

Griffith Thomas described Christ's miracles as the very essence of His being: "It is noteworthy that one of the words very frequently used of these miracles in the Gospels is the ordinary term *works*. They were the natural and necessary outcome of His life, the expression in act of what He Himself was."

Jesus also appealed to the miracles and healings He performed as confirmation of His credentials to be the Messiah predicted by the Old Testament Prophets:

And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them."

(Luke 7:22-23)

However, it is not necessary to go back to the miracles Jesus performed while He walked the towns of Galilee to prove that He was the Son of God. He is exercising that same power today in the lives of countless millions of people, and anyone from the lowest to the greatest can test it. People from every tribe, race, colour, and nationality can testify that they came to Christ burdened with a terrible sense of guilt and that He gave them absolute peace.

Despite their differences in social, economic and intellectual backgrounds, these believers all unite in a common experience of their encounter with the risen Lord Jesus. As Griffith Thomas said: “There is, as it has been well said, a fifth Gospel being written – the work of Jesus Christ in the hearts and lives of men and nations.” The divine power that Jesus is exerting today over the lives of men, women and children proves beyond any doubt that He is God.

HIS LOVING CHARACTER:

Jesus must have been the most wonderful Person to be around. The Gospels tell us that crowds flocked from every village and town in Israel and beyond to see Him. Yet it was not merely Jesus’ teaching and miracles that made Him so appealing, but His love for others. It attracted the most notorious of sinners to start a pure new life in Christ. The apostle Paul declared that the greatest demonstration of God’s love for us is that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us on the Cross:

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

(Romans 5:6-9)

Those who claim that God the Father cannot be a God of either justice or love have failed to see that in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ in our place is both of these things together. When His Son was dying on the Cross, God Himself was suffering in the place of others and paying the punishment for our sin.

The loving and pure character of our Lord Jesus Christ is almost universally acknowledged, and has made such an impact on humankind, that even after two-thousand years of world history that impact is still vibrant and alive.

In fact, so beautiful and unique is Jesus' personality, that He has impressed millions of people who would not even call themselves Christians. Robert Green Ingersoll declared: "I wish to say once and for all, to that great and serene Man, I gladly pay the homage of my admiration and my tears." And Philip Schaff could not have described Jesus more perfectly when he said:

His zeal never degenerated into passion, nor His constancy into obstinacy, nor His benevolence into weakness, nor His tenderness into sentimentality. His un-worldliness was free from indifference and unsociability, His dignity from pride and presumption, His affectability from undue familiarity, His self-denial from moroseness, His temperance from austerity.

He combined childlike innocence with manly strength, absorbing devotion to God with untiring interest in the welfare of man, tender love to the sinner with uncompromising severity against sin, commanding dignity with winning humility, fearless courage with wise caution, unyielding firmness with sweet gentleness.

The great Napoleon Bonaparte expressed a stunning character reference to Christ in these very profound words:

I know men and I tell you Jesus Christ was not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and other religions the distance of infinity.

Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and myself founded empires. But on what did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon sheer force. Jesus Christ alone founded his empire upon love; and at this hour millions of men will die for him.

In every other existence but that of Christ how many imperfections! From the first day to the last he is the same; majestic and simple, infinitely firm and infinitely gentle. He proposes to our faith a series of mysteries and commands with authority that we believe them, given no other reason than those tremendous words; *I am God*.

In his autobiographical, *The Door Wherein I Went*, the former Lord Chancellor, Lord Hailsham, gives us a perfect description of Jesus' true personality:

The first thing we must learn about him is that we should have been absolutely entranced by his company. Jesus was irresistibly attractive as a man. What they crucified was a young man, vital, full of life and the joy of it, the Lord of life itself, and even more the Lord of laughter, someone so utterly attractive that people followed him for the sheer fun of it..

The twentieth century needs to recapture the vision of the glorious and happy man whose mere presence filled his companions with delight. No pale Galilean

he, but a veritable Pied Piper of Hamelin who would have the children laughing all around him and squealing with pleasure and joy as he picked them up.

Another one of my favourite descriptions of Jesus' loving character is given by the eighteenth-century French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau, greatest in his line:

Can it be possible that the same personage whose history the Scriptures contain should be a mere man? Where is the man, where is the philosopher, who could so live and so die without weakness and without ostentation? When Plato describes his imaginary righteous man, loaded with all the punishment of guilt, yet meriting the highest rewards of virtue, he exactly describes the character of Jesus Christ.

What an infinite disproportion between the son of Sophroniscus and the son of Mary. Socrates dies with honour, surrounded by his disciples listening to the most tender words, the easiest death that one could wish to die. Jesus dies in pain, dishonour, mockery, the object of universal cursing, the most horrible death that one could fear.

At the receipt of the cup of poison Socrates blesses him who could not give it to him without tears; Jesus, while suffering the sharpest pains, prays for his most bitter enemies. If Socrates lived and died like a philosopher, Jesus lived and died like a God.

Although these secular references to the character of Jesus are quite amazing and unprecedented in history, the biblical writers go even further and declare that although *Christ was tempted in every way as we are, He was without sin*. The evidence for this

comes not only from His followers and from His inner circle of friends, who followed Him closely for three years, but also from His enemies.

However, the most remarkable testimony to Jesus' sinless-ness and perfection can be found in the claims that He made about Himself. Speaking of His relationship to God, Jesus openly confessed that He always did what was pleasing to the Father. And elsewhere in Scripture Christ claimed complete mastery over temptation and sin when He said, "*The devil has no hold over me.*" On another occasion when His critical audience was looking for a motive to accuse Him Jesus asked them, "*Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?*"

In that He showed absolutely no consciousness of personal sin, Jesus presents a totally different picture from the confessions of other great biblical characters and men of subsequent history. Our Lord never had a guilt-ridden conscience, never had to say He was sorry for anything He said, thought or did, and He never had to ask God for forgiveness.

It is no small wonder that the German critic David Strauss was forced to admit that the life of Christ, "Remains the highest model of religion within the reach of our thought." "His beauty is eternal, and His reign shall never end," wrote Ernest Renan, the famous nineteenth-century humanist. "Jesus is in every respect unique and nothing can compare to Him."

Now here is this great Man, Jesus Christ, who exemplified supreme unselfishness, humility, joy, peace and love for others, and whom all admit to be a Man of great honour, truth and nobility. Therefore, it is only logical to conclude that a Man of such character and reputation could not have been mistaken concerning His own identity and therefore must be exactly who He claimed to be.

HIS FULFILMENT OF OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY:

Another area where the New Testament writers appeal to establish Jesus' claims to deity and Messiah-ship is fulfilled prophecy. The Old Testament Scriptures, from the Book of Genesis through to Malachi, contain hundreds or more references to the coming Messiah who God was to send into the world as Saviour for all mankind. Jesus Christ fulfilled more than three hundred of these Old Testament prophecies in His short life here on Earth, including twenty-nine major prophecies in just one day, the day He died.

All these prophecies, written over a thousand-year period, describe in specific detail Jesus' virgin birth, prenatal eternal origin, childhood, ministry, sinless-ness, atoning death by crucifixion, resurrection, ascension into Heaven, and His Second Coming to judge the world, destroy death, and bring in eternal peace. These were all accurately foretold by the ancient Jewish prophets hundreds of years before our Lord was even born.

This is quite remarkable, because never once among the classical and religious literature of the ancient world has their authors ever made such accurate predictions of any great historic event to come in the future, or any detailed predictions of a saviour who would arrive in the human race many centuries later.

By contrast, when we consider the accurate predictions and precise fulfilment of so many prophecies in the life of the one Man, Jesus Christ, you will easily conclude that it would be very difficult to account for unless the Bible is true and He is the Son of God, and Israel's promised Messiah.

In fact, these prophecies were such a powerful indication to the truth of Jesus' claims that critics asserted the Hebrew Bible was altered by Christians to refer to Him. But such an assertion is absolutely impossible; as has been verified from the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. These scrolls were copied two-hundred years before the birth of Christ from the originals and all the

prophetic records are exactly the same as in our modern Bible. All the prophecies listed below were fulfilled by Jesus at His first appearance.

THE MESSIAH WOULD BE BORN OF A WOMAN

Old Testament Prophecy:

And I will put enmity between you [Satan] and the woman, between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike his heel.

(Genesis 3:15)

New Testament Fulfilment:

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law.

(Galatians 4:4)

God the Father made this statement to Satan when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden. The Messiah's First Coming was from a mother's womb as is the case of a normal birth. However, it is interesting to note that in this passage the woman is emphasized, not the man. This is because Jesus was conceived not through the union of a man and woman, but by the power of the Holy Spirit.

THE MESSIAH WOULD BE BORN OF A VIRGIN

Old Testament Prophecy:

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign; Behold a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call his name Immanuel.

(Isaiah 7:14)

New Testament Fulfilment:

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary...Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a son and you will name him Jesus."

(Luke 1:26-28, 30-32)

All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel – which means, God with us."

(Matthew 1:22-24)

HIS BIRTH IN BETHLEHEM

Old Testament Prophecy:

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.

(Micah 5:2-3)

New Testament Fulfilment:

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem.

(Matthew 2:1)

HE WILL BE THE SON OF GOD

Old Testament Prophecy:

*I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to me,
“you are my son; today I have begotten you.”*

(Psalm 2:7-8)

New Testament Fulfilment:

*And a voice from heaven said: “This is my Son the beloved,
with whom I am well pleased.”*

(Matthew 3:17)

HE WILL BE THE SEED OF ABRAHAM AND FROM THE TRIBE OF JUDAH

Old Testament Prophecy:

*In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed,
because you have obeyed my voice.*

(Genesis 22:18)

*The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the rulers staff
from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs
and the obedience of the nations is his.*

(Genesis 49:10)

New Testament Fulfilment:

*The book of genealogy of Jesus Christ the Son of David, the
Son of Abraham.*

(Matthew 1:1-2)

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say, “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but, “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ.

(Galatians 3:16)

For it is evident, that our Lord arose from Judah...

(Hebrews 7:14a)

HE WILL BE OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID

Old Testament Prophecy:

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, 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.

(Isaiah 9:6-8)

New Testament Fulfilment:

Jesus...the son of David...

(Luke 3:23,31)

A STAR WILL ANNOUNCE THE BIRTH OF MESSIAH

Old Testament Prophecy:

I see him but not now; I behold him, but not near, a star will come forth from Jacob, and a sceptre [ruler] shall rise from

Israel, and shall crush through the forehead of Moab, and tear down all the sons of Sheth.

(Numbers 24:17)

New Testament Fulfilment:

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, wise men came from the East to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East and have come to worship him.”

(Matthew 2:1-3)

Many Bible commentators feel that the magi’s comments reflect a knowledge of Balaam’s prophecy concerning the star that would come forth from Jacob.

THE MESSIAH PREEXISTED

Old Testament Prophecy:

But as for you Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you one will go forth for me to be a ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.

(Micah 5:2-3)

New Testament Fulfilment:

And he is [has existed prior to] before all things, and in him all things consist.

(Colossians 1:17-18)

Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, before Abraham was, I Am.”

(John 8:58-59)

HEROD WOULD KILL THE CHILDREN

Old Testament Prophecy:

Thus says the Lord, “A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachael is weeping for her children, because they are no more.”

(Jeremiah 31:15-16)

New Testament Fulfilment:

When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its environs, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the magi.

(Matthew 2:16-17)

Wise men came from the East to inform Herod of a new King who was born to rule over the Jews, a title that was Herod's in that period. Politically, Herod could not afford another uprising in the lands he oversaw for Rome. So not knowing the exact identity of the new born King, he ordered that all babies two years old and younger should be slaughtered in the hope that by doing so the infant King would be killed.

THE MESSIAH WOULD BE A PROPHET

Old Testament Prophecy:

I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

(Deuteronomy 18:18-19)

New Testament Fulfilment:

And the multitudes were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee.”

(Matthew 21:11)

THE MESSIAH WILL BE ANOINTED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

Old Testament Prophecy:

The spirit of the Lord will rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

(Isaiah 11:2-3)

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me.

(Isaiah 61:1-a)

New Testament Fulfilment:

After being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God, descending as a dove, and coming upon him, and behold a voice out of the heavens, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

(Matthew 3:16-17)

He stood up to read and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me..” Then he began to say to

them, “This scripture today has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

(Luke 4:17-18b, 21)

God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power.

(Acts 10:38a)

THE MESSIAH WILL BE PRECEDED BY A MESSENGER

Old Testament Prophecy:

See I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple.

(Malachi 3:1a)

A voice is calling, “Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness, make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.”

(Isaiah 40:3-4)

New Testament Fulfilment:

What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes I tell you and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, “See I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.”

(Matthew 11:9-11)

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea proclaiming, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, “The voice of one crying out in the wilderness; prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”

(Matthew 3:1-4)

THE MESSIAH'S MINISTRY WILL INCLUDE MIRACLES

Old Testament Prophecy:

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped, then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

(Isaiah 35:5-6b)

New Testament Fulfilment:

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness.

(Matthew 9:35-36)

THE MESSIAH WILL BE CALLED IMMANUEL (GOD IS WITH US)

Old Testament Prophecy:

Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign; Behold a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call his name Immanuel.

(Isaiah 7:14-15)

New Testament Fulfilment:

All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet; "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel – which means, God with us."

(Matthew 1:22-24)

THE MESSIAH WILL BE A PRIEST

Old Testament Prophecy:

The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, you are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

(Psalm 110:4-5)

New Testament Fulfilment:

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. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

(Hebrews 5:7-11)

We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf has entered, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

(Hebrews 6:19-20)

But he holds his priesthood permanently because he continues forever.

(Hebrews 7:24)

THE MESSIAH WILL TEACH THROUGH PARABLES

Old Testament Prophecy:

I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old.

(Psalm 78:2)

New Testament Fulfilment:

All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables, and without a parable he did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world."

(Matthew 13:34-35)

THE MESSIAH WILL BE A LIGHT TO THE GENTILES

Old Testament Prophecy:

It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.

(Isaiah 49:6b-7)

New Testament Fulfilment:

The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.

(Matthew 4:16-17)

A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.

(Luke 2:32-33)

THE MESSIAH WILL ENTER JERUSALEM ON A DONKEY

Old Testament Prophecy:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you;

he is just and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

(Zechariah 9:9-10)

New Testament Fulfilment:

Now when they drew near Jerusalem and came to Bethphage at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to me. And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them' and immediately he will send them." All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet saying; "Tell the daughter of Zion, Behold your king is coming to you, lowly and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey." So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set him on them.

(Matthew 21:1-8)

THE MESSIAH WILL BE BETRAYED BY A CLOSE FRIEND

Old Testament Prophecy:

Even my close friend, in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.

(Psalm 41:9)

New Testament Fulfilment:

I do not speak concerning all of you. I know whom I have chosen; but that scripture might be fulfilled, "He who eats bread with me has lifted up his heel against me." Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He.

(John 13:18-20)

Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

(Matthew 10:4)

It has been suggested that in betraying Christ Judas was seeking to precipitate a crisis out of which he expected to see Jesus emerge triumphant. Judas was ambitious and, like the other apostles, believed that our Lord would set up an earthly kingdom in which he himself might have an influential part.

He may have thought Christ would use His miraculous powers to save Himself and when in danger of death, would declare Himself king and set up His kingdom. When Judas found that Christ intended to submit, he perceived that his scheme had failed and was overwhelmed by the catastrophe he had precipitated. This theory could be confirmed by Judas committing suicide when he discovered the consequences of his act. The suggestion, however, is pure conjecture. No one has been able to satisfactorily analyse the character of Judas.

THE MESSIAH WILL BE BETRAYED FOR THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER

Old Testament Prophecy:

And I said to them, "If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!" So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages.

(Zechariah 11:12-13)

New Testament Fulfilment:

Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver him to you?" And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. So from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

(Matthew 26:14-17)

THE PRICE FOR BETRAYAL WILL BE GIVEN FOR A POTTER'S FIELD

Old Testament Prophecy:

So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the Lord.

(Zechariah 11:13b-14)

New Testament Fulfilment:

And they [the chief priests and elders] conferred together and with the money [that Judas had thrown down in the temple] bought the potter's field as a burial place for strangers.

(Matthew 27:7-8)

THE MESSIAH WILL BE DESERTED BY HIS DISCIPLES

Old Testament Prophecy:

Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered...

(Zechariah 13:7a)

New Testament Fulfilment:

Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of me this night, for it is written; 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'"

(Mark 14:27-28)

All of them deserted him and fled.

(Mark 14:50-51)

THE MESSIAH WILL BE ACCUSED BY FALSE WITNESSES

Old Testament Prophecy:

By a perversion of justice he was taken away...

(Isaiah 53:8a)

Malicious witnesses rise up; they ask me of things that I do not know.

(Psalm 35:11)

New Testament Fulfilment:

For many gave false testimony against him and their testimony did not agree.

(Mark 14:56-57)

Now the chief priests and the whole council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, in order that they might put him to death, and they did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward.

(Matthew 26:59-61)

THE MESSIAH WILL BE SILENT BEFORE HIS ACCUSERS

Old Testament Prophecy:

He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

(Isaiah 53:7)

New Testament Fulfilment:

And while he was being accused by the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.

(Matthew 27:12-13)

Now when Pilate heard this he was more afraid than ever. He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus: "Where are you from?" but Jesus gave him no answer.

(John 19:8-10)

THE MESSIAH WILL SUFFER REJECTION FROM HIS OWN PEOPLE

Old Testament Prophecy:

He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised, and we did not esteem him.

(Isaiah 53:3-4)

New Testament Fulfilment:

Then Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, said to them, "You have brought this man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed having examined him in your presence, I have found no fault in this man concerning those things of which you accuse him; neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us, and indeed nothing deserving death has been done by him. I will therefore chastise him and release him" (for it was necessary for him to release one of them at the feast). And they all cried out at once, saying, "Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas."

(Luke 23:13-19)

“For no one who wants to be widely known acts in secret. If you do these things show yourself to the world.” For not even his brothers believed in him.

(John 7:4-6)

THE MESSIAH WILL BE BEATEN AND SPIT UPON

Old Testament Prophecy:

I gave my back to those who struck me, my cheeks to those who plucked out the beard: I did not cover my face from shame and spitting.

(Isaiah 50:6)

New Testament Fulfilment:

Then they spat in his face and beat him with their fists; and others slapped him.

(Matthew 26:67)

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head.

(John 19:1-3)

THE MESSIAH’S FRIENDS WILL STAND FAR OFF

Old Testament Prophecy:

My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague, and my relatives stand far off.

(Psalm 38:11)

New Testament Fulfilment:

And all his acquaintances and the women who accompanied him from Galilee, were standing at a distance, seeing these things.

(Luke 23:49)

THE MESSIAH WILL BE SCOURGED AND WOUNDED

Old Testament Prophecy:

He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities, the chastening for our well-being fell upon him, and by his scourging we are healed.

(Isaiah 53:5-6)

New Testament Fulfilment:

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head.

(John 19:1-3)

Then he released Barabbas to them, and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

(Matthew 27:26)

Crucifixion was one of the most torturous means of death that man has ever devised. Roman crucifixion began with a whipping of the condemned. The victim was then led through the town to the place of crucifixion carrying his own cross. This was not only very difficult physically for a person who had been weakened by beatings, but it was intended to humiliate the condemned and serve as a warning to those who observed the proceedings.

The person to be crucified would then be tied to the cross. The feet were placed one on top of the other with the knees in a bent position, and a single spike driven through them into a footrest on the cross which would give partial support. The arms were outstretched and nailed to the crossbeam through the wrists. Once the victim was nailed to the cross, it would be hoisted up into the

air and dropped into the hole with a violence that would tear the tissue and cause excruciating pain.

The worst aspect of crucifixion, despite the unbearable pain, was that of suffocation. The position of the victim on the cross, with arms raised and extended, allowed him to inhale, but restricted his ability to exhale. In an effort to breathe, the crucified person would lift himself up on his feet and gasp for air until the pain in his feet would cause him to sag, once again accentuating the pain in the wrists and stopping his breathing.

Jesus must have done this countless times during the long hours on the Cross. This torment could continue for two or three days before death came. Such was the death on a cross, such was Christ's death. For several hours He hung there before a gazing crowd, naked and bleeding from head to foot, His head pierced with thorns, His back lacerated with scourging, His hands and feet torn with nails and mocked by His enemies to the last.

THE MESSIAH WILL SUFFER THIRST AND BE GIVEN GALL AND VINEGAR TO DRINK

Old Testament Prophecy:

And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

(Psalm 69:21)

New Testament Fulfilment:

They gave him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when he had tasted it, he would not drink it.

(Matthew 27:34)

Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty."

(John 19:28)

In the Bible the word gall usually refers to a bitter-tasting substance made of a plant such as wormwood or myrrh. In *Mark 15:23* we learn that the bitterness in the wine offered to Jesus was due to the presence of myrrh. Wine that was mixed with bitter herbs or myrrh created a substance that dulled the mind and sense of pain, and it was customary in ancient times to give this drink to victims about to be crucified to lessen the awareness of the agony awaiting them. Jesus refused this potion after He had tasted it and realized what it was.

With an incredible display of courage, the Son of Man rejected anything that would reduce the suffering He was about to endure for our salvation. Sin against a Holy God required an extreme punishment, and in order to completely fulfil His mission as our substitute, Jesus accepted nothing that would take away or reduce the effects of that punishment. The Word of God says that on the Cross Christ literally became sin for us (*2 Corinthians 5:21*).

The Gospel of John also tells us it was only before Jesus died that He accepted the drink of sour wine offered to Him. One of the prominent effects of crucifixion was an incredible thirst, due to the loss of body fluids caused by open wounds and perspiration. Being at the point of death, Christ wanted to say His last words, but His lips and throat needed moisture.

In accepting the drink, our Lord not only fulfilled Scripture, but disproved one of the great heresies that was to spread later; that Jesus was not really human. In this biblical account we see that He was fully human and fully divine.

THE MESSIAH WILL INTERCEDE FOR HIS PERSECUTORS

Old Testament Prophecy:

Yet he himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors.

(Isaiah 53:12d)

New Testament Fulfilment:

When they came to the place called the skull, there they crucified him... Jesus said, "Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

(Luke 23:33a, 34a)

THE MESSIAH'S SIDE WILL BE PIERCED

Old Testament Prophecy:

They will look on me whom they pierced.

(Zechariah 12:10b)

New Testament Fulfilment:

One of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.

(John 19:34)

THE MESSIAH WILL COMMIT HIMSELF TO GOD

Old Testament Prophecy:

Into your hand I commit my spirit.

(Psalm 31:5a)

New Testament Fulfilment:

Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father into your hands I commend my spirit."

(Luke 23:46a)

THE MESSIAH'S GARMENTS WILL BE PARTED AND LOTS CAST FOR THEM

Old Testament Prophecy:

They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

(Psalm 22:18)

New Testament Fulfilment:

Then the soldiers when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. They said therefore among themselves, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be," that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says: "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." Therefore the soldiers did these things.

(John 19:23-25)

THE MESSIAH WILL BE PUT TO DEATH ALONGSIDE TRANSGRESSORS AND BURIED IN A RICH MAN'S TOMB

Old Testament Prophecy:

Because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors.

(Isaiah 53:12c)

His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet he was with a rich man in his death.

(Isaiah 53:9a)

New Testament Fulfilment:

At that time two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left.

(Matthew 27:38)

There came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph...and asked for the body of Jesus...When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb.

(Matthew 27:57a, 58b, 59)

THE MESSIAH'S HANDS AND FEET WILL BE PIERCED

Old Testament Prophecy:

They pierced my hands and my feet...

(Psalm 22:16b)

New Testament Fulfilment:

And when they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him...

(Luke 23:33a)

The Bible spares us the brutality and horrific details of Jesus' physical agony and simply states that, "*They crucified Him.*" Not uncommonly, those crucified would have birds of prey tear at them and insects light upon or burrow into their open wounds, or their eyes, ears and nose.

It is also interesting to note that this prediction of pierced hands and feet was made long before crucifixion was invented as a means of capital punishment. David wrote this prophecy over a thousand years before crucifixion was made common by the Romans. It was never practiced by the Jews.

PEOPLE WILL SHAKE THEIR HEADS AT THE MESSIAH AND MOCK HIM

Old Testament Prophecy:

I also have become a reproach to them; when they see me, they wag their head.

(Psalm 109:25)

All those who see me ridicule me; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head saying, "He trusted in the Lord, let him rescue him; let him deliver him, since he delights in him."

(Psalm 22:7-9)

New Testament Fulfilment:

And those who were passing by were hurling abuse at him, wagging their heads.

(Matthew 27:39)

Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and another on the left. And those who passed by blasphemed him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross if you are the Son of God!" In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He is the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, I am the Son of God." In the same way the robbers who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

(Matthew 27:38-45)

It is precisely because Jesus did not come down from the Cross and save Himself that He is able to save others; love kept Him up

there not the nails! It is also important to remember that Jesus did not suffer as the victim of circumstances; He was in control. He said in *John 10:18* that no one takes His life from Him, but that He would lay it down at His own free will in obedience to the Father. To freely choose to suffer such a shame and torture out of love is nothing short of remarkable.

NONE OF MESSIAH'S BONES WILL BE BROKEN

Old Testament Prophecy:

All my bones are out of joint...

(Psalm 22:14a)

He guards all his bones; not one of them is broken.

(Psalm 34:20)

New Testament Fulfilment:

But coming to Jesus, when they saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.

(John 19:33)

While hanging on a cross by the hands and feet, it is very likely that all a man's bones would separate from their joints. The Romans used to hasten death by breaking the legs of the crucified criminals, but when they reached Jesus they saw that He was already dead.

THE MESSIAH WILL BE FORSAKEN BY GOD

Old Testament Prophecy:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

(Psalm 22:1a)

New Testament Fulfilment:

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani," that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

(Matthew 27:46)

Jesus' words on the Cross imply that there was a real separation from the Father in this dreadful experience. There is a debt of mystery here before which we may well pause. When Jesus died in our place, He became as accountable for our wickedness as if He had been responsible for it Himself.

Although Christ's soul was to the last absolutely untainted by sin, He received in His own body and spirit the full fury of God's holy anger against sin and the separation from God's presence that this sin brings about. It was this horrible experience of alienation from His Father from which Jesus shrank, and from which gave rise to His agonizing prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane.

As horrible as this was upon His lovely soul, it was the only way for God to fulfil His good and loving plan for our redemption. That is what the prophet Isaiah meant when he said concerning the Messiah, "*Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush Him with pain*" (*Isaiah 53:10*).

It is also important to underline that Christ's complaint did not proceed from doubt or impatience, as if He were ignorant of the cause of His dreadful torment, or was not willing to bear such abandonment in His work of atonement. Such complaints were only a declaration of His most bitter sufferings and prove that our Lord was not rendered impassible by a superior power, but truly human and truly passible.

THE MESSIAH'S HEART WILL LITERALLY BREAK

Old Testament Prophecy:

My heart is like wax; it has melted within me...

(Psalm 22:14b)

You know the insults I receive, and my shame and dishonour; my foes are all known to you. Insults have broken my heart, so that I am in despair. I looked for pity but there was none; and for comforters but I found none.

(Psalm 69:19-21)

New Testament Fulfilment:

But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.

(John 19:34)

It is the opinion of many who have written on the subject that Jesus died of a broken heart. Some medical doctors say the most probable way of accounting for the blood and water that flowed from the Lord's wound when the soldier pierced Him is that the spear pierced the pericardium, which would contain blood if the heart was ruptured.

This is all very probable! Let us not forget that Jesus suffered severe stress and anguish in the Garden the night before, the intensity of which was indicated by a sweat of blood, cruel beatings during His many trials in the hours that followed, a painful flogging and intense physical pain, sorrow and mental abuse while nailed to the Cross.

DARKNESS WOULD COVER THE LAND FROM NOON UNTIL THREE O’CLOCK

Old Testament Prophecy:

And it will come about in that day, declares the Lord God, that I shall make the sun go down at noon and make the earth dark in broad daylight.

(Amos 8:9)

New Testament Fulfilment:

Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour.

(Matthew 27:45)

THE MESSIAH WILL RISE FROM THE DEAD

Old Testament Prophecy:

You will not abandon me to the grave; nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

(Psalm 16:10-11)

New Testament Fulfilment:

While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.”

(Luke 24:4-6b)

David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying, “He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience

corruption.” This Jesus God raised up and of that all of us are witnesses.

(Acts 2:31-33)

THE MESSIAH WILL ASCEND TO HEAVEN

Old Testament Prophecy:

Thou hast ascended on high...

(Psalm 68:18a)

New Testament Fulfilment:

Then he led them out as far as Bethany and lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven.

(Luke 24:50-52)

THE MESSIAH WILL SIT DOWN AT GOD’S RIGHT HAND

Old Testament Prophecy:

The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”

(Psalm 110:1-2)

New Testament Fulfilment:

Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit... For David did not ascend into the heaven, but he himself says, “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘sit at my right hand until I make thine enemies a footstool.’”

(Acts 2:33a, 34-36)

Prophecy Fulfilled on Purpose?

The prophecies listed above could not have been purposely fulfilled by Jesus Christ unless He was who He claimed to be. Bible critics have suggested that Jesus being a rabbi had knowledge of these Old Testament predictions and simply arranged the events surrounding His life to fulfil prophecy and substantiate His claims.

First, such a suggestion is completely contrary to the pure character of our Lord that we already noted earlier. Further, there is absolutely no way that Jesus could have controlled many of the events necessary for the Messiah to fulfil if He were an impostor. How could He have chosen His place of birth, the tribe He would come from, or the betrayal of a friend for a precise amount of money? And why would a self-serving false messiah want to fulfil the manner of such a horrific death?

It is interesting to note that Christ is the only individual to have ever claimed to have fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies concerning the promised Messiah; who would come to bear the sin of His people and reign forever on the throne of David.

Moreover, the genealogies recorded in the Gospel of Matthew and Luke reveal that Jesus was the only Person who could prove by the genealogical records kept in the Temple that He was of the royal lineage of King David. Since the destruction of the Temple and its records in A.D. 70, it would be impossible for anyone else to ever prove their claim to be the Messiah based on their genealogical descent from David, the son of Jesse.

Science Speaks: Coincidence Ruled Out!

Some critics have also suggested that the prophecies fulfilled in Jesus listed above were just sheer coincidences and that one could find some of these prophecies fulfilled in other great men of history. It is true that you might be able to find some men whose

lives would agree with a few of these prophecies, but Jesus is the only Man who ever fulfilled all of them!

In his popular book, *Science Speaks*, former Professor Emeritus of science at Westmont College, Peter W. Stoner, calculated the probability of one man fulfilling just eight major prophecies made concerning the coming Messiah in the Old Testament. These estimates were worked out by twelve different classes of 600 college students.

Professor Stoner took their estimates and made them much more conservative by encouraging sceptics or other scientists to make their own estimates to see if his conclusions were fair. He then submitted his figures for review to a committee of the *American Scientific Affiliation*, which verified his calculations were, “Dependable and accurate in regard to the scientific material presented.”

In the foreword to *Science Speaks*, Harold Hartzler of the American Scientific Affiliation declared: “The mathematical analysis included is based upon principles of probability which are thoroughly sound and Professor Stoner has applied these principles in a proper and convincing way.”

After evaluating the biblical data using scientific principles of probability, the very conservative chance of one man fulfilling just eight prophecies was 1 in 10^{17} . That would be one in 100,000,000,000,000,000. In order to help us comprehend this incredible probability Professor Stoner illustrates it by supposing that we:

Take 10^{17} silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state, two feet deep. Then we mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one.

What chance would this man have of getting the right one? Exactly the same chance that the ancient biblical prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote them according to their own wisdom.

This means that these prophecies were either given by inspiration of God or the Jewish prophets just wrote them as they thought they should be. In such a case the prophets had just one chance in 10^{17} of having them come true in any man, but they all came true in Christ.

Absolutely no Chance at all

In another extraordinary calculation, Professor Stoner used 48 prophecies and arrived at the extremely conservative estimate that the probability of 48 prophecies being fulfilled in one person is one in 10^{157} . Below Professor Stoner gives us a brief illustration of the immensity of the number 10^{157} and why the science of probability powerfully proves once again that we can only be dealing with the supernatural:

We find the chance that any man fulfilled all 48 prophecies to be 1 in 10^{157} . This is really a large number and it represents an extremely small chance. Let us try to visualize it. The silver dollar that we have been using is entirely too large. We must select a smaller object.

The electron is about as small an object as we know of. It is so small that it will take 2.5 times 10^{15} of them laid side by side to make a line, single file, one inch long. If we were going to count the electrons in

this line one inch long, and counted 250 each minute, and if we counted day and night, it would take 19,000,000 years to count just the one inch line of electrons.

If we had a cubic inch of these electrons and we tried to count them, it would take us, counting steadily 250 each minute, 19,000,000 times 19,000,000 times 19,000,000 years, or 6.9 times 10^{21} years. With this introduction, let us go back to our chance of one in 10^{157} . Let us suppose that we are taking this number of electrons, marking one, and thoroughly stirring it into the whole mass, then blindfolding a man and letting him try to find the right one. What chance has he of finding the right one? What kind of a pile will this number of electrons make?

In other words, the chance of the blindfolded man selecting the right electron would be the same as that of one man fulfilling just forty-eight of the more than 300 Messianic prophecies. The probability is absolutely zero, as also shown technically by Emile Borel in *Probabilities and Life*, and William Dembski in *The Design Inference*.

Our Faith Is Not Blind

Dear reader, faith is important to God, for without faith it is impossible to please Him (*Hebrews 11:6*). However, our faith is not blind but greatly assured by the incredible facts we have seen so far. As one writer correctly observed: “If nobody in the world would bet their life savings on a horse race with odds of one chance in a million, how is it that so many bet their convictions about reality – with far more serious consequences if wrong – on odds much worse?”

Think also of the thousands of other prophecies in the Bible and not just the Messianic ones. This is surely proof that there is a God who supernaturally gave this information to the prophets and that He alone is the One true God. In *Science Speaks*, Professor Stoner concludes that to reject the Bible's claims that Jesus Christ is the Messiah is to reject a fact, "Proved perhaps more absolutely than any other fact in the world."

HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION:

The greatest and final evidence that our Lord gave to support His claims to be the Son of God was His physical resurrection from the dead. Jesus made many extraordinary claims about Himself, and when asked by the Jews for a miraculous sign to authenticate these claims, He pointed them to His resurrection on the third day:

Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, "Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you." He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But not one will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

(Matthew 12:38-41)

Then the Jews demanded of him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

(John 2:18-23)

Of the small number of the various world religions that are based on personalities rather than on philosophical systems, only Christianity makes the stupendous claim that its Founder rose from the dead. The bones of Buddha, Abraham and Muhammed are still here on Earth and none of their followers have ever declared their tomb to be empty. This fact alone distinguishes Jesus from all other religious leaders and places the Christian faith in a class all by itself.

Many of these leaders have come and gone professing some revelation from God or a new way of approaching Him, but only Jesus Christ ever predicted, with great definiteness and detail, that He would be put to death in Jerusalem, and His rising from the dead on the third day would be God's seal to the truth of His claims. In other words, the resurrection of Jesus is the ultimate proof for the accuracy of His doctrine.

The noted scholar, writer and teacher, Wilber M. Smith, described how easy it would have been to disprove everything Christ had said and predicted if the resurrection had not occurred:

It was this same Jesus, the Christ, who among many other remarkable things, said and repeated something which, proceeding from any other being would have condemned Him at once as either a bloated egotist or a dangerously unbalanced person. That Jesus said He was going up to Jerusalem to die is not so remarkable, though all the details He gave about that death, weeks and months before He died, are together a prophetic phenomenon. But when He said He Himself would rise again from the dead, the third day after He was crucified, He said something only a fool would dare say... unless He was sure He was going to rise. No founder of any world religion known to men ever dared to say anything like that.

The fact is that Jesus *did* rise from the grave on that Easter Sunday morning, and the evidence for this momentous event is simply overwhelming, even when approached from a sceptic's perspective. Author and minister Douglas Groothuis describes how the New Testament alone "*reverberates and glistens*" with the reality of Jesus' resurrection. In *Jesus in an Age of Controversy* he wrote:

The Gospels record Jesus' teaching that He must be betrayed, killed, and rise again. Then they all testify that His tomb was empty and that He appeared to His disciples as He said. The book of Acts records the preaching of the resurrected Christ as its central fact. The various New Testament letters and the book of Revelation would melt into nothingness without a resurrected Jesus.

The resurrection is attested to by four separate Gospels, the history of the early Church (Acts), by the letters of Paul, Peter, John, James, Jude, and the letter to the Hebrews. There is a diversity of credible witnesses. Since the New Testament volumes show considerable fitness in terms of historical reliability, this is a good initial reason to accept the resurrection as an objective reality.

Famous Lawyers Prove the Case and Vote in Favour

After a close examination of the extensive evidence for the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, some of the best legal minds throughout history have accepted the New Testament documents as factual history and become firm Christians solely on the grounds of strict legal evidence. British barrister and politician Sir Edward G. Clarke said:

As a lawyer I have made a prolonged study of the events of the first Easter day. To me, the evidence is conclusive, and over and over again in the High Court I have secured a verdict on evidence not merely so compelling.

In his fantastic best-seller *Who Moved the Stone?* lawyer Frank Morrison tells how his education gave him a very sceptical outlook which denied every possibility of miracles. He had come to the conclusion that the resurrection was nothing but a fairy tale with a happy ending that spoiled the matchless story of Jesus. Therefore, he set out to write a non-miraculous account of the last week of Christ's life. But when Morrison had studied the facts with care, he was forced to write a completely different book. His first chapter is called, *The Book that Refused to Be Written*. Morrison described it as, "The inner story of a man who originally set out to write one kind of book and found himself by the sheer force of circumstances to write quite another."

And similarly, after a close examination of the legal evidence to support the resurrection case, a former Chief Justice of England, Lord Darling, came to the following conclusion:

The evidence points unmistakably to the fact that on the third day Jesus rose... On that greatest point we are not merely asked to have faith. In its favour as living truth there exists such overwhelming evidence, positive and negative, factual and circumstantial, that no intelligent jury in the world could fail to bring in a verdict that the resurrection story is true.

Two eighteenth century lawyers of great repute, Gilbert West and Lord Lyttelton, set out to prove for the rationalist society of their day that Jesus Christ never rose from the dead and Saul of Tarsus never converted to Christianity.

Lyttelton and his friend both agreed to write independently and meet later to discuss their findings. To their surprise, both of them came to the same disturbing conclusion: The mystery of the disappearance of the body of Jesus can be solved only by the resurrection and ascension. Their books may still be found in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

The brilliant Washington D.C lawyer Irwin H. Linton, who represented many cases before the Supreme Court, wrote a book during his career entitled *A Lawyer Examines the Bible*, in which he stated:

So invariable has been my observation that he who does not accept whole-heartedly the evangelical conservative belief in Christ and the Scriptures has never read, has forgotten, or never been able to weigh, and certainly is unable to refute the irresistible force of the cumulative evidence upon which such faith rests.

President Abraham Lincoln was an agnostic until he reached the age of forty. Then he read Dr James Smith's brilliant examination, *The Christian's Defence*, that proved the historical reliability of the events surrounding Christ's life. The overwhelming evidence from Dr Smith's book completely convinced Lincoln with the result that he became a genuine and firm Christian for the rest of his life.

And what can we say of the other many capable and brilliant minds in every generation who were converted to Christ solely on the basis of the historical evidence for His life, death and resurrection – Augustine, John Warwick Montgomery, C.S Lewis, Simon Greenleaf and Sir William Ramsay, to mention a few?

The Symbol of Easter - an Empty Tomb

Dear reader, the disappearance of Jesus' body from the tomb on Easter Sunday is the biggest mystery and most controversial topic of all time. It is a problem beyond explanation unless we accept the testimony of the early disciples that God raised Him from the dead.

As stated above, the New Testament constantly testifies to the fact that Jesus was seen alive after His death and appeared to more than five-hundred eye-witnesses, including His brother James, who was originally a sceptic but was converted after he saw the risen Lord. Paul wrote:

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and to the twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as one abnormally born.

(1 Corinthians 15:3-9)

In my former book Theophilus, I wrote all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit. After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

(Acts 1:1-4)

Further, and as many experts have pointed out, the New Testament reports of the resurrection come so soon after the event that they simply could not be the product of legendary development as some critics have asserted. The ancient Creed of

Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians mentions specific individuals who encountered the risen Lord Jesus, and the apostle even challenged first-century opponents to talk with these individuals in order to determine the truth for themselves. The historian Luke claimed that he had carefully investigated the evidence for the resurrection from the very beginning:

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good to also to me to write an orderly account for you most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

(Luke 1:1-5)

Concerning Luke's ability as a historian, the world-renowned archaeologist Sir William Ramsay concluded after thirty years of study that the New Testament writer, "Is a historian of the first rank and should be placed along with the very greatest of historians."

If this is the case, we can confidently assume that Luke is also accurate in recording events that concerned the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, especially since they were of greater importance. It is very unlikely that vigilant people like doctors and historians would make such radical claims without convincing evidence to back them up.

Did Jesus Swoon on the Cross?

Despite the overwhelming evidence from eye-witness accounts to support the resurrection case, many absurd theories have been put forward to deny that Jesus ever rose from the dead. Some critics have suggested that Jesus *swooned* on the Cross and pretended to

be dead, while others claim that His disciples stole the body and began the rumour that He had risen. But when we evaluate the evidence, the *Swooned Theory* seems very unlikely.

The renowned physician Dr Alexander Metherell, who also holds a doctorate in engineering, concluded that there is no possible way that Jesus could have survived the gruesome rigors of crucifixion, much less the gaping wound that pierced His lung and heart.

Even before the crucifixion He was in critical condition and probably suffering from shock from the horrific flogging He had undergone. An article in the Journal of the American Medical Association came to the same conclusion:

Clearly, the weight of historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to His side was inflicted and supports the traditional view that the spear, thrust between His right ribs, probably perforated not only the right lung, but also the pericardium and heart and thereby ensured His death.. Accordingly, interpretations based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appeared to be at odds with modern medical knowledge.

The Roman soldiers must have been clearly convinced that Christ was dead or they would certainly not have removed His body from the Cross. Roman executioners were exceedingly efficient in such matters, knowing that they themselves would have been liable for the death penalty if they had permitted a prisoner to escape.

Interestingly, the Gospel writers, Matthew, Mark and Luke all record a simultaneous event that occurred some distance from Calvary after Jesus had died. They wrote that after His death the curtain of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom

(*Matthew 27:51*). This miraculous event signalled the end of the Old Testament animal sacrifices for atonement and limited access to God's presence.

But not only this, it also verified the death of Jesus because it demonstrated that His sacrifice had satisfied God's just demands forever. For centuries the Jewish people were required to offer an unblemished lamb as an atonement for their sin. But now Jesus, the sinless Lamb of God, had become the new sacrifice and the veil was no longer needed because access to God had been opened to all who would believe in Christ.

Could Christ's Disciples Have Stolen the Body?

The exact site of the tomb where the body of Jesus was placed was well known to Christians, Jews and Romans alike and could have been checked by sceptics at any time. It is noteworthy that none of the authorities ever claimed that the tomb still contained Jesus' body. Instead, they were forced through a knowledge of reality to invent the story that His disciples had stolen His body, even though they had no motive or opportunity to do so.

Moreover, this theory, like all the others, is very improbable when we consider the fear and cowardliness of the apostles when their Leader was arrested and killed. Before Jesus had risen they ran away and deserted their Master, hiding behind closed doors in total fear and confusion. But after the resurrection they became mighty preachers, missionaries and courageous martyrs of the faith they proclaimed.

In addition, many of the historical records handed down from the first century reveal that almost every one of the apostles faced a cruel death without ever denying their true faith in Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

Such a transformation in the lives and character of these men can only be accounted for through a personal knowledge of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. A knowledge that compelled them to

preach the Gospel message to a hostile Jerusalem, and later throughout the entire Roman Empire.

It is a message for which many other disciples were willing to suffer and die for down through the centuries; a message that transformed and turned upside down the ancient world; and a message that is still transforming lives today!

Another Great Lawyer Sums up the Evidence

Simon Greenleaf was the famous Royal Professor of Law at Harvard University in the United States. The rise of Harvard to its eminent position among the legal schools of America is greatly ascribed to this man's efforts. Professor Greenleaf produced a famous work, called *A Treatise on the Law of Evidence*, that is still considered the greatest authority on legal evidence in the Western World today.

In 1846, after a detailed analysis of the historical evidence for the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Greenleaf wrote another volume, entitled *An Examination of the Testimony of the Four Evangelists by the Rules of Evidence Administered in the Courts of Justice*, where he examines the value of the apostles' testimony to the resurrection of Jesus.

This brilliant man's observations led him to the same conclusion we just mentioned above; that only the physical resurrection of Christ their Master could explain the change that came over the apostles, especially since they faced terrible opposition from the cleverest legal, political and religious authorities of their day. He wrote:

The great truths which the apostles declared were that Christ had risen from the dead and that only through repentance from sin, and faith in Him, could men hope for salvation. This doctrine they asserted with one voice, everywhere, not only under the

greatest discouragements, but in the face of the most appalling errors that can be presented to the mind of man.

Their Master had recently perished as a malefactor by the sentence of a public tribunal. His religion sought to overthrow the religions of the whole world. The laws of every country were against the teachings of His disciples. The interests and passions of all the rulers and great men in the world were against them. The fashion of the world was against them.

Propagating this new faith, even in the most inoffensive and peaceful manner, they could expect nothing but contempt, opposition, reviling, bitter persecutions, stripes, imprisonments, torments, and cruel deaths.

Yet this faith they zealously did propagate; and all these miseries they endured undismayed, nay rejoicing. As one after another was put to a miserable death, the survivors only prosecuted their work with increased vigour and resolution.

The annals of military warfare afford scarcely an example of the like heroic constancy, patience, and un-blenching courage. They had every possible motive to review carefully the grounds of their faith, and the evidences of the great facts and truths which they asserted; and these motives were pressed upon their attention with the most melancholy, and terrific frequency.

It was therefore impossible that they could have persisted in affirming the truths they have narrated, had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact. If it were morally possible for them to have been deceived in this matter, every human

motive operated to lead them to discover and avow their error.

To have persisted in so gross a falsehood, after it was known to them, was not only to encounter, for life, all the evils which man could inflict, from without, but to endure also the pangs of inward and conscious guilt; with no hope of future peace, no testimony of a good conscience, no expectation of honour or esteem among men, no hope of happiness in this life, or in the world to come.

Such conduct in the apostles would moreover have been utterly irreconcilable with the fact that they possessed the ordinary constitution of our common nature. Yet their lives do show them to have been men like all others of our race; swayed by the same motives, animated by the same hopes, affected by the same joys, subdued by the same sorrows, agitated by the same fears, and subject to the same passions, temptations, and infirmities as ourselves.

And their writings show them to have been men of vigorous understandings. If then, their testimony was not true, there was no possible motive for its fabrication.

The Final Decision Is Yours

We saw earlier that the writer C.S Lewis left us with only three real possibilities concerning the Man, Jesus Christ. Either He was and is God, or else He was totally insane or something worse.

But when we look back on the compelling evidence: the whole weight of Jesus' teaching; His beautiful and pure character; His precise fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy; and His victorious triumph over sin and death, you will agree that it does not make

sense to say that Jesus Christ was anyone other than God Almighty manifested in human flesh.

Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great; He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.

(1 Timothy 3:16)

13

THE TRINITY AND VIRGIN BIRTH

I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

(Genesis 3:15)

One of the greatest mysteries of the Bible is the revelation of God's wonderful plan of salvation for all those who put their faith and trust in our Lord Jesus Christ. In the above passage of Genesis we find the first prophecy relative to the Virgin Birth of the Messiah in the phrase, *the seed of the woman*.

Throughout Scripture a child is always referred to as the seed of the man, and never the seed of the woman. But the above passage of Genesis clearly indicates that the coming Saviour would not be born from a man's seed, as is the case of other children, but would be born from the seed of a woman.

Though the consequences of Adam and Eve's rebellion resulted in their being expelled from the Garden of Eden, God revealed to Adam that his hope lay in this future Child who would defeat the plans of Satan and destroy his seed forever. Again, several centuries later, the prophet Isaiah prophesied that a supernatural sign would be given to Israel when a virgin would conceive and give birth to a male Child:

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

(Isaiah 7:14)

Some liberal critics have tried to deny the significance of Isaiah's prophecy about the Virgin Birth by suggesting that the word *almah*, translated as *young woman* or *virgin*, does not necessarily

imply a virgin as we would use the term today. While it is true that the word *almah* does not primarily and solely refer to the virginal sexual status of a girl, it does, however, refer to a young unmarried woman.

In Hebrew the word *virgin* is denoted by two words: *bethulah*, meaning a virgin maiden, and *almah*, meaning a young woman of marriageable age. Though it is true that *almah* is not the common word for a virgin, its employment in Scripture always denotes virginity. There is absolutely no place among the occurrences of the word *almah* in the Old Testament where it is used of a woman who was not a virgin.

Moreover, the definition of *almah* as a young unmarried girl obviously implies that the unmarried girl in question has not engaged in sexual relations, otherwise the prophet would have used another word to refer to an immoral woman.

Furthermore, the sign of the Virgin Birth came at a very traumatic period of Judah's history. King Rezin of Syria and Pekah, king of Israel's northern kingdom, were raging war against Jerusalem to overtake the city. Isaiah met the unrighteous King Ahaz to assure him that God would deliver Jerusalem, and to warn him against any alliance with His power-hungry enemies. As proof that Isaiah was a true prophet, and that God had the power to deliver Judah, Ahaz was told to ask for a sign to confirm God's message:

*Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, "Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven."
But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test."*

(Isaiah 7:10-13)

Ahaz refused the sign from God because of the political implications involved and because of his unbelieving heart. After rebuking him, the prophet Isaiah continued his message to the house of David:

Hear ye now, O house of David! Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

(Isaiah 7:13-15)

In this context, the sign of the birth of a child to an *almah* should be understood as a highly unusual event for the nation of Israel; it was to be a miracle that would confirm God's message. Now if Isaiah's prophecy merely predicted that a young unmarried girl would give birth to a child through normal sexual relations, in what way would such a common event as a woman having a child out of wedlock serve as a miraculous sign to the house of David? Obviously, the sign refers to a supernatural Virgin Birth, as the New Testament writers also confirm. A woman becoming pregnant through natural sexual intercourse could not possibly fit the criteria for a miraculous sign.

It is also noteworthy that the Hebrew scholars who translated the Old Testament into the Greek Septuagint chose to translate the word *almah* into the Greek word *parthenos*, which clearly indicates a virgin. Centuries before the prophecy of Christ's birth was fulfilled, or the disciples wrote the Gospels, these Jewish scribes clearly understood that Isaiah's prophecy declared that the Messiah would be born of a virgin.

Isaiah's Prophecy Directed to the *House* of David

Some scholars have opposed this conclusion arguing that the prophecy was to be a sign from God to Ahaz indicating the nearness of the conquest of both the northern and southern kingdoms by the Assyrians. They conclude that since the birth of this child was to be a sign to Ahaz, it is only natural to conclude that the birth took place during his reign. While this view may seem reasonable to some, it must adapt an understanding of the

word *almah* that does not require it to include virginity. But we have already seen the evidence in Isaiah's prophecy clearly shows that *almah* means a young virgin woman of marriageable age, and not simply a young woman. If some want to adhere to this position, they must come up with two virgin births in history; one during Ahaz's time and the other identified with Jesus' mother, Mary.

Further, the sign that God proposed is not evidently directed to King Ahaz, who rejected the first offer, but to "you" plural, meaning the Davidic kings who would follow him. Ahaz was afraid of the extinction of the Davidic dynasty and his displacement by a Syrian pretender. So the prophecy was to demonstrate to Ahaz and his descendants that the Davidic kingly line would survive them.

The longer the time needed to fulfil the promise to the Davidic house, the longer the dynasty would be in existence. Also, within the larger context of the prophecies of Isaiah, the child to come from the womb of the virgin had to be a God-Man, and not simply any man. No other person in history can fit this description except Jesus of Nazareth:

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forever more.

(Isaiah 9:6-8)

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of council and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the

Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth.

(Isaiah 11:1-4c)

New Testament Writers Bear Witness

There is a great deal of evidence from the New Testament, as well as numerous manuscripts found in early Church histories, which contain abundant witness to the widespread belief in the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Gospel writer Matthew quoted the prophecy of Isaiah as being fulfilled in the Virgin Birth of Christ through Mary:

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly.

But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said; “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet; “Look the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means, God is with us.” When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and named him Jesus.

(Matthew 1:18-25)

The physician Luke recorded how the angel Gabriel addressed Mary and told her that she would bear a Son who would be great and called the “*Son of the Most High.*” Mary’s response to Gabriel indicates that she clearly understood the conception would take place while she was still a virgin:

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, you will name him Jesus.

He will be great, and he will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” Mary said to the angel, “How can this be since I am a virgin?” The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.”

(Luke 1:26-36)

Another significant indication of Luke’s knowledge of the supernatural nature of Jesus’ birth is found in the opening chapter of his Gospel referring to the beginning of our Lord’s ministry:

Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph.

(Luke 3:23)

With reference to the well-known fact that Jesus was born supernaturally to Mary while she was still a virgin the apostle Paul wrote:

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights as sons.

(Galatians 4:4-6)

In his first Epistle to the Church the apostle John declared that those who reject the deity of Jesus Christ are prompted by evil, deceiving spirits, and that such people make God out to be a liar. They make God out to be a liar because they do not believe the testimony He gave concerning His Son. This testimony is clearly recorded by Luke where the angel Gabriel told Mary that the Child born to her would be conceived through the Holy Spirit and would be called the Son of God.

The apostle John is very blunt in his writings on Christ's deity, as the whole plan of salvation would be affected if the Virgin Birth were not a reality. In other words, if the doctrine of the Trinity is denied, then there is no incarnation, no redemption, and no salvation.

Why a Virgin Birth Was Necessary

When God created this physical world, He gave the first man, Adam, all authority to rule and subdue His perfect Creation. But when Adam disobeyed God's command to not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, sin entered the world. Since the Garden of Eden all humanity has been contaminated through the original sin of Adam. Original sin was the sin in which all other sin or sins originated. The apostle Paul says:

Therefore just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned.

(Romans 5:12-13)

The point Paul is making here is that when the first man sinned, he did so as the head and representative of the entire human race. In other words, the entire human race has been effected through the original sin of Adam and we have all inherited his sin nature. That is why it was necessary our Redeemer be totally free from that contamination; in order to offer Himself as a perfect sin sacrifice on our behalf. This would not have been possible unless Jesus had been supernaturally conceived through the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit.

God's plan of holding each individual guilty because of Adam's sin is much more merciful than if each person had had to stand for himself. If that had been the case, each of us would surely have done exactly what Adam did. We would have sinned and there would have been no hope. But whereas the first Adam stood as our representative, the Second Adam, the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, could also stand as our Representative.

Jesus did for us what not one of us could have done for ourselves. He perfectly kept the Law of God, and having perfectly kept the Law, He died for us who had broken it – not only through the sin of Adam, but through our own personal transgressions as well. No human being will be lost because of Adam's sin. If they are, it is because they did not accept the Second Adam, Jesus Christ.

Can the Trinity Be Explained Scientifically?

The doctrine of the Trinity is something finite minds will never fully comprehend. We must remember that God is Spirit and numbers belong primarily to the physical world. So any attempts we might make to describe a spiritual being in the form of physical expression will inevitably end in difficulty. "To try and give a philosophical explanation of the tri-unity of God," wrote Torrey, "Is to try and put the facts of an infinite being into forms of finite thought."

But this much we know, God is One, and there are three Persons who possess the attributes of deity – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who are called God and worshipped as such. Second, the Bible does not require us to know what physical or scientific means God used before we believe His Word. He is by no means at the mercy of scientific laws of nature because He is the Creator of the Universe and can do all things as He chooses.

It is actually one of the perfections of the Bible that all of the supernatural events recorded there were not written in the terminology of modern science. If they had been, they would never have been understood until today, since science and its terminology are constantly changing.

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

(Hebrews 11:3)

Furthermore, even if we were to abandon the doctrine of the Trinity and the miraculous conception, or if it could somehow be disproved through modern scientific research, it would still be difficult, if not impossible, to account for the facts surrounding the life of Jesus Christ by any other theory than that of His being the incarnation of God.

As we powerfully demonstrated in the previous chapters, this Man's whole life was consistent with His divinity. And the more you study the life of Christ, displayed in the Old and New Testament documents, the less you will be surprised to learn that the promise God made through the prophets concerning the union of divinity and humanity was literally fulfilled in the Man Jesus Christ of Nazareth:

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself,

taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.

(Philippians 2:5-9)

Denials of the Trinity from Professing Christians

There are many religious organisations today that claim to be Christians but totally deny the Trinity as a biblical doctrine. Groups like *The Way International*, *Christian Science*, and the *Jehovah Witnesses* are among many who oppose the doctrine as something pagan, unreasonable and of the devil.

By denying the biblical teaching on the Trinity the Jehovah Witnesses make Jesus Christ out to be a mere creation of Jehovah God, who earned His own salvation and immortality, and the Holy Spirit as God's impersonal force by means of which He carries out His holy will.

In a similar fashion the *Mormons* maintain that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not immortal, but were individual spirit-men created by a sexual union of their parent deities, each of whom then later evolved into Godhood. Therefore, Mormonism totally rejects the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and teach *tritheism* – a belief in three separate gods.

Christian Science is another group that rejects the Trinity as a biblical doctrine. In her book, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, its founder Mary Baker Eddy wrote: “The theory of three persons in one God suggests polytheism rather than the one ever-present I Am. The name Elohim is in the plural, but the plurality of Spirit does not imply more than one God, nor does it imply three persons in one.”

Is this really what we find when we examine the writings of the early Christian leaders and the Old and New Testament accounts recorded by the apostles and prophets? We have partly answered

that question already, but let us examine a little more evidence from the New Testament.

While it is true to say that the word *Trinity* does not appear anywhere in the Bible, it is, however, everywhere presupposed. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are so closely tied together in all of Scripture that to deny the Trinity would make some biblical passages very difficult, if not impossible, to understand. Consider the following:

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

(1 Corinthians 12:4-7)

I urge you brothers by our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me.

(Romans 15:30)

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

(Matthew 28:19)

But you dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

(Jude 1:20-22)

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

(2 Corinthians 13:14)

But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

(Titus 3:4-7)

For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

(Ephesians 2:18)

We Must Test the Spirits

It is of vital importance for each individual to understand what the Scriptures teach concerning the Trinity, as failure to do so can lead to rejection of the One true God and worship of a false deity. The Bible teaches a monotheistic view; that there is One true God, and that this One true God exists eternally as three Persons:

There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

(Ephesians 4:4-7)

The doctrine of the tri-unity of God was defended from the earliest times as Christian teachers sought to safeguard the unity of God against *tri-theism*, and to also maintain the respective deity of all three Persons. This can be seen from the writings of the Church Fathers and the historic creeds. From as early as the 200s written discourses on the Trinity had already begun to appear.

Novatian of Rome (210-280 A.D.) wrote in his work, *On The Trinity*, of Jesus being truly a Man but that: “He was also God according to the Scriptures... Scripture has as much described

Jesus Christ to be a man, as moreover it has also described Christ the Lord to be God.”

Gregory Thaumaturgus of Neo-Caesarea (205-270 A.D.) declared that: “All are one nature, one essence, one will, and are called the Holy Trinity; and these also are names subsistent, one nature in three Persons and one genus.”

Also the historic creeds of the early Church declared faith in only one God, yet clearly taught that both the Son and the Holy Spirit were equally God. For example, the Creed of Nicaea in A.D. 325 was the creed of 318 Church Fathers which reads: “We believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father as only begotten, Light from Light, begotten not created.”

Contrary to what some liberal theologians and religious cults teach, there have always been three Persons in the eternal Trinity, each of whom is eternally divine. One or more of the Persons did not come into being at a point in time, nor at some point in time did one of them become divine.

There has never been any change in the essential divine nature of the triune God, even though the function of one member may for a time be subordinate to one or both of the other members. However, this does not mean that He is in anyway inferior in essence.

When the Second Person of the Trinity incarnated and became a Man, He did not become less than the Father, although, functionally, He did become subordinate. And even though one member of the Trinity may have a more prominent part in a specific action or role, such as creating or redeeming, all three Persons are still involved.

Therefore, the Bible often substitutes or includes a specific member of the Trinity in events where the term God is used. To further illustrate that the Trinity is taught in Scripture try to answer the following questions without reaching that conclusion.

Who Sanctifies Man?

Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ.

(Jude 1:1)

Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the city gate in order to sanctify the people by his own blood.

(Hebrews 13:12)

To the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ.

(1Peter 1:1-3)

Who Raised Jesus from the Dead?

This man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, who you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death...

(Acts 2:23-24b)

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking of the temple of his body.

(John 2:19-22)

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

(Romans 8:11-12)

Who Does the Bible Say Is God?

One God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

(Ephesians 4:6-7)

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited but emptied himself taking the form of a slave.

(Philippians 2:5-8)

While we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

(Titus 2:13)

“Ananias” Peter asked, “Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, were not the proceeds at your disposal? How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You did not lie to us but to God.”

(Acts 5:3-5)

Who Created the World?

And to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things.

(Ephesians 3:9-10)

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for by him all things in heaven and on earth were created.

(Colossians 1:15-16)

And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

(Genesis 1:1-3)

Immediately after the time of the apostles, and right up to the Council of Nicaea, the first Church leaders consistently believed and taught that Jesus Christ was God born of a virgin. In his book, *God in Three Persons*, Professor, theologian and writer Dr E. Calvin Beisner expounds on the overwhelming evidence, direct and indirect, in the New Testament manuscripts concerning the deity of Jesus Christ. He wrote:

The testimony of the New Testament to the deity of Christ is unanimous... where there no passages at all which directly call Christ God, we would still have a great weight of evidence that is the New Testament conception of Him, for in all senses He is depicted as precisely parallel to God the Father.”

Then We Will Know All Things

All we can truly understand about God is what He has revealed to us in His Word. Even though the Bible gives us a great deal of accurate information, it by no means reveals the debts of His infinity. This will be one of the glories of our eternal salvation, to learn wondrous things of the unending perfections of an infinite and perfect God:

But when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.

(1 Corinthians 13:10-13)

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THE RELIABILITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

We come now to the remarkable story of the inspiration, preservation, and reliability of the New Testament documents. The Gospels themselves declare that they are eye-witness accounts given by trustworthy and honest men, who endeavoured to give an accurate record of the incarnate, Divine Son of God who fulfilled all the Old Testament Messianic prophecies. The apostle John saw it all happen and declared that his record is true:

When they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe.

(John 19:33-35b)

That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

(1John 1:3)

The apostle Peter also claimed that he was an “eyewitness” of Christ’s power and glory:

For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty.

(2 Peter 1:16)

Other New Testament writers clearly indicate that there is much evidence of careful eyewitness reporting in their records. In the Gospel of Luke, and his prologue in the Book of Acts, the historian Luke declares that he obtained his information from eyewitnesses; that he wrote in order of events; that many others had written down their experiences; and that there were many infallible proofs of the whole life and ministry of Christ:

Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. I too decided after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account.

(Luke 1:1-4)

As we shall see below, the caution exercised by these writers, their personal conviction that what they wrote was true, and the total lack of demonstrable error or contradiction in their reports is a powerful indication that they told the truth.

The Bringing Together of Scripture and When the Canon Closed

The New Testament was written in Greek, the universal language of ancient times, and appropriate for the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ that was to be preached to all nations of the world. The twenty-seven Books of our New Testament are divided into four categories: (1) *History* – including the four Gospels and the Book of Acts. (2) *Paul's Epistles* – from Romans to Philemon. (3) *The general Epistles* – the Books from Hebrews to Jude. (4) *The Apocalypse* – the Book of Revelation.

In the case of the New Testament documents, the recording of Scripture ceased when the living witnesses of Christ's life, death and resurrection had all died. Jesus had said to His chosen apostles:

You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

(Acts 1:8b)

I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.

(John 14:25-27)

It is important to remember that the bringing together of Scripture into one volume is a different question from that of divine inspiration. Similar to the collection of the Old Testament, the New Testament Books and Epistles were inspired by the Holy Spirit the moment He gave His message to His prophets or apostles.

At first each Book or Epistle was written and sent to various churches, or individuals, and circulated separately until they were eventually bound together into one volume. The first volume containing several Books are the writings of Paul, which include his Letters to the various churches. The Synoptic Gospels also circulated separately until John had included his, after which they were then bound together as the fourfold Gospels.

Tests to Determine Inspired Books

The New Testament canon of Scripture closed when the living witnesses of Christ had all died. Therefore, the early Church leaders had the task of excluding from that list all that was written after this period. Later writings were merely helpful works but

not considered Scripture. The basic factor for recognizing a book's canonicity for the New Testament was *divine inspiration*, and the chief test for this was apostolicity. The New Testament declares that the Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets whom Christ had promised to guide into all truth by the Holy Spirit:

You are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

(Ephesians 2:19b-22)

Unless a book could be proven to come from the pen of an apostle, or at least have the authority of an apostle behind it, it was rejected. In the early days of the Church at Jerusalem an apostle was someone who could claim to be an eyewitness of the life, ministry and resurrection of Jesus.

This is made evident from the Book of Acts where Peter nominated two candidates to take the place of Judas a few days after the crucifixion. Their first and foremost qualification was that they had known Jesus before and after His death and were eyewitnesses to His resurrection:

Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.

(Acts 1:21-23)

From the writings of biblical and Church history we can discern another principle that guided the recognition and collection of the truly inspired Books that make up our New Testament – miracles and wonders. If a Book or Epistle was written by a spokesman of

God, then it would also have to be confirmed by supernatural acts of God. Frequently, miracles and wonders separated the true prophets from the false ones. In many of his Epistles the apostle Paul appeals to the miracles and signs which God performed through him to defend his ministry as a true representative of Jesus Christ:

The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, signs and wonders and mighty works.

(2 Corinthians 12:12)

My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

(1Corinthians 2:4-6)

But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. For the kingdom of God depends not on talk but on power.

(1Corinthians 4:19)

As we have already seen, the criterion which came to prevail to determine which books were to be included in the canon was apostolicity. In fact, lists appeared soon after the last apostle died, and a final list was drawn up in 397 A.D., after all the evidence was thoroughly reviewed by a Council at Carthage.

The Council was called to exclude unauthentic writings and to authorize a list, not to declare the Books inspired, but to exclude any writings which did not originate from the living witnesses. This is one reason why the Gnostic gospels were never among the Books considered for the canon by the early Church. They were written a century too late to be written by the people they name as

their authors. Professor FF Bruce explains the role of the Church Council in similar terms:

One thing must be emphatically stated. The New Testament books did not become authoritative for the Church because they were formally included in a canonical list; on the contrary, the Church included them in her canon because she already regarded them as divinely inspired, recognising their innate worth and general apostolic authority, direct or indirect. The first ecclesiastical councils to classify the canonical books were both held in North Africa, at Hippo Regius in 393 A.D. and at Carthage in 397, but what these councils did was not to impose something new upon the Christian communities but to codify what was already the general practice of the communities.

Since that period there has been no serious questioning of the twenty-seven accepted Books in the New Testament, either by Roman Catholics, Protestants, or the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Who Composed the History Books?

The universal tradition of the early Church Fathers is that Matthew wrote the first of our four Gospels. Papias, the first century Christian writer, bishop of Heirapolis and a disciple of the apostle John, said that Matthew wrote his Gospel from notes taken down while Jesus was actually teaching. Indeed, recent discoveries have shown that it was customary for rabbis of Christ's time to be followed by disciples with note pads to record their teachings.

Further evidence comes from Roman records which show that it was compulsory for tax collectors to take account of full particulars of every business and unusual events in their district. Accounts would be taken down in the vernacular tongue and then translated to Greek for a report to Rome.

This may indicate why Jesus called Matthew the tax collector to follow Him. It is very likely that Matthew continued his note taking when he became a disciple. Papias described how: “Matthew compiled the sayings of Jesus in the Hebrew Aramaic tongue and everyone translated them as best they could.”

Papyrus Expert Verifies Composition Date

A German Papyrus expert by the name of C. Thiede verified this statement of Papias after his visit to Magdalen College Oxford where he identified fragments from Matthew’s Gospel. He recognized a style of writing which he claimed had faded out by A.D. 50. This shows that the Gospel of Matthew was written by an eyewitness at the time the events recorded took place.

In addition to Thiede’s conclusions, Dead Sea Scroll experts are convinced that dialect changes reveal that all the Gospels were written within twenty–five years of the crucifixion. In his fantastic book, *Re-dating The New Testament*, lecturer and Dean of Trinity College, Cambridge, Dr John Robinson, said that his research had led him to the conviction that the whole of the New Testament was written before the fall of Jerusalem.

Robinson concluded that if the Gospels had been written after this period, the wording in Scripture would have been different with knowledge of these events. For example, the Gospel writer Matthew alluded to the destruction of the Temple, but only as a prediction and not as a past fact. In fact, the most climatic events of that period, the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the collapse of Judaism, are never once mentioned in the New Testament. They are only predicted.

Early Dates for Mark, Luke, John and Acts

The Gospel of Mark comes next, after Matthew, in around A.D. 45, followed by the Gospel of Luke in around A.D. 54. They are followed by the Gospel of John which was composed before A.D. 66. In his *Ecclesiastical History*, the fourth century Church historian Eusebius preserves writings of Papias where he recorded sayings of the elder John:

The elder used to say this also: 'Mark having been the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately all that he mentioned, whether doings or sayings of Christ.' So then Mark made no mistake writing down in this way some things as he (Peter) mentioned them; for he paid attention to this one thing, not to omit anything that he heard, or to include any false statements.

The apostle John was bishop of seven churches in Turkey until 105 A.D. Early Church writings confirm that he read the other three Gospels and confirmed their accuracy. He then composed his own Gospel to cover the activities of Jesus during His first year of ministry that had not been mentioned by the other Gospels. It can be shown by what John omits and includes that he had before him the Synoptics.

It was thought by many that John wrote in his old age, but this has long been challenged by experts who believe his Gospel must have been composed before A.D. 70. These scholars again point out that the Judaistic type of Christianity was shattered by the Jewish wars of A.D. 66 -70, yet John makes no mention of it.

In his book, *The Bible And Archaeology*, the most respected New Testament textual scholar Sir Frederic Kenyon concluded from the overwhelming archaeological evidence that the Gospels were composed shortly after the events they describe, and that the early

Church had widely distributed them within its congregations in a comparatively short period of time.

The Book of Acts ends unfinished and up to date with the apostle Paul imprisoned in Rome and awaiting trial before Nero. History records that this event took place in A.D. 62, yet Luke makes no mention of Paul's trial, release, re-arrest and execution in A.D. 64. If Acts had been written after this event, Luke would surely have mentioned it. We can conclude then that Acts was written before A.D. 62, and Luke's Gospel of which Acts was a sequel, a reasonable time before.

Concerning Luke's ability as a historian the great archaeologist Sir William Ramsay concluded after thirty years of study: "Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy... this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians."

No Room for Counterfeits

Fortunately, due to the tremendous advances in historical research and biblical archaeology, some of which are mentioned above and elsewhere in this chapter, Christians were finally able to reject the vain arguments of liberal scholars, who claimed that the Gospels and Epistles are historically unreliable and were written a hundred years after the events they describe. These critics conclude that the New Testament documents were based on hearsay and oral tradition rather than on eyewitness accounts as the New Testament writers declare.

However, due to the many incredible archaeological discoveries over the last few decades many of these liberal scholars were forced to consider much earlier dates for the composition of the New Testament documents, as the evidence shows that all New Testament Books were already written and widely circulating throughout the Christian communities within thirty–five years of the events they describe.

One of the world's foremost biblical archaeologists, Professor William F Albright, said that there was no longer any solid basis for dating any Book of the New Testament after about A.D. 80.

If any of these manuscripts had contained factual errors, there would certainly have been divisions within the early Church. This is because many eyewitnesses to the events surrounding Jesus' ministry were still alive and would have contested any inaccurate records, in the same way that any false reporting today of a major past event would be corrected on the basis of eyewitness accounts and historic records.

Moreover, these copied manuscripts were read in Christian churches throughout the Roman Empire every Sunday by thousands of believers. By A.D. 60 – 70 the original Greek Books and Epistles of the New Testament had already been translated into Egyptian, Hebrew, Latin, Coptic, and many other languages. If a counterfeit text or doctrine had been introduced, it would easily have been detected when compared with the other numerous available manuscripts at that time.

Many of these ancient copies of the original New Testament documents have survived through the centuries and are kept in various museums and libraries around the world. They confirm that there were absolutely no factual or doctrinal differences among the copied texts.

It is also very significant that the Gospel's historical account concerning the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was never denied by any Jewish or Roman critics of the first century. On the contrary, as we showed in chapter six, they only confirm that the New Testament account surrounding these events is historically true and reliable.

THE BIBLIOGRAPHICAL TEST

In his introduction to *Research in English Literary History*, historian C. Sanders lists and explains the three basic principles for assessing the reliability of ancient documents. The first is the *Bibliographical Test*, which asks such questions as: “How many manuscripts (handwritten copies) do we have?” “In how good a condition are they?” And, “how close are they to the original?” The second test is the *External Evidence Test*, which asks whether there is any contemporary historical material to confirm the statements of the document under analysis. And the third is the *Internal Evidence Test*, which asks whether the author concerned was writing truth or error, fact or fiction.

To begin with the first question in the bibliographical test we can affirm with great certainty that the New Testament text rests on such a great multitude of manuscript evidence that it has become the most frequently copied and widely circulated Book of antiquity. There are now more than 5,686 known Greek manuscripts, 10,000 Latin Vulgate, and almost 9,300 other early versions from Slavic, Arabic, Persian, Ethiopic, Armenian, Anglo Saxon, Old Latin, Hebrew and so on. No other document of antiquity even comes close to this number.

In comparison, only Homer’s famous *Iliad* is second to this with 643 manuscripts that have survived. However, the first complete preserved text of Homer dates from the thirteenth century. The importance of this great number of biblical copies cannot go unobserved. As with most of the documents of ancient literature, there are no original manuscripts of the Bible, but fortunately the large number of surviving copies make it possible to reconstruct the original with complete accuracy.

The significance of this caused the great lawyer and retired Professor of Law and Humanities at the University of Luton, John Warwick Montgomery, to say:

To be sceptical of the resultant text of the New Testament Books is to allow all of classical antiquity to slip into obscurity, for no document of the ancient period is as well attested bibliographically as the New Testament.”

And the renowned archaeologist and scholar William Foxwell Albright asserts that:

No other work from Graeco-Roman antiquity is so well attested by manuscript tradition as the New Testament. There are many more early manuscripts of the New Testament than there are of any classical author, and the oldest extensive remains of it date only about two centuries after their original composition.

Finally, Sir Frederic G. Keyon, a firm authority on ancient manuscripts, had this to say on the subject:

It cannot be too strongly asserted that in substance the text of the Bible is certain: especially is the case with the New Testament. The number of manuscripts of the New Testament, of early translations from it, and of quotations of it from the oldest writers in the church, is so large that it is practically certain that the true reading of every doubtful passage is preserved in some one or other of these ancient manuscripts. This can be said of no other ancient book in the world.

Quality and Antiquity of New Testament Copies

In light of the overwhelming quantity of New Testament manuscripts in our possession today, the sceptic will obviously say that quantity does not constitute quality, and that there would be no authority behind thousands of pieces of inferior biblical material. This takes us to the second and third question in the bibliographical test: “How good are the thousands of copies of the New Testament manuscripts in our possession and how close are they to the original?”

In his fantastic book, *Are The New Testament Documents Reliable*, Professor F.F Bruce gives us the answer by making a strong comparison between the great wealth of New Testament evidence and the number of other popular writings of antiquity. He wrote:

Perhaps we can appreciate how wealthy the New Testament is in manuscript attestation if we compare the textual material for other ancient historical works. *For Caesar’s Gallic Wars* (composed between 58 and 50 B.C.) there are several extant MSS, but only nine or ten are good, and the oldest is some 900 years later than Caesar’s day.

On the 142 books of the *Roman history of Livy* (59 B.C. – A.D. 17) only 35 survive; these are known to us from not more than 20 MSS of any consequences, only one of which, and that containing fragments of books III-VI, is as old as the fourth century.

Of the 14 books of the *Histories of Tacitus* (c.A.D. 100) only four and a half survive; of the 16 books of his *Annals*, 10 survive in full and two in part. The text of these extant portions of his two great historical works depends entirely on two MSS, one of the ninth century and one of the eleventh. The extant

MSS of his minor works (*Dialogus de Oratoribus*, *Agricola*, *Germania*) all descend from a codex of the tenth century.

The History of Thucydides (c.460-400 B.C.) is known to us from eight MSS, the earliest belonging to c.A.D. 900, and a few papyrus scraps, belonging to about the beginning of the Christian era.

The same is true of the *Histories of Herodotus* (488-428 B.C.). Yet no classical scholar would listen to an argument that the authenticity of Herodotus or Thucydides is in doubt because the earliest MSS of their works which are of any use to us are over 1,300 years later than its original.

From the very first century the Christian's enthusiasm and devotion to the Gospel of Jesus Christ encouraged them to copy and translate thousands of New Testament manuscripts that were distributed throughout the entire Roman Empire down through the centuries.

In addition to these, the early Church leaders and Christian writers quoted so extensively from the Bible, and especially the New Testament, that a committee at Oxford University collected all their references into one work, known as *The New Testament In The Apostolic Fathers*, in the early nineteenth century.

Among these writings were three works dated before A.D. 96: *The Epistle of Barnabas* (A.D. 70), *The Didache* (A.D. 90), and the *Epistle of Clement*, who was bishop of Rome (A.D. 96). They quoted from the *Gospels*, *Acts*, *Romans*, *1 Corinthians*, *Ephesians*, *Titus*, *Hebrews*, and *1 Peter* among others.

Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch, was responsible for several churches in Syria. He quoted extensively from almost every New Testament Book. Polycarp, a friend and disciple of John, makes numerous quotations from the Gospels and Epistles of Paul and Peter. His writings are dated around A.D. 108.

Chrysostom, writing in 170 A.D., lists all the New Testament except the Epistle of James and 3 John. A manuscript containing some of his writings was discovered in the Ambrosian Library of Milan. It is known as *The Canon of Muratori*.

These writers, referred to as *The Apostolic Fathers*, wrote between A.D. 90 and 160, yet in their many writings we find evidence of their familiarity with Scripture. This again greatly proves that the New Testament could not have been composed at the later date suggested by critics.

A Sure Foundation

The more texts we have of any ancient document, the less doubt there can be about the original. In addition to the thousands of Greek, Latin and other New Testament manuscripts in existence, historians have been able to recover over 36,000 citations in the writings of the early Church Fathers, some dating back to the first century. Many leading scholars in the field of textual criticism have pointed out that these quotations and citations by the early Church writers are so extensive that a whole New Testament could be constructed from them alone.

It is this great wealth of evidence that has enabled scholars to place the original text at ninety-nine per-cent plus, the remaining uncertainties being insignificant. Below is a brief chronology of just a small portion of the earliest and most important New Testament manuscript discoveries.

Codex Vaticanus (A.D. 325-350)

Another important early manuscript includes a complete Bible known as the *Codex Vaticanus*, or *Vatican M.S No 1209*. It was written in Greek in the latter part of the fourth century and is now a part of the Vatican Library. After decades of textual criticism,

many consider Codex Vaticanus as one of the most trustworthy manuscripts of the New Testament.

Codex Sinaiticus (A.D. 350)

At first it was not possible to bind all the writings into one volume until scrolls gave place to paged books, called codex. Our earliest complete copy of the New Testament was written out not long after A.D. 300. It is known as *Codex Sinaiticus*, named so because it was discovered at the foot of Mount Sinai.

This document was found in the year 1859 in St Catherine's Monastery by a German scholar, Constantine Tischendorf. The manuscript contains all of the New Testament and more than half of the Old Testament. It was presented to the Russian czar and later bought by the British Government. Today it is preserved in the British Museum London.

The Chester Beatty Collection (A.D. 200-250)

In the year 1931 The *Times* newspaper announced that a large volume of the biblical papyri discovered in the 1920s, in the ruins of an old monastery in Egypt, had been acquired by the antiquarian, Alfred Chester Beatty. This very important collection contains three papyri, with Greek portions of the New Testament and eight papyri with portions of the Old Testament, dating from as early as the second and fourth centuries A.D. The New Testament papyri, which date from the third century, were at least a hundred years older than the ancient vellum codices.

The texts were published between 1933 and 1937 by the retired director of the British Museum, Sir Frederic Kenyon, and are kept in exhibition at the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, Ireland. Among this fantastic collection are:

The Fourfold Gospels (A.D. 200)

The most striking of the Beatty papyri is the codex containing the four Gospels; Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and the Acts of the Apostles. Until this discovery only small fragments of the single Gospels on papyrus were known, and it was believed that all four Gospels had not been collected into one volume until a much later date.

However, this papyrus, which dates from around A.D. 200, shows that the four Gospels and the Book of Acts had been compiled into one volume at a much earlier date than once believed. Although many more papyrus fragments have been discovered since then, this codex remains the only surviving example of the four Gospels and Acts in one volume.

Epistles of the Apostle Paul (A.D. 200)

Another significant papyrus in the Beatty collection contains a text of the Letters of Paul. Fifty-six pages of this codex were acquired by Chester Beatty, while another thirty pages of the same Book were acquired by the University of Michigan. Together, these documents make up a complete text of the Pauline Letters and date from around 200 A.D.

The Book of Revelation (A.D. 250)

The New Testament papyrus of the Beatty collection also contains chapter nine to seventeen of the Apocalypse of the apostle John. This portion of the text that has survived is the largest single portion of the Book of Revelation to have been preserved on papyrus.

Old Testament Papyri

As well as the many important New Testament papyri in the Beatty collection, there are also several significant Greek manuscripts of the Old Testament. Two papyri dating from around the late third and early fourth centuries contain most of the Book of Genesis.

Another papyri contains the text of the Book of Numbers and Deuteronomy. The style of handwriting indicates that this text was written out as early as A.D. 150 and is the oldest biblical manuscript in the Chester Beatty collection.

Another important papyri contains writings from the Old Testament prophets. The most significant of these is a manuscript of the Book of Daniel dating from as early as A.D. 200. This codex also contains portions of the text of the Books of Ezekiel and Ester.

Among the other Old Testament texts is a small portion of the Book of the prophet Jeremiah dating from around A.D. 200, and from the same period, a codex of the Book of Isaiah.

As well as containing much more substantial portions of New Testament writings than any of the previously known papyrus fragments, the Beatty papyri also provide an incredibly unique witness to the Greek text from the time before the mass destruction of the Christian's sacred writings during the persecution by Diocletian in A.D. 303.

Codex Alexandrinus (A.D. 400)

Codex Alexandrinus was written in Greek and contains the whole Bible. It is contained in the British Museum.

The John Ryland Fragment (A.D. 150-200)

What is generally accepted as one of the oldest surviving New Testament Greek document is a single small fragment of a page of John's Gospel, discovered in Egypt in the 1950s. This precious document is kept at the *John Ryland's Library* in Manchester. The fragment was subsequently identified as a missing part of a codex containing the Gospel of John, which was well known to scholars and dated from around 150-200 A.D.

Because of the early date of the Ryland Fragment and its location, some distance from Asia Minor where the original was composed, this portion of the Gospel of John greatly confirms the early date for the composition of the original.

The Bodmer Papyrus (A.D. 150-200)

This document was purchased in the 1950s from a dealer in Egypt and is located in the Bodmer Library of World Literature in Geneva, Switzerland. It contains most of the Gospel of John.

Another Fragment of John's Gospel (150 A.D.)

In the early 1950s another small fragment of John's Gospel was discovered among the papyri acquired by Beatty at that time. This fragment is among the oldest Gospel texts in the world, and contains part of John's account of the crucifixion; where Jesus asks John to take care of His mother.

Codex Ephraemi (A.D. 400)

This manuscript contains every book of the New Testament except 2 *John* and 2 *Thessalonians*. It is referred to as a *palimpsest*, which is a manuscript where the original writing has

been erased and written over. However, through much effort and the use of various chemicals scholars have been able to read the original writing underneath the overprinted text. This codex is located in the Bibliotheque Nationale of Paris.

Codex Bezae (A.D. 450)

This codex contains all four Gospels and the *Acts of the Apostles*, and appears to be written not only in Greek, but also in Latin. It is kept in the Cambridge Library.

Codex Claromontanus (A.D. 500) and Codex Washingtonensis (A.D. 450)

Codex Claromontanus is another bilingual manuscript and contains all of Paul's Epistles. Codex Washingtonensis is a codex containing the four Gospels: *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke* and *John* and is located in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C.

The Dead Sea Scroll Fragments (A.D. 68)

These fragments from Cave 7 of Qumran are believed to be small portions of the Gospel of Mark and fragments from the Epistles of Paul and James.

Amazingly Close to the Originals

A gap of almost two to three hundred years between the earliest major copy of the New Testament and the date of the original may seem quite long, yet it compares very favourably with the time-gap involved in the cases of the other famous ancient documents quoted previously by Professor Bruce.

With only one fragment of *Livy's Roman History* is the gap of almost 400 years, and for the works of Tacitus 900 years and so on. Until 1947 the earliest text of the Old Testament was dated around 1000 A.D., which compared quite badly to the large time-gaps we just noted in the works of Livy, Pliny, Tacitus and Caesar, but this all changed with the great discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran near the Dead Sea of Israel.

In light of such incredible evidence it is no wonder that the great scientist Isaac Newton said: "There are more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible than in any profane history."

It is more than clear that on the subject of bibliographical testing, no other known piece of ancient literature, religious or secular, has anything close to the Bible's credentials. As far as the New Testament is concerned Frederic Kenyon came to a similar conclusion:

Besides number, the manuscripts of the New Testament differ from those of the classical authors. In no other case is the interval of time between the composition of the book and the date of the earliest extant manuscripts so short as in that of the New Testament. The books of the New Testament were written in the latter part of the first century; the earliest extant manuscript are of the fourth century—say from 250 to 300 years later.

This may sound a considerable interval, but is nothing to that which parts most of the great classical authors from their earliest manuscripts... The interval then, between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed.

Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of New Testament may be regarded as established.

And F.A Hort, one of the greatest ever textual critics, came to the following conclusion of the overwhelming evidence on which the reliability of the New Testament text rests: “In the variety and fullness of the evidence on which it rests, the text of the New Testament stands absolutely and unapproachable alone among other ancient prose writings.”

THE EXTERNAL EVIDENCE TEST

As we already examined in great detail in the opening chapters of this book, the early part of the nineteenth century gave birth to many liberal scholars in Germany and England who asserted that whatever the Bible’s religious message was, it could not be considered seriously in matters of historical fact.

Their affirmations and false ideas became so pervasive that it became common for generations of amateur critics, and people who have never even read a page of Scripture, to confidently say that the Bible contains hundreds of historical and scientific mistakes.

This brings us to the external evidence test, which forms the second part of the examination for assessing the reliability of ancient documents, in this case the Bible. It asks if there is any contemporary evidence to confirm the statements made in the literature concerned. In other words, “what sources are there apart from the documents under analysis that proves its accuracy, reliability and authenticity?” For the New Testament documents the evidence could hardly be more positive.

In chapter six we examined the overwhelming evidence from the first century secular writers, Josephus, the Roman Tacitus, Suetonius and the Roman governor Pliny, who all indirectly

confirm that the events, peoples, places and customs recorded in the New Testament narratives are historical facts. But again archaeology has provided the most and more exciting confirmation of the Bible's accuracy.

Great Archaeologists Change Their Minds

Probably three of the greatest American archaeologists of the twentieth century, W.F. Albright, Nelson Glueck, and George E. Wright, each had their beginnings as sceptics, but later became believers through their many fantastic archaeological discoveries that convinced them of the total historical accuracy of the biblical records.

The English scholar Sir William Ramsay is regarded as one of the greatest archaeologists ever to have lived. He was Professor of Classical Art and Architecture at Oxford University, founder member of the British Academy, holder of nine honorary doctorates from universities in Great Britain, Europe and America, and knighted in 1906 for his distinguished service to the world of scholarship.

Ramsay began his career as a student in the German historical school in the middle of the nineteenth century and was a complete sceptic regarding the historical evidence about Jesus and other personalities recorded in the New Testament. He admitted that in his student years he was a great admirer of Julius Wellhausen, the leading German critic, and that his early training led him to believe that the New Testament narratives were complete myths rather than accurate contemporary historical records.

More than a century ago he embarked on a scholarly trip, being just a young man, to Asia Minor for the sole purpose of disproving the historical accounts mentioned by Luke in his Gospel and the Book of Acts. Ramsay and his travel companions were fully convinced that the New Testament records were totally inaccurate and so began to dig in the ancient ruins of sites

throughout Greece and Asia Minor searching for archaeological finds that would give proof to his assumptions.

But as a result of the fantastic evidence he uncovered in his study, Ramsay was forced to do a complete reversal of his religious beliefs and became a firm Christian for the rest of his life. His books became classics in the study of New Testament history. He described Luke as, “The very greatest of historians.”

New Testament Writers Further Confirmed

Time and time again biblical archaeology and historic research have vindicated the New Testament writers and disproved the many false accusations that call into question their writings as first century historical facts.

The famous historian A.N Sherwin White powerfully argues that as a historically reliable source, the New Testament Books compare favourably with the best in the field of classical studies, and goes on to say that sceptics should know better than to downgrade objective evidence in their favour. W.F Albright adds:

The excessive scepticism shown towards the Bible by important historical schools of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, certain phases of which still appear periodically, has been progressively discredited. Discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of innumerable details and has brought increased recognition to the value of the Bible as a source of history.

And writing along the same lines the famous assyriologist A.H Sayce said:

Time after time the most positive assertions of a sceptical criticism have been greatly disproved by archaeological discovery. Events and personages that

were confidently pronounced to be mythical have been shown to be historical and the older writers have turned out to have been better acquainted with what they were describing than the modern critic who had flouted them.

Entire volumes are not large enough to contain the archaeological finds that have boosted our confidence in the historical reliability of the New Testament documents. Secular museums around the world contain in-numerous quantities of inscriptions, documents, coins, utensils and other artefacts which point to the Bible's incredible and meticulous accuracy.

This fact alone is sufficient to set the Bible apart from all other literature of its time. Presented below are just a few of the findings of some of the most eminent archaeologists and their valuable opinions regarding these finds.

Luke's Accuracy in Describing Historical Event

It was considered for a long time that Luke had made a serious blunder in the events he described surrounding the birth of Jesus Christ in the following passage of his Gospel:

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinus was governor of Syria. All went to their own town to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child and she gave birth to her firstborn son.

(Luke 2:1-7)

The Bible critics claimed that Luke's statement regarding a Roman census of Judea was a pure invention and that Quirinus was not governor of Syria at that time. However, Luke's account, which for centuries had occasioned so much controversy, finally received considerable confirmation by historians and excavators that the entire passage is a literal fact.

While excavating at Antioch of Pisidia (Asia Minor) in 1913, William Ramsay unearthed inscriptions which revealed that Quirinus was, after all, the name of the governor of Syria at the time of the birth of Christ.

Further, it was established by close examination of ancient historical sources that the Roman authorities took a regular fourteenth-year census that obliged everyone at some time within the year to go and register in his native city. Evidence of this comes from a 2,000-year-old poster bill found in Egypt, very similar to the decree found in the Gospel of Luke. The ancient papyrus poster is an edict commanding everyone to return to their native town for enrolment. It reads:

The enrolment by household being at hand, it is necessary to notify all who for any cause so ever are outside their homes to return to their domestic hearts, that they may also accomplish the customary dispensation of enrolment and continue steadfastly in the husbandry that belongeth to them.

In *The Life of Claudius*, Suetonius, the Roman historian and chief secretary to Emperor Hadrian, confirms the report in the Book of Acts where Claudius commanded all the Jews to leave the city of Rome in A.D. 49. He wrote: "As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome."

After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome.

(Acts 18:1-3)

Luke's Accuracy in Describing People and Places

In his book, *The Book of Acts In The Setting Of The Hellenistic History*, the noted historian Colin Hemer gives numerous archaeological and historical confirmations of Luke's accuracy in identifying the exact titles of kings, governors and officials; his identification of army units; and his geographical precision and knowledge of major routes.

Such specialized details would not have been so well known except to a contemporary writer such as Luke who had travelled widely in the areas he described. And as one noted scholars pointed out:

This was not an easy achievement in those days, for the titles of chief officials varied from place to place and from time to time in the same place. For example, in Palestine Luke was careful to give Herod Antipas the correct title of Tetrarch of Galilee.

One of the first problems that confronted William Ramsay when he embarked on his mission trip to discredit the Bible was to discover the exact location of the city of Iconium. Until that time many believed that the Book of Acts was unreliable and wrong in its assumptions that Lystra and Derbe were in Lycaonia while Iconium was not. Luke wrote:

The same thing happened in Iconium..When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to

mistreat them and to stone them, the apostles learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding country.

(Acts 14:1,5-7)

Here the Bible says that when the persecuted believers were forced to leave Iconium, they fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding country. As it was assumed, based on some ancient records of the writer Cicero, that Iconium was the chief city of Lycaonia, to speak of people escaping from there to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe was nonsense and revealed a basic ignorance of geography. However, this all changed when William Ramsay unearthed a mass of evidence which showed that in Luke's day Iconium was in the province of Phrygia, and not Lycaonia.

The critics had never gone back further than A.D. 372, when the Roman Emperor Valens had made boundary changes which took Iconium into Lycaonia and made it its capital. So Luke was vindicated once again. Luke also made reference to *Lysanias the Tetrarch* of Abilene who ruled at the beginning of the ministry of John the Baptist in A.D. 27:

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis and Lysanias ruler of Abilene.

(Luke 3:1-2)

The only person with the name Lysanias that was known to historians was one who was killed in 36 B.C. Again Luke was thought to be wrong until an inscription was found at Abila, near Damascus, which bore the title *Freedman of Lysanias the Tetrarch*, and is dated between A.D. 14 and 29.

Luke Accurately Describes Ancient Custom

The biblical historian also wrote of a riot in the city of Ephesus and described a civic assembly taking place in a theatre where Paul's travel companions were dragged before the city clerk:

About this time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in no little business for the craftsmen. He called them together, along with the workmen in related trades, and said: "Men you know we receive a good income from this business. And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia...

There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited, and the goddess herself, who is worshipped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty.." Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's travelling companions from Macedonia, and rushed as one man into the theatre.

(Acts 19:23-30)

During excavations in the ancient ruins of Ephesus an inscription was found that speaks of these silver statues of the goddess Artemis that were to be placed in the theatre during a full assembly.

This theatre mentioned by Luke turned out to be incredibly big, with room for more than twenty-five thousand persons. Thanks to these and many other amazing archaeological discoveries, most of the ancient cities, islands and rulers mentioned by the Gospel writers have now been identified.

After evaluating the overwhelming historical and archaeological evidence which vindicates the total historic reliability of the Book of Acts, the distinguished historian A.N Sherwin White said that any attempts to reject its basic historicity, even in matters of detail, must now appear absurd.

The Politarch Inscription

Because the Greek term *politarchs* could not be found in existing ancient literature outside of the New Testament, some critics argued that Luke must have been mistaken in his use of the term in Acts 17, which speaks of some believers at Thessalonica being dragged by a mob before the politarchs. But then thirty-two inscriptions were found, nineteen of them from Thessalonica and at least three dating from Paul's time, that have the term politarchs (city authorities) written on them.

Temple Warning to Gentiles

In the year 1938 a stone slab was found just north of the Temple Mount which contained an inscription that originally hung on a small balustrade wall between the court of the Gentiles and the Temple itself. The text reads: "No foreigner is to enter within the forecourt and the balustrade around the sanctuary. Whoever is caught will have himself to blame for his subsequent death."

According to Josephus, these warnings were hung on a low wall that divided the public square of the Temple from the holy inner courtyard that only Jews had access to. The apostle Paul was wrongly accused to have taken Trophimus the Ephesian Gentile beyond the wall and into the inner court. This rare find from the Temple of Jesus' day verifies the Temple regulations described by Luke and gives a deeper meaning to the words of the apostle Paul in his Letter to the Ephesians:

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations.

(Ephesians 2:13-15b)

The Erastus Inscription

Writing from Corinth, the apostle Paul passed along greetings from several Corinthian believers including Erastus the city chamberlain. In 1929 archaeologists found a paving stone near the theatre of Corinth in Greece that contains Erastus' name and says that he was indeed a Roman public official there, just as the Bible says:

Gaius who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you.

(Romans 16:23-25)

The Megiddo Church Inscription

In 2005 a prayer hall was discovered outside the Megiddo prison. The floor of the prayer hall features a detailed mosaic floor with inscriptions that consecrate the Church to *God, Jesus Christ*. This find verifies that the Christian Church recognized the divinity of Jesus as early as the third century.

The Sergius Paulus Inscription

On one of his missionary journeys the apostle Paul visited the town of Paphos, on the west coast of Cyprus, where he converted the Roman proconsul Sergius Paulus to faith in Christ:

He was with the proconsul Sergius Paulus... When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was astonished at the teaching about the Lord.

(Acts 13:7a,12)

An inscription displayed in the Yalvac Museum near Antioch of Pisidia has the name of Sergius Paulus carved on it.

The God Fearers Inscription

In the ancient sites of Aphrodisias and Miletus in modern Turkey, scholars discovered two interesting inscriptions carved in marble and placed at ancient public buildings. Each inscription contains the term *God Fearers*, a term similar to a term we find often in the Book of Acts, whose meaning has long puzzled scholars and commentators. The inscription shows that the God fearers likely were non-Jews who believed in the God of Israel:

Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women.

(Acts 17:4)

The Stone Pavement Discovered at Last

Until recently sceptics declared that the *pavement* the apostle John mentions in his Gospel did not exist because no other secular historian made mention of it. But it has recently been unearthed eight feet below the present surface.

Now visitors to the Holy Land are shown the pavement where our Lord stood during His trial that had been covered up and forgotten ever since the destruction of the Temple and the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

It is an interesting fact that many other features spoken of so graphically by John as if they still existed while he was writing were totally destroyed and forgotten to history after the fall of Jerusalem. As stated above, this important fact has convinced many experts that John's Gospel was written well before the war of the Jews started in 66 A.D.

The Stones Shout out!

Even though thousands of sites from the biblical world have been confirmed by the many discoveries and excavations over the last century, archaeologists calculate that so far only a small percentage of all historical remains have been excavated. Therefore, because the amount of information uncovered is not yet complete, archaeology cannot be expected to confirm *every* statement of biblical history, geography, culture and so on. However, it is quite an amazing and significant fact that no discovery in the field of archaeology has yet refuted a biblical statement as unreliable, given the many opportunities it has had to do so.

With reference to the Bible's credibility Professor Nelson Glueck, former president of the Jewish Theological Seminary at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, and one of the three greatest archaeologists, observed the following:

It is worth emphasising that in all this work no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a single, properly understood biblical statement.

And former director of the Australian Institute of Archaeology, Doctor Clifford Wilson, closes his seventeen volume, *Archaeology, The Bible And Christ*, with the following words:

The Bible stands investigation in ways that are unique in all literature. Its superiority to attack, its capacity to withstand criticism, its amazing facility to be proved right after all, are all staggering by any standards of scholarship. Seemingly assured results disproving the Bible have a habit of backfiring. Over and over again the Bible has been vindicated. That is true from Genesis to Revelation, as we have seen in this book.

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop" He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

(Luke 19:39-41)

THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE TEST

However impressive the tremendous bibliographical and archaeological evidence in the Bible's favour may be, the critic will no doubt want to apply the internal evidence test; which asks whether the essential contents are truth or error fact or fiction, and if the biblical texts contain any known contradictions or inconsistencies.

In asserting the integrity of any document literary critics still follow Aristotle's ancient dictum that, "The benefit of the doubt is to be given to the document itself not arrogated by the critic to himself." In other words, one must listen to the claim of the document under analysis and not assume fraud or error unless the author disqualified himself by contradictions or known factual inaccuracies.

However, while using this dictum most critics who discredited the Bible, by arguing that it is full of errors and contradictions, failed to ask themselves a number of important questions before stating

their claim. The renowned British author Robert Horn amplifies this statement where he wrote:

Think for a moment about what needs to be demonstrated concerning a difficulty in order to transfer it into the category of a valid argument against doctrine. Certainly much more is required than the mere appearance of a contradiction. First, we must be certain that we have correctly understood the passage, the sense in which it uses words and numbers.

Second, that we possess all available knowledge in this matter. Third, that no further light can possibly be thrown on it by the advancing knowledge, textual research, archaeology etc.

Horn goes on to remind us that:

Unresolved difficulties do not constitute objections and unresolved problems are not necessity errors. This is not to minimize the area of difficulty but to see it in perspective. Difficulties are to be grappled with and problems are to drive us to seek clearer light, but until such time as we have total and final light on any issue we are in no position to affirm ‘Here is a proven error, an unquestionable objection to an infallible Bible.’

As we have seen in previous chapters, countless so-called errors in Scripture have already been resolved in the light of modern scientific and archaeological discoveries, and there is no reason to suppose that if there are still some remaining, they will not disappear completely in the years to come when new evidence comes to light.

As R.A. Torrey rightly said: “Time may well prove that the difficulty proceeds from our own ignorance rather than our knowledge.” I deal more on this subject in chapter twenty-three.

While we are still pursuing the question as to whether the Bible’s message is true or false, we need to remember that the Bible is not so much a single Book, but a library of sixty-six separate documents written by forty or more authors over a time span of 1,600 years.

These forty or so authors lived at different periods of history and came from many different cultures and levels of society, yet they produced a volume which is amazingly coherent. Not only this, the Bible also addresses many hot and controversial topics that usually create very opposing opinions when mentioned or discussed by various groups of people, including marriage, divorce, homosexuality, adultery, truth, and the nature of God to mention a few. But from the Book of Genesis right through to Revelation the biblical writers addressed these topics with an amazing degree of harmony.

When we contrast this fact with the compilation of Western classics, called *Great Books of the Western World*, whose writers are all part of the Western way of thinking, they often display an incredible diversity of views on almost every subject discussed. And even though their views share something in common, they also display a lot of conflicting and contradictory positions. In fact, they often set about to refute and criticise the ideas proposed by others.

This may not sound like sufficient evidence to confirm that the biblical writers always wrote the truth. Yet can we imagine a collection of falsehood or a mixture of truth and falsehood holding together and influencing society in the way the Bible has? As one commentator rightly pointed out: “By nature error is conflicting, whereas truth is cohesive. The amazing cohesion of the Bible’s teaching is a powerful pointer to its integrity.”

Second, and most importantly, the Bible, despite its diversity, presents a single unfolding story all the way through that is God's redemption of mankind through Jesus Christ His Son. As is frequently quoted: "The paradise lost of Genesis becomes the paradise regained of Revelation. Whereas the gate to the tree of life is closed in Genesis, it is opened forever in Revelation."

This in itself should be sufficient evidence for any fair-minded person of the Bible's integrity and reliability if they will openly examine the truth, but there is still more. Let us consider one more time the unprecedented phenomenon of biblical prophecy. While there are absolutely no prophecies in the Koran, the Hindu Vedas, the sayings of Buddha and Confucius or the Book of Mormon (even though almost all of them claim divine inspiration), it has been estimated that almost thirty per-cent of the Bible consists of future predictions making it very unique in all religious literature.

Because these predictions in Scripture were so accurate and precise, the critic's only response was to assert that the prophecies were made *after* the events they predicted. This claim is usually always based on the presupposition that such predictions are impossible and infers that a great part of the biblical writers were dishonest or deranged. It also ignores the obvious fact that in many prophetic passages it is simply impossible to manipulate the dates.

The evidence for the dating and fulfilment of biblical prophecy is so convincing that any attempt to use such an argument against the Bible's ability in foretelling future events is futile. Please refer back to chapter seven, eight and twelve of this book for more on biblical prophecy.

To paraphrase an apt observation: the problem becomes even more difficult for the critic when we consider the fact that not a single prophecy given according to the Bible's own criteria has ever proven to be false. At a time in Israel's history when prophecy was an important concern, the Israelites wanted to know

how someone claiming to be God's true prophet could be recognized. The reply that Moses gave could not have been clearer:

You may say to yourself, "how can we recognize a word that the Lord has spoken?" If a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord but the thing does not take place or prove true, it is a word that the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken of it presumptuously; do not be frightened by it.

(Deuteronomy 18:21-22)

Notice that Moses did not say, "If what a prophet says takes place, the prophet is genuine." Anybody claiming to be a prophet might make some accurate predictions sometimes, by just using common sense or some kind of inside knowledge, but this would not be proof of their credentials. A true prophet proved himself to be a spokesman of God by *always* making correct predictions. This again is powerful evidence for the direct involvement of God with the Bible and the integrity of Scripture.

Did the Writers Use Primary Sources?

As we noted at the opening of this chapter, the New Testament writers clearly indicate that they wrote their accounts as eyewitnesses or from first-hand information. In fact, no one can read any part of the New Testament without being impressed by the fact that all its writers convey the sense of truthfulness and divine authority, and give no impression that what they or the other biblical writers wrote were to be doubted by the reader as coming from unreliable sources. F.F Bruce describes the value of this primary-source information:

The earliest preachers of the Gospel knew the value of first-hand testimony, and appealed to it time and

time again. ‘We are witnesses to these things’ was their constant and confident assertion. And it can have been by no means so easy as some writers seem to think to invent words and deeds of Jesus in those early years when so many of His disciples were about, who could remember what had and had not happened. And it was not only friendly eyewitnesses that the early preachers had to reckon with; there were others less well-disposed who were also conversant with the main facts of the ministry and death of Jesus.

The disciples could not afford to risk inaccuracies... which would be at once exposed by those who would be only too glad to do so. On the contrary, one of the strong points in the original apostolic preaching is the confident appeal to the knowledge of the hearers; they not only said, “We are witnesses of these things,” but also, “As you yourselves know” (*Acts* 2:22). Had there been any tendency to depart from the facts in any material respect, the possible presence of hostile witnesses in the audience would have served as a further corrective.

Someone might be tempted to say here that an author writing a century or so after the facts can claim anything he wants. But as we demonstrated above and elsewhere, the New Testament documents were not written a century after the events they describe but during the lifetime of those involved in the biblical accounts themselves.

Therefore, the New Testament must be considered by scholars today as a competent primary-source document from the first century. In an interview for *Christianity Today* William Foxwell Albright stated:

In my opinion, every book of the New Testament was written by a baptized Jew between the forties and the eighties of the first century A.D.

Heaven and earth will pass away but my word will not pass away.

(Matthew 24:35)

15

ARE THERE OTHER GOSPELS?

Over the past few centuries many doctrines of the historical orthodox Christian faith have been challenged by liberal thinkers all over the world. As we have mentioned elsewhere, from the early eighteenth century until this very day many popular attempts have been made to discredit the historical reliability of the New Testament documents. However, none of these have been more harmful than the most recent liberal thinkers of the Jesus Seminar, directed by Robert W. Funk and sponsored by a private California Study centre.

The seminar consists of a consortium of New Testament liberal scholars who meet twice a year to vote on whether or not any of the Gospel quotations of Jesus' sayings meet with their scholarly approval and are genuine. This group of people actually sit in judgement to make pronouncements about the authenticity of the words and deeds of Christ by using a set of coloured beads.

If they believe Jesus might have made a statement close to what the Gospel writer recorded, they vote by dropping a pink bead into a box, and if they believe that Jesus certainly made such a statement, they vote by dropping in a red bead. If, on the other hand, they totally reject a given statement in the Gospels as something Jesus would never had said, they drop a black bead into the box showing their total rejection of the Gospel writer.

In April 1996 *Time Magazine* reported that during the Jesus Seminar meeting in Santa Rosa, California, these seventy or more liberal scholars had decided that the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were completely unreliable and that the judges had to throw out the New Testament testimony of the birth of Jesus, the resurrection, and other important Christian doctrines.

Their vote was based on a variety of Christian writings other than the four canonical Gospels, including the *gospel of Peter*, the

supposed but not extant *Q document*, and the second century *gospel of Thomas*, which is usually treated as the fifth gospel on par with the four New Testament Gospels.

The criteria used by these liberal scholars to judge the authenticity of the Gospel narratives clearly reveals why they reached the above conclusion; they unfairly reject any prophetic statements, most descriptions of Jesus' trial and resurrection, and any claim He made to be the Son of God. In other words, they refuse to accept any intervention of God in history.

The brilliant scholar Professor Michael Green of Regent College totally rejects the conclusion of the Jesus Seminar. He stated what we proved in the previous chapter – that the canonical Gospels are the best authenticated of all ancient documents from that period. He wrote:

We have copies of them going back to well within the century of their composition, which is fantastic compared with the classic authors of that period. And in striking contrast to the two or three manuscripts we have attesting the texts of these secular writers, we have hundreds of the New Testament. They give us the text of the New Testament with astonishing uniformity.

Even though many attempts of the Jesus Seminar have been totally rejected by careful scholars, they still receive widespread attention today. Their views represent only a handful of a large group of academic scholars who totally reject the Bible as being the inspired Word of God and would add extra books to the canon of Scripture. Sadly, their agnostic and unbelieving attitudes have permeated not only the academic world, but the general public also; and worst of all the Church itself.

Over the last few years we have seen the publication of books such as *Holy Grail*, *Holy Blood*, *The Da Vinci Code*, and the third century *Gnostic gospels*. These works claim that the Bible was compiled and edited by men who possessed a political agenda to promote the divinity of Jesus Christ and use His influence to solidify their own power base.

Much of the modern controversy with these extra-biblical writings came from Dan Brown's best-selling fiction book, *The Da Vinci Code*. The novel claims that the Roman Emperor Constantine proposed a motion to upgrade Jesus Christ to a deity at the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. and that prior to that period nobody believed Jesus Christ to be divine.

The book also suggests that Constantine commissioned and financed a new Bible which omitted "those gospels" (the Gnostic) that spoke of Christ's human traits, and embellished "those Gospels" (New Testament) that made Him God-like. The so-called "*earlier gospels*" are said to have been outlawed, gathered up and burned, but fortunately some managed to survive.

The *Da Vinci Code* holds the Roman Catholic Church responsible for keeping these facts about Christianity hidden for centuries, and this fact, it claims, is the greatest cover up and conspiracy of the last two thousand years. Brown's book further claims that rumours of this conspiracy have been echoed for centuries through the media of music, art, literature and, most dramatically, in the paintings of Leonardo Da Vinci.

Fact or Fiction

If the claims made by *The Da Vinci Code*, that there are some destroyed or "*missing gospels*" which make it clear that Jesus was just a mortal prophet, are said to be just fiction, then that is fine. But if these claims are said to be based on scholarship and historical facts, they are quite ridiculous.

The novel fails to produce a shred of credible evidence of any earlier form of Christianity in which no one believed Jesus to be divine, or to prove that these so-called earlier gospels come anywhere close to matching the credentials of the four Gospels of the New Testament.

Second, the idea that there were eighty of these Gnostic gospels is totally incorrect. From the Nag Hammadi library, discovered in Egypt in 1945 and published in English in 1977, there came forty-five separate titles, and not all of them were gospels. In fact, it only names five separate works as gospels: *Truth*, *Thomas*, *Philip*, *Egyptian* and *Mary*. When the documents were closely examined most of them turned out to be nothing more than fourth century Coptic manuscripts that had been translated from Greek.

Moreover, the gospels which Brown so credulously quotes in his novel are completely non-historical and were written generations after the events they purport to describe. For example, the gospel of Thomas claims secret knowledge to certain facts even though it was written generations after they occurred. It also claims to be written by the apostle Thomas, even if he had probably been dead for centuries by the time the manuscript was composed.

In contrast to the Gnostic works, the four canonical Gospels have stronger manuscript support than any other work of classical literature, and are the only historical documents that really can be shown with certainty to be documents of the first century.

In the previous chapter we demonstrated how wealthy the New Testament is in manuscript attestation by comparing its text with other historical works. Moreover, the Muratorian Fragment from 170 A.D. demonstrates that sixty-one out of the sixty-six books of our Bible were already treated as sacred a hundred years before Emperor Constantine was born.

History Mixed with Falsehood

What is ironic about many of the allegations made by Dan Brown in his novel is that much of what he quotes as *fact* is, in fact, the complete opposite. It was actually the Gnostic gospels that omitted Christ's human traits and embellished the so-called "*earlier accounts*" to make Him more God-like, one of the reasons why they were excluded from the canon.

One only needs to read the New Testament to see that it assumes the full humanity of Jesus. He began life as a baby; went through human development; worked for a living; became hungry and tired; experienced sorrow and sadness; and suffered death and died.

The Gnostic gospels, on the other hand, tend to be docetic, which comes from the Greek word *dokeo* meaning *I seem*. It is a tendency which considers the humanity and suffering of Christ as something apparent rather than real. That is, Jesus as a divine being neither assumed a fully human body, nor did He die. Either He temporarily inhabited a human being, Jesus Christ, or assumed a phantasmal human appearance.

Further, it is totally inaccurate to say that prior to 325 A.D. no one believed Jesus was divine. In chapter six we examined the overwhelming evidence from the first-century secular writers, including Josephus, the Roman Tacitus, the Roman Suetonius and the Roman governor Pliny, who all confirm that Jesus was worshipped as God by His followers long before the birth of Constantine.

Finally, these non-Christian writers confirm many of the events, people, places and customs recorded in the New Testament narratives which puts the date of their composition in the first century, indicating that they are much earlier than the Gnostic gospels. Of the abundant extra-biblical evidence in favour of the orthodox view of Jesus Christ, a leading expert of ancient history at Miami University, Edwin Yamauchi, declared:

In spite of what some modern scholars claim, the extra-biblical evidence will not sustain their eccentric picture of Jesus that attracts such widespread media attention because of their novelty. In contrast to the idiosyncratic and ephemeral revisions, the orthodox view of Jesus still stands as the most credible portrait when all the evidence is considered, including the corroboration offered by ancient sources outside the New Testament.

In addition to the evidence from the non-Christian sources and the New Testament writers themselves, numerous records from the early Church Fathers reveal that from the time of the apostles the early Church clearly believed that Jesus Christ was God and worshipped Him as such.

Polycarp (69-155 A.D.) spoke of, “Our Lord and God Jesus Christ...”

Ignatius of Antioch (30-107 A.D.) constantly spoke of Christ’s deity. In his many letters we find references such as: “Jesus Christ our God; who is God and man. Christ who was from eternity with the Father...”

Clement (150 A.D.) said: “It is fitting that you should think of Jesus Christ as God...”

Justin Martyr (100-165 A.D.) wrote of Jesus, “Who.. being the first begotten Word of God is even God..” In his *Dialogue with Trypho* he stated that, “God was born of a virgin...” and that, “Jesus is worthy of worship and of being called Lord and God.”

Tatian (110-172 A.D.), the early apologist, wrote: “We do not act as fools; O Greeks, nor utter idle tales when we announce that God was born in the form of man.”

Irenaeus of Lyons and Rome (120-22 A.D.) wrote that Jesus was, “Perfect God and perfect man.”

Tertullian of Carthage (145-220 A.D.) said of Christ; “Christ is also God because that which has come from God is at once God and the Son of God, and the two are one.”

Origen (225 A.D.) wrote: “No one should be offended that the Saviour is also God.”

Hippolytus (170-235 A.D.) stated: “ It is the Father who is above all, the Son who is through all, and the Holy Spirit who is in all. And we cannot otherwise think of one God, but by believing in truth in Father and Son and Holy Spirit.. For it is through the Trinity that the Father is glorified.”

Novatian of Rome (210-280 A.D.) wrote in his work, *On the Trinity*, of Jesus being truly a Man but that, “He was also God according to the Scriptures... Scripture has as much described Jesus Christ to be man, as moreover it has also described Christ the Lord to be God.”

Athanasius (293-373 A.D.) was the defender of New Testament teaching against the early heresy, which taught that Jesus Christ was not God. He wrote of Jesus: “He always was and is God and Son. He who is eternally God.. also became man for our sake.”

Eusebius of Caesarea (325 A.D.) stated: “We believe in.. One Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God... very God, by whom all things are made.”

Cyril of Jerusalem (350 A.D.) said: “We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God.. very God, by whom all things are made.”

These are only a few of the many references that could be cited to show that from the earliest times the first Church leaders, from the time of the apostles right up to the Council of Nicaea in the fourth century, believed and taught that Jesus Christ is God.

What Happened at the Council of Nicaea?

Emperor Constantine summoned the Council of Nicaea primarily to end disunity and controversy caused by the Arian heresy, which taught that although Jesus was the Son of God, He was less than the Father, a god of lesser importance. So Nicaea was not about whether Jesus was the Son of God or a mere mortal prophet, but whether He was the same substance as the Father. In fact, the one thing everyone agreed on was that Jesus was more than mortal.

Constantine’s interests in summoning the Council was also to attempt to unite the Christian Church to the secular state in the hope that both Christians and pagans would be reconciled in the one faith. The Emperor also humanized the criminal laws and made government grants to support poor children.

Was Jesus Married?

Many sensational books and television documentaries tend to focus on opposing biblical truth by stating that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene, whom He was said to have ordained leader of His Church until misogynist disciples usurped her position. The legend put forward by author Dan Brown in *The Da Vinci Code*, and the earlier treatise on the subject, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, by Richard Leigh and Michael Baigent, is that the marriage

of Jesus to Mary Magdalene is part of the historical record and that the biggest cover-up is that He fathered a child through her. In addition, the Opus Dei, an alleged secret society, is said to be responsible for covering up the fact that Jesus married and had children to protect His claim to deity.

Again, there is not a shred of credible evidence to support such claims, not in the four canonical Gospels, not in the Epistles of the New Testament writers, and not even in any of the second or third century Gnostic gospels themselves.

The case argued for Jesus' marriage to Mary Magdalene is based on the assumption that according to a Gnostic text Jesus kissed Mary on the mouth and the other disciples were jealous of His special relationship to her. This assumption relies on two later Gnostic gospels which totally lack any historical credibility – *The gospel of Philip*, written some two hundred years after the ministry of Jesus, and *The gospel of Mary Magdalene*, created at the end of the second century. However, neither one of these two gospels actually states that Jesus was married to anyone.

Besides, because these writings are steeped in Gnosticism, which saw sexual activity as something evil, the idea of such a union would have been repulsive to them. And as for Jesus supposedly kissing Mary Magdalene on the mouth, that is actually missing from the manuscript of the gospel of Philip. The brackets in the text below indicate broken locations in the manuscript where there is no reading because the manuscript is damaged. It reads:

And the companion of the (...) Mary Magdalene.
(...loved) her more than (all) the disciples (and used
to) kiss her (often) on her (...). The rest of the
disciples (...) They said to him, "Why do you love
her more than all of us?"

Brown believes that the words of Jesus' disciples suggest that Mary and Jesus were husband and wife, but if they were, the question would have been absurd to ask in the first place. It is interesting to compare another Gnostic text, *The Second Apocalypse of James*, which describes the risen Jesus imparting His secret mysteries to James by kissing him on the mouth and calling him "my beloved."

This is obviously a non-sexual act, but the incident bears some similarities to the extract in the gospel of Philip which is used to provide evidence of Jesus' marriage.

Was Jesus Obligated to Marry?

Another argument to support the claims that Jesus was married is that because He was a teacher and functioned like a rabbi, He would have been obliged to follow Jewish custom and take for Himself a wife. However, many scholars have argued that this assertion does not hold much weight for two reasons.

First, Jesus was not technically a rabbi and certainly did not portray Himself as one. The apostles called Jesus Rabbi because He was their teacher, and not because He held an official Jewish role of that kind. In fact, the Jewish leaders often questioned Jesus as to what authority He did certain things because He did not occupy any official position within Judaism that would have permitted Him to act as He did within the Temple.

Second, among the community of the saints in the first century there were many rabbis and Jewish teachers who were single, and Jesus' teaching of God's call for some to be eunuchs in the kingdom seems to be rooted in His commitment not to be married (See *Matthew 19:12*).

In addition, the first century historian Josephus testifies to the practice of celibacy in Jesus' day when he writes about the religious practices of the Jewish Essenes who lived at Qumran of the Dead Sea. In his work, *The Antiquities*, he wrote:

It also deserves our admiration, how much they exceed all other men.. There are about four thousand men that live in this way, and neither marry wives, nor are desirous to keep servants; as thinking the latter tempts men to be unjust, and the former gives the handle to domestic quarrels.

These practices among the Essenes reveals that they did not see marriage as an obligation, and so chose celibacy in order to offer single minded dedication to God.

But What If?

Our Lord did many things that revealed His full humanity: He ate, slept, thirsted, tired, wept and so on. As we already mentioned above and elsewhere, one of the most fundamental of Christian beliefs is that Jesus was one hundred per-cent human. Therefore, if He had been married and fathered children, it would not, theoretically, undermine His divinity, but would be a reflection of His complete humanity.

So the whole reason for covering up any alleged relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene has no theological basis. If Jesus had been married, He could still have claimed to be God's Son and done the things He did. However, the Christian Church has long believed that Jesus was single and there is much evidence to support this argument.

No early Christian text we possess, whether biblical or non-biblical, indicates the presence of a wife during Jesus' ministry, crucifixion, or after His resurrection. Whenever the Gospel writers mention Jesus' family they speak of His mother, brothers and sisters, but no reference is ever made to a wife.

The apostle Paul believed that because he was a minister of the Gospel he had a right to certain things of which he did not take advantage of, but were possible for him. In one of his Epistles to

the Corinthians he gives one of the most important passages to support that Jesus was not married. He wrote:

This is my defence to those who sit in judgement on me. Don't we have the right to food and drink? Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas? Or is it only I and Barnabas who must work for a living?

(1Corinthians 9:3-7)

The implication here is that if Jesus had been married, Paul would most certainly have cited Him as the prime example, for such a case would undoubtedly have sealed his argument. Another strong argument can be seen in the passages of the four Gospels where Mary Magdalene is spoken of and named.

In these same texts other women are mentioned along with her, but they are mentioned as being connected to prominent well known males in their lives. The point is that if Mary had been married to Jesus you would expect the biblical writers to have mentioned it, as they did with the other women who were connected with husbands or sons.

Conclusion

Our Lord Jesus Christ had a very unique and special mission as the Son of God and Saviour of the world, and He stands in a long tradition of prophets who were set aside and consecrated so that their lives would be completely dedicated to God and their mission here on Earth. One immediately thinks of the prophet Isaiah where he says that the Messiah, the Suffering Servant, will have no descendants:

He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare his generation? For he was cut off from the land of

the living; for the transgressions of my people He was stricken.

(Isaiah 53:8)

As the New Testament writers assert repeatedly: the only people who can really have any claim of “descent” from Jesus are those of us who come to Him through repentance and faith in His name:

As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

(Galatians 3:27-29)

When we cry, “Abba! Father!” it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs of Christ – if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

(Romans 8:15b-18)

Despite the wide public attention that the Jesus Seminar has gained to itself; and the great success the legends put forward in the many sensational books on the life and Person of Jesus Christ have achieved, their conclusions have long been proven to be totally contrary to the overwhelming evidence for the historicity of the New Testament documents which were handed down to us from reliable and honest eyewitnesses of the events they describe.

16

FAITH AND SCIENCE IN HARMONY

For most of the last century many people wrongly assumed that science had somehow disproved the Scriptures, and that anyone who disagreed with this was in the same sorry state as those who believed the Earth was flat.

The sad irony of all this is that for much of history Christianity and scientific study have been allies, not opponents. Contrary to popular belief, it was the Christian worldview that provided the right environment for modern science to emerge. This is because the Christian faith is monotheistic.

It was actual belief in the One true God, who created everything through and by Himself, that led many scientists to expect an orderly, intelligible, rational and uniform world, with the underlying laws of nature remaining the same in time and space. A Universe that was irregular and wayward would not be capable of systematic study.

In addition, the Christian belief in an immanent transcendent God, outside of time and space, and completely distinct from the Universe and nature, made experimentation justified. This would not have been the case under other religious belief systems, that regarded forms of matter as gods, or under those that considered matter as something evil.

The Christian belief is that matter is good, but it is not God. As one commentator pointed out: “The Christian doctrine of Creation provided an essential matrix for the coming into being of the scientific enterprise.”

This fact is recognized by many of the greatest scientists, historians and philosophers in history. The historian Herbert Butterfield described science as, “a child of Christian thought.” Dr Peter Hodgson said that, “Christianity provided just those

beliefs that are essential for science, and the whole moral climate that encouraged its growth.”

This argument can be furthered by considering the views of some of the most prominent scientists the world has ever seen. These leading scientists found no contradiction between their discoveries in science and their acceptance of the authority of Scripture regarding God’s creation of the Universe out of nothing. Below are just a few examples.

Isaac Newton (1642-1723) was probably the greatest scientist ever. At the young age of twenty-two he invented calculus, which made him one of the greatest mathematicians of all time. Using the mathematics he had invented, he derived the law of gravity and the mathematical motions of the planets, the Moon, the comets and all moving terrestrial objects. In the conclusion of his scientific book *Principia* he wrote:

This most beautiful system of the Sun, planets and comets, could only proceed from the council and dominion of an intelligent and powerful being...This being governs all things, not as the soul of the world, but as Lord over all.

Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) laid the foundations for modern astronomy and the scientific revolution by suggesting on mathematical grounds that the Earth travelled around the Sun. At first many resisted his discovery because they feared it was a contradiction to the Holy Scriptures. However, the Bible never makes any such claim that the Sun revolves around the Earth. Copernicus described God as the best and most orderly Workman of all.

Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) was a mathematician, physicist and astronomer, and founder of modern mechanics and experimental physics. Through his studies, he became convinced of the truth of the theory of Copernicus, that the Earth and the planets revolved around the Sun. The Pope condemned his theory on the grounds that the Bible said it was the Sun which ran about in the heavens, not the Earth.

In his defence, Galileo invited one of his opponents, a professor of philosophy at Padua University, to look through the telescope at the evidence on which his theory was based. The professor refused and Galileo was condemned by the Inquisition.

Despite persecutions from the Catholic Church, Galileo was a devout believer and said: “There are two big books, the book of nature and the book of super nature, the Bible.”

Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) was a brilliant astronomer and mathematician. He developed physical astronomy and the laws of planetary motion and believed strongly in God’s Creation. When Kepler was asked his purpose in pursuing science, he said that he wanted to complete scientific research to obtain a sample test of the delight of the Divine Creator in His work and to partake of His joy. Elsewhere Kepler said that he was thinking God’s thoughts after him.

Robert Boyle (1627-1691) was a devout Christian. He is renowned as one of the forerunners of modern chemistry and gas dynamics and gave his name to *Boyle’s Law*. In his book entitled *The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of Creation*, Boyle declared his firm belief in the Bible.

James Simpson (1811-1870) was the Scottish obstetrician who discovered chloroform which led to the modern anaesthetic. He said that the most important discovery he ever made was the day he discovered Jesus Christ.

James Clerk Maxwell (1831-1879) discovered the four fundamental equations that light and all forms of electromagnetic radiation obey. These equations are what make radio transmissions possible. Maxwell was a firm believer of Scripture and was deeply opposed to the Theory of Evolution.

Louis Pasteur (1822-1895), who discovered the process of pasteurisation and revolutionized microbiology, said: “Science brings us nearer to God.”

Gregor Mendel (1822-1884), an Austrian botanist and plant experimenter, whose research into the laws of heredity formed the basis of the modern science of genetics, did much of his research in a monastery where he faithfully served as a priest and monk.

All of these and many other great scientists believed the Bible as the infallible Word of God. They admitted their Christian faith was the driving force and intellectual foundation of their excellent scientific work and discoveries.

If it were true that science and religion contradict each other, we would not expect to find believing scientists at all. But, as we shall demonstrate below, even today there are many leading scientists who have the wisdom to study the heavens and believe that God created them.

Complementing Each Other

By investigating Creation in a scientific way, we understand more about God’s character, wisdom and power through the things He has created. Science is simply the process of discovering the mechanisms of nature which God put in place to make our Universe work in the perfect harmony that it does.

It is the interest of science to gather all the facts about our Universe in all its facets, but the function of the Bible to give these data their purpose and meaning. Through the Scriptures we discover the origin, purpose, and ultimate end of the created Universe.

The most brilliant scientist of this generation, the late Dr Stephen Hawking, unwittingly pointed this out when he said science may solve the problem of how the Universe began, but it cannot answer the question of why it bothers to exist.

What Modern Scientists Believe

Today, the impression given to the general public is that all real scientists think alike and believe in the Big Bang Theory and the Theory of Evolution. Nothing could be further from the truth. Over the last few decades there has been an extraordinary revolution in the thinking of many scientists from diverse fields whose research and discoveries in astronomy, the genetic code of life, the complexity of biological systems and the nature of the atom, have made the idea of an accidental Universe unthinkable, even ridiculous.

Dr Malcom Dixon, head of the Enzyme Biology Department of Cambridge, worked out according to statistics that there were as many believers among scientists today as there were among non-scientists. Dr Dixon went on to show how a major proportion of the scientific progress of the last two centuries was made by Christian scientists.

Henry Margenau, Professor of Physics and Natural Philosophy at Yale University, and former president of the American Association for the Philosophy of Science, acknowledged the fantastic new scientific evidence that points towards the creation of the Universe out of nothing; as the Scriptures declared thousands of years ago. He wrote:

It is absolutely unreasonable to reject the notion of a Creator by appealing to science. Science has definitely shown the non-contradiction of creation out of nothing.

Writer John Ashton edited a book entitled *In Six Days*, which is a series of short essays by fifty scientists who fully believe in the biblical story of Creation, and who find nothing in their research that cannot be reconciled with their faith.

These scientists are drawn from all over the world and work in different backgrounds, biology, chemistry, physics, geology, zoology and astronomy. Aston pointed out how some of them started out as believers while others were converted through their study of science.

The publication of an interesting book, entitled *The Intellectuals Speak out about God*, surprised its readers with the recent scientific discoveries that totally disprove the Theory of Evolution, but support both the existence and special creation of the Universe by a personal God. Below is a small extract:

Until quite recently it was thought by many people that the leading scientists universally support atheism, that science is the rational alternative to theism. However, it is now clear that science not only does not support atheism, but that it now lends rational support for theism.

There is now strong scientific evidence for the existence of God. Scientists, without presupposing God or creation, without trying to prove them, have come up with findings that strongly support the existence of God, His creation of the Universe and man, and supports a supernatural purpose for the world we live in.

As early as the 1980s *TIME* magazine acknowledged that a very profound intellectual revolution was occurring in the scientific community, after almost a century and a half of rejection of the concept of an intelligent Designer of the Universe, due to the compelling evidence that these atheistic scientists were finding in their own research. The writer of the article declared:

In a quiet revolution in thought and argument that hardly anyone would have foreseen only two decades ago, God is making a comeback. Most intriguingly, this is happening... in the crisp intellectual circles of academic philosophers.

A physicist from Princeton University, Professor Freeman Dyson, also acknowledged a revolution in the thinking of many scientists after discoveries in their own field which point to an intelligent Designer. He wrote:

The more I examine the Universe and the details of its architecture, the more evidence I find that the Universe in some sense must have known we were coming.

Leading scientist Dr Francis Collins is just another of the thousands of believing scientists in the world today. He led a team of more than 2,000 scientists, who collaborated to determine the three-billion letters of the human genome – our own DNA instruction book. It would take thirty-one years to read those letters out loud.

In *The Language of God* Dr Collins says there is, “a richly satisfying harmony between the scientific and the spiritual worldviews.” Below are the words of his personal testimony given in a speech at the National Prayer Breakfast in the United States:

As I explored the evidence more deeply, all around me I began to see signposts to something outside of nature that could only be called God. I realized that the scientific methods can only really answer questions about HOW things work. It can't answer questions about WHY – and those are in fact the most important ones.

Why is there something instead of nothing? Why does mathematics work so beautifully to describe nature? Why is the Universe so precisely tuned to make life possible? Why do we humans have a universal sense of right and wrong and an urge to do right? Confronted with these revelations, I realized that my own assumption – that faith was the opposite of reason – was incorrect.

In Great Britain eight-hundred scientists made the following statement concerning their regret for the doubts that some others in their own field cast upon the authenticity of the Bible:

We the undersigned, students of the Natural Sciences, desire to express our sincere regret that researchers into scientific truth are perverted by some in our own times into occasion for casting doubt upon the truth and authenticity of the Holy Scriptures. We conceive that it is impossible for the Word of God written in the book of nature, and God's Word written in the Holy Scriptures to contradict one another.

The Order of Creation: No Contradictions

One of the areas of alleged conflicts between the Bible and the discoveries of modern science is the Creation account given in chapter one of the Book of Genesis; of how God created the

Universe and all the living matter which supports mankind on planet Earth.

Dear reader, you will be surprised to learn that the order of Creation events proposed by many science books has a similar order to the order of Creation described in the Bible. For example, the formation of the Earth proposed by noted astronomer Hugh Ross has the exact same order as the Creation account given to Moses in the opening pages of the Old Testament.

As a side note, it is an interesting fact that the next ten chapters of Genesis, which follow the Creation account, show the exact same succession of cultures and civilisations that has only recently been discovered by anthropologists.

In his book, *Modern Discovery and the Bible*, the renowned and respected scientist Dr Rendle Short showed that by comparing the first chapter of Genesis, which was written long before any scientific knowledge came into existence, with secular scientific books, correlating them page by page, we discover the order of events are remarkably similar. He concluded:

These considerations bring to light a perfectly amazing accordance between the Creation narrative and the discoveries of modern science. When we remember the wild guesses as to the ultimate nature and origin of the Earth that were current amongst other ancient people, the accuracy of Genesis stands out in solitary grandeur.

Geology is a young science: the classification of strata is not much older than a hundred years; we may be sure the author of the Creation narrative derived none of his information from fossil hunting. Neither guesswork nor intuition taught the writer to arrange events in the correct order. This narrative bears marks of a divine inspiration.

The late Professor James D. Dana of Yale University was pronounced by competent authority to be one of the greatest scientific thinkers of the nineteenth century. He admitted that one of the reasons he believed the Bible to be the very Word of God was because of the marvellous accord of the order of Creation given in the Book of Genesis with that worked out by the best scientific investigation.

Finally, “Physical science has nothing to say against the order of creation as given in Genesis,” wrote the famous mathematical physicist and engineer, Lord Kelvin.

Although the Creation narrative in the Bible correlates remarkably with science, this is not its objective, so its details are set out much more clearly and selectively. The first physical event in Genesis is God’s Command, “*Let there be light.*” Such a concept was contrary to primitive views, and even today some comment that the sequence of events seems unlikely.

However, science agrees that the intense visible radiation present at the beginning of the Universe is in accord with the Divine Command. Leading physicist Professor George Gamow said that the Divine Command was completely scientific. He continued:

All the chemical elements which we deal with today must have been formed within the first 30 minutes of the life of this Universe, and it accords with the Divine Command, “*Let there be light.*” There certainly was light through this intense radiation.

The following list of scientific events concerning the formation of planet Earth assumes that the Universe was the result of a *natural* big bang event *only*. This, however, is not in agreement with the biblical account, which claims that in the beginning God created the entire Universe and everything in it by His Word.

I have included the list only to illustrate that science appears to agree with the *order* of Creation events and not their *cause*.

Obviously, this should not lead us to believe that we should consider the Bible only because we find scientific proposals that agree with its contents. On the contrary, it means that science continues to uphold knowledge recorded in the Bible more than three-thousand years ago.

As we might expect, the Bible is much more concerned with meaning rather than mechanisms. Therefore, it does not give us a detailed explanation of *how* Creation took place, but simply says, “*He commanded and they were created*” (*Psalms 148:5*).

Some theists claim this is in contradiction to the Big Bang Theory as presently understood, but others see no conflict here between science and Scripture. We will discuss this issue in another chapter.

PLANET EARTH’S BEGINNING

Science book:

The Earth started... possibly as a whirling globe of hot gases. It passed through a liquid stage...

The Bible:

Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep.

(Genesis 1:2a)

Most cosmologists agree that the Genesis account of Creation, when it describes an initial void, “May be uncannily close to the truth.”

Science book then says:

The Earth for long ages, was surrounded by a thick, steamy atmosphere...

The Bible likewise says:

And darkness was upon the face of the deep.

(Genesis 1:2a)

Science book says next:

As soon as the surface became cool enough, the water vapour condensed as rain, producing rivers and seas...

The Bible agrees:

God said "Let there be an expanse in the middle of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters."

(Genesis 1:6)

So God made the atmosphere separate, by evaporation, the water clouds from the sea water.

The Bible then says:

Let the waters be gathered into one place and let dry land appear.

(Genesis 1:9)

Science book agrees:

The original single continent is called *Pangaea*, which later broke up into individual continents, as we see today...

The Bible continues:

Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation."

(Genesis 1:11a)

Note that the Hebrew word *deshe* should not be translated *grass*. The word actually describes something green.

Science book is similar:

The atmosphere lacked oxygen... most of the free oxygen present in the air has been produced by the activities of green plant life...

Science book continues:

After the condensation of the thick steamy atmosphere, the sky could be seen, and the sun moon and stars...

The Bible places this event on the fourth day:

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 it was so. 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.

(Genesis 1:14-17)

Some biblical scholars believe that the Hebrew historic tense used here means that the Sun, Moon and stars were already created and

could not be seen until the atmosphere cleared in the fourth day. However, other theologians disagree with this conclusion.

Next the science book says:

By the beginning of Cambrian times a considerable variety of non-backboned creatures came into the seas... All the main divisions existed in the seas.

Geologists who have discovered the fossils of this period verify how suddenly swarms of marine creatures of every kind appear in the strata without any trace of life in the layers of rock before them. This made even Charles Darwin admit that the record looked more like sudden creation than slow evolutionary changes. This scientific account is in complete harmony with the Bible. Moses recorded God's command:

Let the waters teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky. So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind.

(Genesis 1:20-22)

Science book continues:

The land animals appeared...

Geologists call this *The New Life Period* because a large number of new kinds of creatures start together. Long before these discoveries Moses wrote:

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 its kind.”

(Genesis 1:24-25)

When Genesis speaks of cattle and beasts, it is speaking in general terms to a non-scientific age. It would be referring to all mammals in general. So we have seen that science supports the order in which life appears in the Creation narrative of the Holy Scriptures. Both the Bible and science distinguish several main orders of life which appear in the same sequence.

The difference, then, between the Bible and evolution, is that the Scriptures say God created each order separately, while evolutionists say that each species evolved one from another. Therefore, the main difference lies in the interpretation of the facts that we have at hand.

Theories Based on Atheistic Assumptions

The main difference between scientists who are *creationists* and those who are *evolutionists* is their starting assumptions. Both have a different view of history, but the way they do science is the same. Both use observation and experimentation to draw conclusions about nature.

The scientific facts that evolutionists claim as proof of millions of years for Earth history are really interpretations of selected observations based on their atheistic views and philosophical assumptions. The facts are the same for every scientist who studies them.

They all have the same living creatures, the same DNA molecules, the same fossils and rock layers, the same Sun, Moon stars and so on. How they were formed and how old they are, are simply interpretations. Biblical creationists accept the recorded history of the Bible while evolutionists reject this truth.

What one believes about history will obviously affect how he interprets the facts he observes. In order to draw conclusions about what the evidence means, we use our most basic beliefs about the nature of reality.

Since creationists and evolutionists have different starting assumptions, they both interpret the evidence to mean very different things.

Language of God Governing all Life

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth.

(Psalm 33:6-7)

When we see the remarkable harmony demonstrated between the order of Creation in the Bible and that which science has discovered, we naturally turn to the origin of that order. The account in Genesis reveals that everything came into existence as a result of God's speech. The science of information theory powerfully confirms this statement.

DNA is the molecule heredity and part of a staggeringly complex system more information dense than the most efficient super computer. To paraphrase the co-discoverer of the structure of DNA, Dr Francis Crick, there is almost no possibility whatsoever that the very first life could have spontaneously generated from the inorganic chemicals that were supposed to have existed in the Earth's atmosphere and surface water.

Since the information in our DNA can only come from a source of greater information and intelligence, there must have been something other than matter in the beginning. The New Testament makes it clear. It was the pre-existing Son of God who was the creating Word in Creation:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

(John 1:1-4)

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 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 1:15-18)

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word.

(Hebrews 1:1-3b)

The DNA code is contained in the middle of every cell of the human body and in the cells of each animal and plant. The discovery of the structure and function of DNA genetic code by Watson and Crick is the most spectacular scientific discovery of the last century, and one of the most compelling proofs for the existence of God and His language governing the creation and existence of all life forms. Molecular biologists are now able to read the message of the genes and are printing out the message page by page.

The message of the genes are the instructions in your body's cells on how to manufacture and reproduce the parts of your body. These instructions are set out in sentences, paragraphs and chapters. Several genes together make up a paragraph, and many

paragraphs of gene clusters make up a chapter. These chapters together make a book called a *chromosome*. There are twenty-three chromosome books to make a whole encyclopaedia of instructions.

Each encyclopaedia is duplicated to produce an identical copy so that your body has two. These instructions instruct complicated machines called *ribosomes* to make the proteins which construct the shape of your heart, liver and stomach etc., and to put all these body parts in the right place. The psalmist was not exaggerating when he said, “*We are fearfully and wonderfully made.*”

This code is declared by scientists to be the *Language of Life*. Nobel Prize winner Dr Geo Beadle declared: “This language is as old as life itself. Its words are buried deep in the cells of our bodies.”

The Words which God spoke at the beginning of Creation created all life and are contained in the cells, in the DNA books and chapters. The words which Dr Beadle describes were recorded by Moses more than three-thousand years ago. When God said, “*Let the earth bring forth vegetation,*” He put His instructions in the form of DNA codes into all plant cells.

From a biblical perspective, we know that all God’s Creation had perfect DNA. Adam and Eve, including the original animal and plant kinds, had perfect DNA strands with no mistakes or mutations. However, after the Fall, flaws and mutations began to occur and accumulate. The incredible amount of information that was originally in the DNA has been lost due to mutations and natural selection.

This would explain why God, with the passing of time, strictly forbid marriage with close relatives. Such a union would result in the possibility of similar genetic mutations appearing in the offspring, due to inheriting a common mutation from the father and mother. Marrying someone who is not a close relative reduces the chance of both parents carrying the same mutated gene.

Standing in Awe of Him

With the discovery of the DNA genetic code we are now in possession of a very clear information filled message, so amazing in its complexity that it could not possibly have been produced without a supernatural intelligence.

When Dr Crick and Dr Watson made this discovery, the famous artist Salvador Dali exclaimed: “The announcement of Watson and Crick on the DNA code is for me the real proof of the existence of God.” “*I Am the Alpha and Omega*” – the alphabet of life – declared Jesus in the Book of Revelation.

17

ADVANCED SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE

The Bible is by no means a scientific Book, but as we have seen, and will see in the following chapters, it does reveal an astonishing amount of scientific knowledge that can only be explained if we accept that God inspired its authors. Many of the scientific statements found therein were thousands of years in advance of the scientific knowledge accepted in the period when the Scriptures were written.

These amazingly accurate scientific provisions found in almost every Book of the Bible is something very unique in the history of religious literature.

In his book, *The Creator Beyond Time and Space*, Mark Eastman, M.D, and Chuck Missler, a computer specialist, provide many examples which show how the Bible, scientifically speaking, was thousands of years ahead of its time:

There are dozens of passages in the Bible which demonstrate tremendous scientific foreknowledge. When the biblical text is carefully examined, the reader will quickly discover an uncanny scientific accuracy unparalleled by any document of antiquity... In virtually all ancient religious documents it is common to find scientifically inaccurate myths about the nature of the Universe and the life forms on planet Earth. However, throughout the Bible we find scientifically accurate concepts about the physical Universe that were not discovered by modern scientists until recent times.

In *the Biblical Basis for Modern Science*, scientist Dr Henry Morris offers a text supplying a large number of examples of scientific foreknowledge, or allusions, in the Bible. They are provided from the area of physics, astronomy, oceanography, the Earth's hydrologic cycle, meteorology, medicine, geology and biology.

Fortunately, due to the incredible advances in scientific knowledge during the last few decades the accurate scientific statements found in Scripture can now be tested.

The late A.E Wilder Smith, who held three earned doctorates in science and wrote numerous popular and technical books and scientific papers, was another of the many leading scientists who was greatly impressed by the historic, prophetic and scientific accuracy of the Word of God. Below are some of their discoveries.

STATEMENTS CONSISTENT WITH GEOLOGY

It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.

(Isaiah 40:22)

God inspired the prophet Isaiah to write that our planet was a globe hundreds of years before Aristotle suggested that the Earth might be a sphere. Critics have falsely suggested that the Bible states the Earth is flat because of the biblical expression, *the four corners of the earth*. But this statement is simply a colloquial expression, also in use today to indicate the whole Earth, or the four extremities of our globe from a central point.

The expression *circle of the earth* used by the prophet Isaiah clearly describes the Earth as a sphere or globe. This scientific fact was also revealed to the Gospel writer Luke more than two thousand years ago:

It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed. On that day no one who is on the roof of his house, with his goods inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. Remember Lot's wife!

Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding grain together one will be taken and the other left.

(Luke 17:30-37)

These statements by Luke may have appeared quite contradictory until recently. But today we know that at whatever time Christ returns it will be day on one side of the globe and night on the other. These passages clearly indicate a revolving Earth with day and night at the same time.

The Earth's Crust:

Thus says the Lord: "If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth below can be explored, then I will reject the offspring of Israel because of all they have done, says the Lord."

(Jeremiah 31:37)

Although some scientists claim that they have measured the size of the Universe, it is interesting to note that every human attempt to drill through the Earth's crust to the plastic mantle beneath has so far ended in failure.

STATEMENTS CONSISTENT WITH ASTRONOMY

The Earth Hangs on Nothing:

He stretches out the north over empty space: He hangs the earth on nothing.

(Job 26:7)

The Bible's description of the suspension of the Earth in space is an astonishingly advanced and accurate scientific statement, especially when you consider the pagan beliefs of Job's day. Many believed that the mythological hero *Atlas* carried the Earth on his shoulders, while others believed that the Earth was suspended on the backs of four elephants standing on the back of a giant turtle.

Only a century ago scientists believed that our planet Earth and the stars were supported by some sort of ether. But more than four-thousand years ago Job accurately stated that our planet moves in its orbit through outer space. In addition, an astonishing discovery by astronomers recently revealed that the area to the north of the Earth's axis is almost empty of stars, in contrast to the other directions.

The Sun Moving through Space:

In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy, and like a strong man runs its course with joy. Its rising is from the ends of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them; and nothing is hid from its heat.

(Psalm 19:4c-7)

For many years Bible critics stated that these verses in Psalm nineteen teach the old false doctrine that the Sun revolves around the Earth. This all changed, no doubt, when it was discovered that

the biblical statement was correct and the Sun is in fact moving through space, and is not stationary as was once thought. I quote:

The Sun is estimated to be moving through space at about 600,000 miles per hour, and in an orbit so large that it would take an average 200,000,000 years to complete just one orbit.”

God also inspired David to write that the Sun is the source of the Earth’s energy, an amazing statement considering when the Psalm was penned.

More Galaxies than Previously Estimated:

As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured, so I will multiply the descendants of David My servant.

(Jeremiah 33:22)

Today, with an ordinary cheap telescope or a pair of binoculars you can see over 3,300 stars. In the Milky Way, our own galaxy, more modern telescopes allow us to view more than two hundred million stars. In 1925 the great astronomer Edwin Hubble used his new one-hundred-inch mirror telescope on Mount Wilson to view whole new galaxies of stars that were more than six million trillion miles away from planet Earth.

It is an interesting fact that until as late as 1915 astronomers believed that our galaxy made up the whole Universe, but Professor Hubble proved that the Universe contained as many galaxies outside our home galaxy as there were stars inside our home galaxy. Further discoveries in the following years revealed that the Universe is actually much larger than previously estimated and contains more than fifty billion galaxies, each containing millions of stars.

Uniqueness of Each Star:

There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory.

(1 Corinthians 15:41)

All stars look alike to the naked eye, even when viewed through a telescope. However, analysis of their light spectra reveals that each star is unique and different from all others. Some can obviously perceive slight differences in colour and apparent brightness when looking at stars with the naked eye, but we would not expect a first century preacher to claim they differ one from the other.

STATEMENTS CONSISTENT WITH METEOROLOGY

Circular Wind Patterns:

The wind goes toward the south, and turns around to the north; the wind whirls about continually, and comes again on its circuit.

(Ecclesiastes 1:6)

More than three thousand years ago King Solomon described the complex climatic circular wind patterns that determine the weather around the globe. He accurately described how the planetary winds follow a circular pattern from south to north and south again.

Principles of Fluid Dynamics:

For he looks to the ends of the earth, and sees everything under the heavens. When he gave to the wind its weight, and

apportioned out the waters by measure. When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the thunderbolt.

(Job 28:24-27)

The fact that air has weight was scientifically proven only about three-hundred years ago. The relative weights of air and water are needed for the efficient functioning of the world's hydrologic cycle. How could Job have known that the air and wind patterns are governed by their actual weight?

Statements on Hydrology:

All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; to the place from which the rivers come, there they return.

(Ecclesiastes 1:7)

If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth.

(Ecclesiastes 11:3a)

To paraphrase another observation: When running at an average rate of flow, the Mississippi River deposits almost 6,052,500 gallons of water into the Gulf of Mexico per second. The answer to where that large quantity of water goes, bearing in mind that this is just the water from one river, lies in the hydrologic cycle of which the Bible accurately speaks.

The Book of Ecclesiastes confirms that most clouds are formed by evaporation from the oceans. Studies in the area of agriculture prove that most of the waters that form into the clouds worldwide comes from the evaporation of the waters found in the oceans that cover a great part of the Earth's surface.

The Complete Hydrological Cycle:

For he draws up drops of water, which distil as rain from the mist, which the clouds drop down and pour abundantly on man. Indeed can anyone understand the spreading of clouds, the thunders from his canopy?

(Job 36:27-30)

The complete hydrological cycle governing evaporation, cloud formation, thunder, lightning and rain is explained in detail in the Old Testament. The idea of a complete water cycle was not fully understood, or even accepted, until the sixteenth century.

The first evidence came from the experiments of Pierre Perrault and Edme Mariotte. Astronomer Edmund Halley also contributed valuable data to the concept of a complete water cycle. However, many centuries before their discoveries, Job revealed the complete hydrological cycle of evaporation, cloud formation and precipitation.

When you consider the weight of water compared to air, it is astonishing that large quantities are raised from the oceans and lakes every hour by evaporation and lifted thousands of feet into the air where it remains suspended for long periods. This also is described by Job:

He binds up the waters in his thick clouds, and the cloud is not torn open by them.

(Job 26:8)

STATEMENTS CONSISTENT WITH OCEANOGRAPHY

Hydrothermal Vents:

Have you entered into the springs of the sea? or walked in the recesses of the deep?

(Job 38:16)

It is only in the last thirty years that underwater exploration of the ocean depths has revealed many huge springs of fresh water flowing through the ocean bed. Yet God asked Job if he had entered into the *springs of the sea*, or if he had *walked in the recesses of the deep*, long before their discoveries by science.

The Hebrew word for *recesses* refers to that which is hidden and known only through investigation, while the Hebrew for *deep* is the word for seas or oceans.

In previous centuries, the seashore was considered as nothing more than a shallow sandy extension from one continent to another. This changed in 1873 when a team of British scientists searching in the Pacific Ocean found a recess five and a half miles deep. Moreover, as one source tells us:

Huge currents such as the Gulf Stream run like deep rivers way beneath the surface of the Atlantic Ocean. This large stream carries more than five thousand times as much water as the great Mississippi River, and carries more than twenty-five times as much water as all the rivers on our planet.

It was not until recently that scientists discovered that “the Gulf Stream is only part of a huge thirteen-thousand-mile current of water that circles the Atlantic Ocean.” Yet centuries before, King David wrote of these huge currents that existed in the ocean deeps:

All flocks and herds and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim in the paths of the seas.

(Psalm 8:8)

It was this biblical passage that inspired Matthew Fontaine Maury to recognize that the *seas* were circulating systems with interaction between wind and water. His book on physical

oceanography is still considered a basic text for studies of that class.

Water in Outer Space:

*Has the rain a father, or who has begotten the drops of dew?
From whose womb did the ice come forth, and who has
given birth to the hoarfrost of heaven? The waters become
hard like stone, and the face of the deep is frozen. Can you
bind the chains of Pleiades or loose the cords of Orion?*

(Job 38:28-32)

*And God said "Let there be a dome in the midst of the
waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." So
God made the dome and separated the waters that were
under the dome from the waters that were above the dome.
And it was so. God called the dome sky.*

(Genesis 1:6-8)

The existence of water in the heavens or outer space seemed quite improbable to scientists until recent progress in astronomical discoveries proved that large amounts of water do, in fact, exist in space. Satellites located vast quantities of ice in the ice caps of Mars, as well as in the rings of Saturn.

Because of extreme temperatures these waters are obviously frozen. In 1998 NASA announced that the *Lunar Prospector Spacecraft* had discovered evidence of massive quantities of ice beneath the surface of the Moon.

We also know that huge comets composed of great quantities of ice travel through our Solar System. In 1908 a small piece of the comet *Encke* broke away during its passage and collided with planet Earth in central Siberia.

Witnesses from a distance of thirty-six miles away from the point of impact were knocked over due to the weight of the massive block of ice weighing more than thirty-thousand tons. The large quantities of water in our oceans is small in comparison to the quantities of water that exist in the dome above.

STATEMENTS CONSISTENT WITH BIOLOGY

Development of Living Organisms from other Living Organisms:

So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the waters teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.”

(Genesis 1:21-23)

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 its kind.”

(Genesis 1:24-25)

The opening pages of the Word of God describes the development of all living organisms from other living organisms, and the stability of each kind. The Bible uses the phrase *according to its kind* repeatedly to stress the reproductive integrity of each kind of animal and plant. Today we know this occurs because these reproductive systems are wonderfully programmed by their genetic codes.

The Law of Biogenesis is one of the most commonly accepted and widely used laws of science in the field of biology. This law has proven through experimental evidence that life comes only from preceding life and perpetuates itself by producing only its own kind or type. Men like Francesco Redi, Lazzaro Spallanzani and Rudolf Virchow were among the first to carry out experiments which formed the ultimate basis of the Law of Biogenesis.

Virchow documented what Moses had written thousands of years before, namely that cells do not arise from formless matter, but come only from pre-existing cells. This law has no exceptions and is a topic that creates many problems to the Theory of Evolution.

The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things.

(Acts 17:24-26)

The Function of Blood:

For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; For it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.

(Leviticus 17:11-12)

This scientific statement made by Moses was exceptionally astute because doctors have only recently discovered that our blood is essential to all of our body's life processes. In 1616 William Harvey discovered that blood circulation is the key factor in physical life, confirming the accuracy of what Moses wrote more than three-and a-half thousand years earlier.

The blood carries water and nourishment to every cell in our body, maintains our body's temperature, and removes the waste material of the body's cells. It also carries oxygen from the lungs throughout the body. When the blood supply is restricted to any part of the body, that part begins to die immediately. Up until a hundred and twenty years ago sick people were ignorantly bled to death through the blood-letting process and many died from this practice.

Remedy for Sound Mental Health:

A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones.

(Proverbs 17:22)

Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones.

(Proverbs 16:24)

It is a well proven fact that a person's mental and spiritual health is strongly correlated with physical health. Many Bible readers would be surprised to learn that modern psychiatry has discovered that good humour and laughter does indeed improve our health and well-being. Scientists discovered that the emotion of humour triggers off the release of certain hormones and endorphins that greatly improve our sense of well-being.

Man Created from Dust:

The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

(Genesis 2:7-8)

For many years scientists laughed at the apparent simple account of how God, using the dust of the ground, constructed the complex elements and molecules to create a human being. Interestingly, scientists are now saying:

Every atom in the human body was fashioned in stars that formed, grew old and exploded most violently before the Sun and the Earth came into being, and scattered their fine dust to form planet Earth. And from earth's rocks, atoms were incorporated into living things; carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, phosphorus, sulphur, calcium for bones and teeth, sodium and potassium for nerves and brains.

In addition to this, a *Reader's Digest* article in 1982 described a fascinating discovery made by the researchers at NASA's *Ames Research Center* which strongly supports the biblical account that every single element found in the body of human beings exists within soil and earth.

This incredible discovery caused the scientists there to make the following statement: "We are just beginning to learn the biblical scenario for the creation of life turns out to be not far off the mark."

STATEMENTS CONSISTENT WITH PHYSICS

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned.

(2 Peter 3:10)

The Bible suggests the presence of nuclear processes like those we associate with nuclear weaponry. This is certainly not something that we would expect a first century writer to explain,

especially using scientific principles. Again, in Revelation we read:

Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues and nations will see their dead bodies three and a half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets torment those who dwell on the earth. Now after the three and a half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and a great fear fell on those who saw them.

(Revelation 11:9-12)

This biblical passage describes a device that uses electromagnetic waves which would permit everyone on Earth to see a single event at the other end of the globe.

First Law of Thermodynamics:

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude.

(Genesis 2:1-2)

On the first day of Creation God made matter and energy that had not existed before, and on the seventh day He ended His creative work. Moses chose the Hebrew past definite tense for the verb *finished*, indicating an action completed in the past and never to occur again.

This is exactly what the First Law of Thermodynamics says. This law, often referred to as the *Law of the Conservation of Energy*, states that neither matter or energy can be destroyed or created.

The First Law of Thermodynamics states that the total energy of a system cannot change. Energy cannot come from nowhere, and it cannot disappear into nowhere. And when energy is transferred

from one place to another, or from one form to another, this must be done according to definite rules which state that energy is not lost or gained in the end.

Beginning with the seventh day there was no more energy put into the Universe, except for special miracles which God can perform when He chooses. On the seventh day the Law of the Conservation of Energy began its normal workings in our Universe.

Second Law of Thermodynamics:

In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded.

(Psalm 102:25-27)

Lift up your eyes to the heavens, look at the earth beneath; the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants die like flies.

(Isaiah 51:6)

The Second Law of Thermodynamics, also known as the *Law of Entropy*, states that everything in the Universe is running down and wearing out, and that usable energy is becoming less and less available for use. Entropy, which is a measure of randomness, disorderliness and lack of structure, is increasing. This law means that the Universe will eventually wear out, exactly what the biblical writers stated clearly thousands of years ago.

Five Fundamentals of Science:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

(Genesis 1:1)

The famous British philosopher Herbert Spencer discovered after a lifetime of study that there are five fundamentals of science: Time, Force, Action, Space, and Matter. Spencer concluded what Moses had written long before in the very first verse of the Bible:

In the beginning - (*Time*)

God – (*Force*)

Created – (*Action*)

The heavens – (*Space*)

And the Earth – (*Matter*)

STATEMENTS CONSISTENT WITH MEDICINE

Circumcision:

Throughout your generations every male among you shall be circumcised when he is eight days old.

(Genesis 17:12a)

For centuries, the Jewish people have kept the command given them by God to circumcise their male children on the eight day of their life. This was to be for them a sign of their obedience to the Covenant of God. However, this command is also one of the most interesting of the medical details found in the Bible.

In 1935 Professor H. Dam proposed the name *Vitamin K* for the factor in foods that helped prevent haemorrhaging in babies. Research has proved that Vitamin K is responsible for the production of *prothrombin* by the liver. If there is a deficiency of the K vitamin, this will cause a prothrombin deficiency which would likely result in haemorrhaging, since both of these are necessary for proper blood-clotting.

When a baby is born, he has no bacteria in their intestines for the first few days, but by day seven the bacteria multiply and produce Vitamin K that is absorbed by the liver. The liver then uses this vitamin to produce prothrombin, which is essential to allow blood to clot properly.

It is only on the fifth through to the seventh day of the new-born male's life that Vitamin K begins to be produced, and only in the eighth day of the infant's life that the blood-clotting element *prothrombin* is above one hundred per-cent! How could Moses have known that the eighth day was the ideal day for an operation on a male baby unless God inspired him?

Advanced Sanitation Laws:

The person who has the leprous disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head be dishevelled; and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, "Unclean, unclean." He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease; he is unclean. He shall live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.

(Leviticus 13:45-47)

This is the law when someone dies in a tent; everyone who comes into the tent, and everyone who is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days. And every open vessel with no cover fastened on it is unclean. Whoever in the open field touches one who has been killed by a sword, or who has died naturally, or a human bone, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days.

(Numbers 19:14-17)

And when he that hath an issue is cleansed of his issue; then he shall number to himself seven days for his cleansing, and wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in running water, and shall be clean.

(Leviticus 15:13)

A close examination of the above detailed instructions displayed in the Book of Numbers and Leviticus reveal a very advanced quarantine system for the prevention of disease at a time when most people were not even aware that such infectious diseases existed. We need only examine the medical remedies of the ancient Egyptians and other pagan cultures of the Middle East to understand their ignorance of the most rudimentary medical knowledge.

Germs from a dead human body are extremely dangerous to other humans because of the high risk of transmission. But Moses ordered the Israelites to wash their bodies in fresh *running water*, and similar instructions were given to those who had dealings with any afflicted with an infectious disease.

Horrorifying Death Rates in Vienna

The Encyclopaedia Britannica documents that in the year 1845 Ignaz Semmelweis, a young doctor in Vienna, was surprised at the terrible death rate of women who were giving birth to their children in hospitals; almost thirty per-cent died after the delivery. Doctor Semmelweis noted that doctors would examine the bodies of dead patients and then go directly to the next ward and examine pregnant women without washing their hands.

It was only when Semmelweis had insisted that doctors wash their hands before examination that the death rate dropped to two per-cent. This was the normal practice of most doctors because the presence of microscopic germs was unknown.

Even when doctors *did* wash their hands, they did so in a bowl of water which obviously would allow the germs to remain. But God commanded the Israelites to wash under “*running water*.”

Moses' Law Saves Europe from Black Death

In the fourteenth century almost a third of Europe's population is said to have died by the *Black Death*, an epidemic of plague which started in Asia in 1347 and spread across Europe in 1348. It was the greatest disaster Europe had ever suffered. Entire countries and cities were wiped out without known survivors. Many believed that it was a punishment from God, or governed by chance or bad luck.

If only the doctors and the ordinary people themselves had followed the ancient biblical laws of sanitation and disease control, thousands of lives would have been spared. Instead, patients with the deadly diseases were cared for in their home without any awareness of the high risk of transmission of their disease to the other people around them.

This dreaded plague was finally stopped when the Church Fathers wisely looked to the Holy Scriptures to see if God had given a solution to such a devastating situation. Indeed, history reveals that it was only after people began to follow the biblical laws of sanitation and disease control that the epidemic was stopped.

People were obviously unaware of the fact that invisible microscopic germs could remain on cooking and eating utensils also. This is why God commanded the Israelites to throw out broken pottery, as any cracks would contain harmful germs, and to scour bronze pots, an indication that this utensil should be disinfected by scouring and rinsing in water:

The clay pot the meat is cooked in must be broken; but if it is cooked in a bronze pot, the pot is to be scoured and rinsed with water.

(Leviticus 6:28-29)

The Old Testament reveal an accurate and advanced knowledge of germs, infectious diseases and their transmission, sanitation needs and many more medical advances which can only be explained if we accept that God inspired His prophet Moses to record them.

The famous medical historian Arturo Castiglione wrote in his book, *A History of Medicine*, the profound importance of the medical laws in the Bible. He said: “The law against leprosy in Leviticus 13 may be regarded as the first model of sanitary legislation.”

There is no other book in any of the world’s religions that contains such scientific truth as that of the Bible. On the contrary, they contain statements that are clearly unscientific and dangerous to human life.

A close examination of the Scriptures, however, reveals many startling scientific facts which were placed there hundreds, or even thousands, of years before they became known to modern scientific minds. As Eastman and Missler concluded:

In the twentieth century, more than any time in history, it can be demonstrated that the Bible is a skilfully designed, integrated message system that evidences supernatural engineering in every detail.

18

MANY SCIENTISTS REJECT THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION

Almost all university and secondary school students around the world have long been taught that the *Theory* of Evolution, as popularised by Charles Darwin in his famous book *Origin of Species*.

No other hypothesis, about the origin of human and other life forms on planet Earth, has done more to influence the way in which people view themselves and each other in the world in which we live.

While initially the theory was just limited to the study of biological life, these false ideas have become a total philosophy, and almost all secular books on biology and other sciences in recent generations have been written from evolutionary presuppositions, even though the scientific evidence to prove it has never been found; as the famous writer and molecular biologist Michael Denton also pointed out:

Despite the weakness of the evidence, Darwin's theory was elevated from what was in reality a highly speculative hypothesis into an unchallenged dogma in a space of little more than twenty years after the publication of *Origin*.

The overall subject of the Theory of Evolution is extremely vast and complex. Some years after the publication of *Origin of Species*, Tomas Huxley complained that the work was one of the most difficult books to exhaust that had ever been written.

And even today, and in light of the incredible scientific advances since Darwin's day, numerous books have been written on the subject with even greater complexity, confusion and controversy. Considering these facts, it would be extremely difficult to include an overview on the subject in just a few chapters, and especially to fully explore the gross errors of the theory in general. This would require volumes in itself and many more excellent and qualified scientists, writers and scholars have ventured to do just that.

However, here and in the following chapters I will outline just a small part of the compelling evidence that some of these eminent scientists and scholars have produced over the last few decades. Evidence which powerfully demonstrates that the scientific problems and inconsistencies of the Theory of Evolution are so blatantly obvious and vast that it now faces collapse on all fronts; and explains why many of the world's best scientists no longer hold to this view.

What Made Them Change Their Minds

As I mentioned above, for almost one hundred and fifty years the world has seen a universal support for the materialistic Theory of Evolution by scientists, educators and philosophers from all academic fields.

But this all changed quite recently through the explosive scientific discoveries of the incredible complexity of the DNA genetic code, the nature of the atom, the total lack of fossil evidence for missing links, and many other interesting facts that have motivated many scientists – even evolutionists themselves – to totally abandon the theory.

Many scientists and academics now accept that the mathematical odds against life forming by random chance alone is quite impossible. A Nobel Prize winner for his research in chemistry, Harold Urey, described the impossibility of life forming by

chance alone, but admitted that he still believed in the Theory of Evolution despite the total lack of scientific evidence in its favour. He wrote:

All of us who study the origin of life find that the more we look into it, the more we feel that it is too complex to have evolved anywhere. We believe as an article of faith that life evolved from dead matter on this planet. It is just that its complexity is so great, it is hard for us to imagine that it did.

Although Urey does not speak in favour of intelligent design, his sincere declaration proves that his acceptance of evolution is not based on evidence or logic, but on blind faith. In *Teilhardism and the New Religion*, the American mathematician and physicist Wolfgang Smith writes:

We are told dogmatically that evolution is an established fact; but we are never told who established it and by what means. We are told, often enough, that the doctrine is founded upon evidence... but we are left entirely in the dark on the crucial question wherein, precisely, this evidence consists.

Later Professor Wolfgang adds this interesting comment:

If by evolution we mean macro-evolution... it can be said with the utmost rigour that the doctrine is totally bereft of scientific sanction... there exists today not a shred of bona fide scientific evidence in support of the thesis that macro-evolution transformations have ever occurred.

Not so long ago an interesting article in *Science Digest Special* announced that an increasing number of scientists are publicly rejecting the evolutionary theory that was previously the fundamental belief of Western society. It said:

Scientists who utterly reject evolution may be one of our fastest growing controversial minorities... Many of the scientists supporting this position hold impressive credentials in science.

Writing after many years of experience as senior palaeontologist at the British Museum of Natural History, Dr Colin Patterson had this to say:

Nine-tenths of the talk of the evolutionists is sheer nonsense, not founded on observation and wholly unsupported by facts. This museum is full of proofs of the utter falsity of their views. In all this great museum there is not a particle of evidence of the transition of species.

Today, with the tremendous advances in the study of molecular biology and knowledge of the living cell and all its mechanisms, more and more books by scientists are questioning Darwin's Theory of Evolution and what others deduced from it.

One scientist calls molecular biology *Darwin's black box*, because it reveals why his theory has crashed like an aeroplane to the ground. The black box, in this case, is the cell's intricate mechanism – more intricate than any computer factory.

Processes of Change Observed by Darwin

Charles Darwin studied wildlife while on a voyage in South America where he noticed the variation in the appearance of

individual animals. He supposed that natural selection working on these chance variations had led to the evolution of all living things.

This process of changing an organism's appearance through a series of small changes is called *micro-evolution*. In order to understand the truth about the Theory of Evolution we must clearly define and distinguish between *micro-evolution* and *macro-evolution*.

Micro-evolution describes the very small mutations and variations that scientists find occurring within species over periods of time. These small genetic changes may lead to a variation of a species. For example, after a series of evolutionary change, a frog may be larger or changed in colour, but it remains a frog; it does not become a lizard or a fish.

Microevolution also holds that in organisms of the same species different characteristics emerge as the result of adaptation to different natural environments. Such changes in species are in no way contradictory to the Word of God.

Macro-evolution, on the other hand, is the term scientists use to describe the process of developing new life forms. It goes much further than variations in species and claims that as a result of natural selection, life forms have evolved from a common ancestor in a continuity that goes back to a single primal origin.

It also claims that unlimited random mutations provide survival advantages within species over very long periods. Such changes are then reproduced from one generation to the next until the major changes actually produce an entirely new and different species that never existed before.

While it has been proven that micro-evolution occurs, there is absolutely no empirical (reproducible and testable) proof that macro-evolution occurs or has ever occurred in the past. As one expert in the field pointed out:

In 1859 Charles Darwin had no idea of the biochemical structures that underlie inheritance, or how it was that chance produced the variations that he observed. Today, with the invention of the electron microscope and the discovery of DNA code, we have a much greater understanding than he did.

Natural Selection at Work

Charles Darwin proposed that evolution happens by a process which he called *natural selection*. According to this theory organisms prey on each other in order to survive and at the same time develop new characteristics in order to cope with the environment in which they live.

When these characteristics (passed on to the next generation) become permanent, a new species emerges in what Darwin called the *progress toward perfection*, whereas those life-forms which adapt less die out and become extinct.

As we said above, there is no argument against the theory that variations occur in nature, or that in some cases natural selection causes one variant to become more dominant. However, the Theory of Evolution demands that such changes be without limits, but there are very strong arguments that this is not the case.

As stated previously, major changes have never been observed in nature or in selective breeding by humans. Rabbits have never been bred from dogs, or dogs from cats. Humans have bred dogs for various purposes, but they remain dogs and can still interbreed with one another. Darwin's error was to mistake variation within a very narrow range of organisms for the evolution of all forms of life. He mistook micro-evolution for macro-evolution.

Natural Selection Requires Loss of Genetic Information

Selection, whether it is natural selection due to environmental factors or human inbreeding, involves the preferential selection of some genes and the elimination of others. This explains why the Galapagos Islands of South America are so famous for producing the most extreme variations.

Experts say the individuals on the islands were cut off from the larger gene pool of the species and so produced a subspecies which is distinct from the mainland's population. But this process involves the *loss* of genetic information in the gene pool of the subspecies, and not the acquisition of new information as the Theory of Evolution demands.

If it is true that fish evolved into amphibians, the amphibians into reptiles, and the reptiles into birds and mammals, then vast quantities of new genetic information would have had to be added at every stage.

Yet natural selection does not contain any mechanism for such a process, but only for losing it; and everything observed in nature seems to point us in the same direction. Scientific observations have proven that all systems and elements on Earth tend to disintegrate and fall to a lower order of organization over time and not the opposite.

Evidence from the Second Law of Thermodynamics

The Second Law of Thermodynamics, the **Law of Entropy**, is universally accepted and observed to be true without exception. It states that in a closed system the amount of available, useful energy always decreases. Energy still exists but it degrades into useless forms. The entropy principle says that things move from order to disorder, and left to themselves things cool and run down.

In theoretical physics this means that given enough time the Universe itself will run down until everything becomes cold and dead. Scientists refer to it as the *heat death* of the Universe because all temperatures will reach a very cold equilibrium.

The physicist Ludwig Boltzmann spent decades studying the mechanics of thermodynamics and came to the conclusion that the Universe was doomed to the faith of heat death. In his research he saw no way to deal with the entropy principle, which says that the Universe is running down and there is no way to reverse this tendency.

Boltzmann reached the conclusion that someday there will be no available energy left in the cosmos, all the stars will be burned to nuclear ashes, and life will cease to exist.

Entropy, through the Second Law of Thermodynamics, is one of the greatest arguments against the Theory of Evolution. It teaches that species became more complex with the passage of time, that new genetic information was added and new species evolved, that entropy decreased, and that the chemical elements on Earth became more ordered.

The Law of Entropy proves that this is absolutely impossible. In biology, the general tendency that we observe is for species to become extinct, for genetic information to be lost, and for things to fall apart, wear out and disintegrate. The Theory of Evolution is an absolute denial of the Second Law of Thermodynamics.

Changes Occurring Through Mutations

There is another mechanism on which the Theory of Evolution depends by which changes can occur in a species of living organisms. We have looked at the natural variations in the gene pool and seen how selection involves the loss of genetic information.

But change can also occur through mutation – the random alteration of letters in the genetic code. One expert says this may happen through errors being made in the process of copying DNA from one generation to the next. Though there are proof reading devices built into the system, errors can and seldom occur. Changes may also occur through DNA being exposed to radiation, and so on.

By the 1930s classical Darwinism was well on the way to being superseded by neo-Darwinism, which put forward the so-called *synthetic theory*. This theory holds that organic evolution could not be brought about by natural selection alone, but depends also on mutations (inherited genetic changes taking place over a considerable period of time). Yet with all the passion and glamorous advertising with which it is promoted, this theory has run into some massive difficulties.

First, natural mutations, as opposed to those carried out in a laboratory, are extremely rare. One expert suggested that they occur once in approximately every ten million duplications of the DNA molecule. Second, scientists have never observed mutations in nature or in the laboratory that adds information to an organism to generate positive changes.

With the exception of some very rare cases, most experiments have proven that genetic mutations can only produce freaks of nature that are less able to survive and reproduce than the standard version. I quote, “Even if the freak does survive and thrives, its faulty genetic make-up is not likely to be passed down to another generation. If the mutant interbreeds with normal members of the species, there is an in-built tendency for the line to regress to the standard type.”

The Theory of Evolution depends entirely on the unproven assumption that random mutations, over extremely long periods of time, will result in beneficial improvements in a species through added information that will be carried to the next

generation, resulting eventually in the evolution of entirely new kinds.

The essence of evolution is that such change must take place through a series of small steps where one beneficial mutation is added to another. But as we have just pointed out, copying errors through mutation cannot possibly add new information to any organism. They are nothing more than faulty copying of God's original instructions in the hereditary code.

Nobel Prize winner Ernest Chain wrote about the impossibility of life evolving through chance mutations as proposed by the Theory of Evolution:

To postulate that the development and survival of the fittest is entirely a consequence of chance mutations seems to me a hypothesis based on no evidence and irreconcilable with the facts.

These classical evolutionary theories are a gross over-simplification of an immensely complex and intricate mass of facts, and it amazes me that they are swallowed so uncritically and readily, and for such a long time by so many scientists without a murmur of protest.

In *Mathematical Challenges to the Neo-Darwinian Interpretation of Evolution*, Marcel Schutzenberger of the University of Paris, along with other scientists, calculated the probability of evolution based on mutation and natural selection and came to the following conclusion:

There is no chance to see this mechanism appear spontaneously...We believe there is a considerable gap in the neo-Darwinian theory of evolution, and we believe this gap to be of such a nature that it cannot be bridged with the current conception of biology.

Michael Denton is scientist and lives in Australia where he does research in molecular biology. Though writing from a secular viewpoint, he powerfully demonstrates the total lack of evidence behind Darwin's theory in his popular book, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, He stated:

The overriding supremacy of the myth has created a widespread illusion that the theory of evolution was all but proved one hundred years ago and that all subsequent biological research – paleontological, zoological and in the newer branches of genetics and molecular biology – has provided ever-increasing evidence of Darwin's ideas. Nothing could be further from the truth...

His general theory, that all life on Earth had originated and evolved by a gradual successive accumulation of fortuitous mutations, is still, as it was in Darwin's time, a highly speculative hypothesis entirely without direct factual support and very far from that self-evident axiom some of its more aggressive advocates would have us believe.

Complexity of the Living Cell Requires a Designer

Darwin himself admitted that if it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, his theory would absolutely "breakdown." Biologists have discovered that a simple cell is an extremely complex structure.

A small body cell is composed of billions of atoms arranged in almost a hundred proteins, together with a large amount of genetic information encoded in the DNA and RNA that controls the cell's activities, repair and replication. The problem facing

evolution is that every part of this complex structure needs to be present simultaneously for the cell to function properly.

In his book, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, Denton goes on to explain how a single cell is an extremely complicated construction which could not possibly have risen from random interactions of atoms and molecules. He compares the cell to a huge automated factory, larger than a city and carrying out almost as many unique functions as all the manufacturing activities of man on Earth! He wrote:

Magnify a cell a thousand million times until it is twenty kilometres in diameter and resembles a giant airship. On the surface of the cell we would see millions of openings, like the port-holes of a vast spaceship, opening and closing to allow a continual stream of materials to flow in and out.

If we were to enter one of these openings we would find ourselves in a world of supreme technology and bewildering complexity. We would see endless highly organised corridors and conduits branching in every direction away from the perimeter of the cell, some leading to the central memory banks in the nucleus and others to assembly plants and processing units.

We would see that nearly every feature of our own advanced machines had its analogue in the cell: artificial languages and their decoding systems, memory banks for information storage and retrieval, elegant control systems regulating the automated assembly of parts and components, error fail-safe and proof reading devices utilised for quality control, assembly processes involving the principle of prefabrication and modular construction.

We would be witnessing an object resembling an immense automated factory... However, it would be a factory which would have one capacity not equalled in any of our own most advanced machines, for it would be capable of replicating its entire structure within a matter of hours.

Here Dr Denton is describing just one simple cell! The human body itself consists of billions of cells of different types organized in incredibly complicated arrangements, “Which are impossible to understand in terms of simple molecular motion and random combinations as the theory of evolution demands.”

In *Darwin's Black Box* Michael Behe, Professor of biochemistry at Lehigh University Pennsylvania, demonstrates how evolution could never account for the irreducibly complex biological systems we find around us today.

As stated, *Irreducible Complexity* describes a biological system that could never have developed gradually because it cannot function unless every part of the complex system is present. The electron microscope and molecular interactions within living organisms have demonstrated that numerous, successive, slight modifications *do* take place, but for complex organs such as the eye to have evolved, too many successive, slight modifications would have had to take place simultaneously. Therefore, on the principle of irreducible complexity the theory of evolution does not have a leg to stand on.”

Professor Behe powerfully demonstrates this fact, and the dilemma most scientists face today in the face of the compelling evidence in favour of intelligent design. He wrote:

Over the past four decades modern biochemistry has uncovered the secrets of the cell. The progress has been hard won. It has required tens of thousands of

people to dedicate the better parts of their lives to the tedious work of the laboratory...

The knowledge we now have of life at the molecular level has been stitched together from innumerable experiments in which proteins were purified, genes cloned, electron micrographs taken, cells cultured, structures determined, sequences compared, parameters varied, and controls done. Papers were published, results checked, reviews written, blind alleys searched and new leads fleshed out.

The result of these cumulative efforts to investigate the cell – to investigate life at the molecular level – is a loud, clear, piercing cry of ‘design.’ The result is so unambiguous and so significant that it must be ranked as one of the greatest achievements in the history of science...

The observation of the intelligent design of life is as momentous as the observation that the Earth goes round the sun or that disease is caused by bacteria or that radiation is emitted in quanta.

The magnitude of the victory, gained at such great cost, through sustained effort over the course of decades, would be expected to send champagne corks flying in labs around the world. This triumph of science should evoke cries of ‘Eureka’ from ten thousand throats, should occasion much hand-slapping and high-fiving, and perhaps even be an excuse to take a day off.

But no bottles have been uncorked, no hands slapped. Instead a curious, embarrassed silence surrounds the stark complexity of the cell. When the subject comes up in public, feet start to shuffle, and breathing gets a bit laboured. In private people are more relaxed;

many explicitly admit the obvious but then stare at the ground, shake their heads, and let it go at that.

The Central Idea of Intelligent Design

The central idea of intelligent design is that the complexity of nature demands that a thinking intelligent Being planned and devised it. The famous British philosopher William Paley explained *complexity* as evidence of intelligent design.

He reasoned that if one walked across a field and found a watch, he would naturally assume that a watchmaker had designed it. The complexity and purpose of the watch points to the fact that it is not the result of undirected, unintelligent causes, but the product of a very intelligent designer.

With the explosion of knowledge over the last century concerning the complexity of the cell, the DNA code, microorganisms, and the complex design of the Universe, which contains many principles and laws that point us to the reality of God, the need for an intelligent designer has become much greater.

The current *Intelligent Design Movement* has much more than just theories and philosophical arguments for a designer in nature, it uses scientific evidence drawn from biology, chemistry and physics. This view has received a great deal of publicity in the last few years and is known in some educational fields as an alternative to Darwinism (I will pick up on this again in another chapter).

A professor of Oxford University, Dr Anthony Flew, was a figurehead of the atheist movement for many years and one of the most influential rationalist philosophers of his time. But in 2004 he had a complete change of mind.

Flew did not come to a belief in the God of Scripture, but the compelling evidence that the Universe had an initial beginning and was perfectly fine-tuned to sustain life convinced him that there was a Creator and he abandoned his life-long commitment

to atheism. A news article entitled, *Leading Atheist Says Science Has Changed His Mind*, recorded the story:

A British philosophy professor who has been a leading champion of atheism for more than fifty years has changed his mind. Anthony Flew 81, said scientific evidence has now convinced him that a super intelligence is the only explanation for the origin of life and the complexity of nature... If his new-found belief upsets people, Flew said that is too bad... he is always being determined to follow the evidence where ever it leads.

In 2005 another article on the intelligent design argument appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*. It said:

Intelligent Design, which started to gain notice about ten years ago, holds that evolution alone does not adequately explain some complex biological mechanisms, suggesting that a plan by an intelligent force is behind changes in species.

The noted astronomer Allan Sandage also expressed his belief in an intelligent designer behind nature:

I find it quite improbable that such order came out of chaos. There has to be some organizing principle. God to me is a mystery but is the explanation for the miracle of existence.

Professor Verner Von Braun, the leading post World War 2 rocket scientist, wrote:

I find it difficult to understand a scientist who does not acknowledge the presence of a superior rationality behind the existence of the Universe as it is to comprehend a theologian who would deny the advances of science.

After considering how completely unlikely it was that certain elements like carbon could have been formed by accident, the famous astrophysicist Sir Fred Hoyle was forced to admit the obvious:

A common-sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a super intellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature.

The well-known British journalist and philosopher Malchom Muggeridge totally rejects the Theory of Evolution as a great scientific fraud and criticizes those who so readily accept it. He said:

I myself am convinced that the theory of evolution, especially the extent to which it has been applied, will be one of the great jokes in the history books of the future. Posterity will marvel that so many flimsy and dubious a hypothesis could be accepted with the incredible credulity that it has.

The Only Credible Alternative

In light of statements such as these and the overwhelming scientific evidence which reveals the incredible number of flaws in the Theory of Evolution seen so far, you immediately wonder why it is still universally accepted by so many scientists and

intellectuals today. Evolutionary scientist Arthur Keith openly admitted why:

Evolution is unproved and un-provable. We believe it only because the only alternative is special creation which is unthinkable.

Writing in *Nature* as far back as 1929, biologist and evolutionist D.M.S. Watson said much the same thing:

The theory of evolution itself is a theory universally accepted, not because it can be proved by logically coherent evidence to be true, but because the only alternative is special creation which is clearly incredible.

The palaeontologist L.T. More of the University of Chicago admitted:

Our faith in the idea of evolution depends upon our reluctance to accept the antagonistic doctrine of special creation.

In other words, if the Theory of Evolution is rejected, then evolutionists and atheists would have no other alternative other than the biblical account of Creation by a personal God.

Dr Richard Lewontin, an evolutionist from Harvard University, admitted that it is unyielding prejudice and bias against the supernatural that is the true motive that causes many scientists to reject intelligent design and not the evidence at hand.

Whether we choose to accept it or not, our finely tuned Universe demands a Creator. Such a magnificent design presupposes an intelligent mind and will, unimaginably great in wisdom and power.

The exact precision of the physical forces in our Universe, the coincidence of so many factors on planet Earth which make life possible, the language of DNA, and the ingenuity of the complex molecular machines on which life depends all demand an intelligent Designer and Creator.

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.

(Revelation 4:11)

Still Perplexed by Fossil Record

Charles Darwin admitted that millions of “*missing links*,” transitional life forms, would have to be found in the fossil record to prove the accuracy of his theory that all species had gradually evolved by chance mutation into new species.

Unfortunately for his theory, and despite hundreds of millions spent on searching for fossils worldwide for almost a century and a half, scientists have failed to locate a single missing link out of the millions that should exist if the Theory of Evolution is to be scientifically proven.

Fossils are the remains of plants or animals buried in such a way that much or all of their structure when alive has been preserved. They are found in the *sedimentary rocks*; rocks formed through the deposition of sediment in water. Fossils are found in the sedimentary rocks all over the Earth and under the seas.

It is generally found that the fossils contained in the lowest strata of the rocks are of simpler organisms, and as we work upwards we find more complex and developed ones, such as fish, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, birds, and *Homo sapiens* (please see chapter twenty-two for more on this subject).

These fossilized remains found in the geologic column are said to provide compelling proof for evolution. This is because all the other evidence offered in favour of the theory is circumstantial, whereas the evidence from palaeontology (the study of life-forms based on fossils found in the rocks) claims to present proof of the history of evolution as opposed to its results and mechanisms. But as we shall see, the fossil record proves the exact opposite.

As we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the Theory of Evolution requires that one form of life evolved into another by a series of small gradual changes without any sudden jumps. This means that the fossil record should contain millions of animals with partially developed limbs or organs such as partial legs, brains or eyes. But no such fossils have ever been found, as a firm supporter of evolution, Dr Niles Eldredge, was forced to admit:

We palaeontologists have said that the history of life supports the story of gradual adaptive change, all the while really knowing that it does not.

Supporters of evolution hoped at the beginning that they would find the continuous gradation of organisms showing all the intermediate stages through which the various species have passed in the course of time in the fossil record.

However, after one hundred and fifty years of claims made that just a little more time would produce such a progression, we find there is only an embarrassing and total lack of fossil evidence to produce what evolutionists so desperately seek to prove their theory – the smooth transition from one species to another with a string of intermediate organisms to *glue* the species together. Instead, as the late Dr Henry Morris, engineer and founder of the Creation Research Center, pointed out:

All the present orders, classes and phyla appear quite suddenly in the fossil record without indications of the evolving lines from which they presumably developed.

There are numerous examples in the fossil record of deterioration and extinction, but a complete absence of any fossils showing transitional structures leading to the evolution of more complex species. In his book, *Macroevolution: Pattern and Process*, palaeontologist Stephen M. Stanley wrote:

The known fossil record fails to document a single example of phyletic evolution accomplishing a major morphologic transition and hence offers no evidence that the gradualist model can be valid.

Charles Darwin was very perplexed that the fossil evidence did not bear out his theory. In his *Origin of Species* he wrote:

Why if species have descended from other species by fine gradations, do we not everywhere see innumerable transitional forms? Why is not all nature in confusion, instead of the species being, as we see them, well defined? But, as by this theory innumerable transitional forms must have existed, why do we not find them embedded in countless numbers in the crust of the Earth?

According to David Raup, the Curator of Geology at Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History, the situation has not changed much since Darwin's day. He claimed:

The record of evolution is still surprisingly jerky and, ironically, we now have even fewer examples of evolutionary transition than we had in Darwin's time... Darwin's problem has not been alleviated.

Unfortunately, this is not the message the average person has been taught at school or university. We were exposed to textbooks littered with trees, graphs, charts, columns and models with many polysyllabic names claiming to prove evolution, which gave us the impression that we were to take the whole thing for granted as something that has long been proven by science.

The truth is that after decades of millions being spent on massive global searches by scientists, who have catalogued hundreds of thousands of fossil specimens in museums and laboratories around the world, the long sought after *missing links* are still missing!

The picture that the fossil record shows is a series of acts of Creation at various stages as new types of fully formed animals appear. This correlates exactly with the statements found in the Book of Genesis which states that God created each creature after its own kind:

And God said, "Let the waters teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the waters teem, according to their kinds and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

(Genesis 1:20-22)

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 its kind.." And it was so. God made the wild animals 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.

(Genesis 1:24-26)

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

(Genesis 1:26-28)

FRAUDS IN THE HISTORY OF EVOLUTION

Then God said, "Let us make human kind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created human kind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

(Genesis 1:26-28)

Dear reader, there have been many frauds in the history of evolution. Under the heading *Embryonic Fraud Lives on*, the *New Scientist* of 6 September 1997 reported that Ernst Haeckel's fraudulent drawings of alleged embryonic evolutionary parallels are displayed in museums today even though he was convicted of fraud by Jena University over a hundred and twenty years ago. Haeckel believed with Darwin that all life had evolved by chance from a common source. But he also proposed that in every individual the story of evolution is recapitulated in the womb. Haeckel claimed that as the human embryo developed, it passed through the different stages of evolution, resembling at one stage a fish, then a chicken, then a pig, and in the latest stage, a human being. Haeckel produced drawings of the embryos of all these creatures to demonstrate their similarities. These drawings were fakes, a real and deliberate fraud. Even though they were exposed as early as the 1860s, they continued to be included in biological textbooks, and worse than that, the idea of recapitulation is still repeated in television nature programmes today.

The Archaeopteryx Fossil

Extinctions of many wonderful and weird creatures buried in the rock layers caused very much excitement when they were first discovered. Evolutionists made much of a fossil discovered in Austria known as *Archaeopteryx* (from the Greek word *archaios* meaning ancient, and *pteurux* meaning wing) which they boldly claimed to be a missing link, or a transitional form, between a reptile and a bird.

Archaeopteryx is a small creature close to the size of a crow and was declared to have lived around a hundred and fifty million years ago. Although this creature had certain unusual features such as teeth, a long tail and claws on its wings, everything else about the fossil revealed it was a true bird and taxonomists today have no hesitation in assigning it to that class for the following reasons.

First, fossil birds younger than Archaeopteryx, and not included in the supposed “reptile-to-bird” evolution scenario, have been found, some with teeth and others with a similar hook on their wings. A good example of this type is the modern hoatzin, officially placed in a family of its own, but with some of the features of Archaeopteryx.

Second, no creature that is fossilized or living has scales that are halfway to developing into feathers, and there is absolutely no evidence that this has ever occurred in the past. On the contrary, the fossilized remains of at least two undisputed birds have been found in rock strata said to be seventy-five million years *earlier* than the date which evolutionists give for Archaeopteryx.

After studying the evidence evolutionist Francis Hitching concluded: “Every one of its supposed reptilian features can be found in various species of undoubted birds.”

The Tale of Dinosaur to Bird Continues

In November 1999 *National Geographic* announced that a fossil had been discovered which appeared to be a missing link between the dinosaurs and birds. The fossil had the tail of a dinosaur and the forelimbs of a bird. The article written by its senior assistant editor stated that: “We can now say that birds are theropods just as confidently as we say that humans are mammals.”

This of course created a storm of interest until it was revealed to be another deception and fraud. Palaeontologists proved that the back end of a dinosaur had been glued to the front end of a bird, a combination of two distinct and totally unrelated fossils! Professor Storrs Olson, curator of birds at the National Museum of Natural History in Washington D.C, condemned this bold claim made by National Geographic when he stated:

National Geographic has reached an all-time low for engaging in sensationalistic unsubstantiated tabloid journalism... It eventually became clear to me that National Geographic was not interested in anything other than the prevailing dogma that birds evolved from dinosaurs.

This type of scientific fraud is a lesson that we should take any media announcements regarding evolution with great caution. The newspapers, television and various magazines, and even some who should know better, are easily deceived and predisposed to publicize any new breakthroughs that support the Theory of Evolution that will sell in the bookshops or newsagents. The pattern so often is for a headline to blow the trumpet about another evolutionary discovery, but when that same discovery turns out to be a hoax, there is not one media squeak. As a result, the general public is left with the impression of *proof* when in reality we have nothing more than a false alarm.

Making Men out of Apes

By far the most interesting gap in the macro-evolutionary theory is the gap between human beings and our supposed ape-like ancestors. The widely-accepted theory is that apes and humans evolved from a common and unknown ancestor between thirty and seventy-million years ago.

Most of us have listened to university professors, read textbooks, watched very impressive nature programmes, or visited museums around the world with fantastic exhibitions, which all give the impression that this evolutionary transition is to be taken for granted.

As we pointed out in the previous chapter, the scientific evidence at hand is absolutely in full support of the conclusion that the entire evolutionary process of apes to man is one of the greatest scientific frauds in history! Darwin's book, *The Descent of Man*, gave much to the hasty search for evidence in support of the idea, but almost a hundred and fifty years later palaeontologist Niles Eldredge of the American Natural History Museum has this to say:

The smooth transition from one form of life to another which is implied in the theory... is not borne out by the facts. The search for missing links between various living creatures, like humans and apes, is probably fruitless, because they never existed as distinct transitional forms... no one has yet found any evidence of such transitional creatures.

Millions of people around the world have been taught an incredible lie to convince them that science has absolutely proven that evolution is true. One of the most effective techniques that evolutionists use to do this is their continual referral to the discovery of a number of "ape-men" fossils that have been found

around the world since the search began more than a hundred and fifty years ago.

These “missing link” ape-men creatures are supposed to demonstrate the very slow and gradual evolution of modern humans from primitive ape-like creatures over millions of years. However, a detailed analysis of these fossils show an incredible account of mistaken identification, misrepresentation and outright blatant fraud!

What the general public is unaware of is that these so-called hominid fossil skeletons, popularized and reconstructed by evolutionary textbooks and museum curators, often consist of little more than a single tooth, a small piece of a skull, a single jaw fragment, or a portion of an elbow or knee-joint, out of which an illustration of a complete ape-man is created! Such meagre evidence is then used to convince the masses that modern man developed over millions of years from ancestors that resembled apes.

Worse than that, a number of the alleged hominid ape-men fossils presented by palaeontologists as evidence of the gradual transition from primitive ape-like ancestors to modern man have been shown to be nothing more than extinct forms of pigs, horses, monkeys and apes that have no relationship whatsoever to ancient or modern humans. Below are a few of the strongest cases to have hit the media headlines since the time of Charles Darwin to modern times.

The Fossil Lucy:

The host of extinct apes evolutionists continually use and upscale in their desperate attempt to fill the large gap in the fossil record include almost all the australopithecines, as well as a variety of other extinct apes such as *Ardipithecus*, *Orrorin*, *Sahelanthropus*, and *Kenyanthropus*.

Despite the fact that all of these have obviously ape skulls, ape pelvises and ape hands and feet, australopithecines, especially *Australopithecus afarensis*, are very often portrayed as having hands and feet very similar to those of modern man, including a straight, upright posture.

The fossil known as *Lucy* is probably the best-known specimen of *Australopithecus afarensis*. This little lady, with no hands or feet, was discovered in Ethiopia in the early 1980s by the American anthropologist Donald Johanson, and is said to be one of the most important discoveries for the evolution of man.

Only parts of her skull were found, so the size of her brain was not mentioned. Lucy was given the great age of three and a half billion years and was described as an early human because the knee-joint proved that this individual walked upright, while the skeleton showed evidence of small skull capacity akin to that of apes.

In spite of Johanson's enthusiastic announcement that he had "discovered" the first ape to walk upright, and therefore a link between primitive apes and humans, not all experts in the field were impressed with his statements. In answer to a question following a lecture at the University of Missouri in 1996, Johanson admitted that the knee-joint given as "proof" that Lucy walked upright was found over two miles away and two-hundred feet lower in the rock strata!

A complete life-like mannequin of Lucy in the *Living World Exhibit* at the St Louis Zoo shows a hairy, human-like female body standing in an upright position with human hands and feet, but with an ape-like head; which many scientists say is a gross misrepresentation of what is known about the fossil ape *Australopithecus afarensis*.

As we mentioned above, these creatures are known to have ape skulls, ape pelvises and ape hands and feet. But despite evidence to the contrary, evolutionists and museums continue to portray these creatures with human-like features.

A fuller description of the Lucy discovery is given by Johanson and Edey in their book entitled *Lucy*. Here the authors aggressively state that the fossil record is true and human beings were indeed descended from apes. Nevertheless, they admit that the so-called fossils that link apes to humans have not been found:

There was no abrupt crossover from ape to man, but probably a rather fuzzy time of in-between types. We have no fossils yet that tell us what went on during that in-between time.

Author Richard Leakey goes further in his popular book, *Origins Reconsidered*, and not only pictures the progress of the in-between time, but actually draws pictures of a line of ape-men gradually walking more and more upright even though no such skeletons have ever been found.

Anthropologists now have a great number of human-like and ape-like fossils, but between them there is not one ape-man fossil. Reader, it needs repeating, most of the alleged hominid ape-men presented by palaeontologists as evidence for evolution are nothing more than the remains of extinct forms of pigs, monkeys and horses.

Combining Men and Apes

Pitdown Man:

The most famous of a so-called ape–man find, which proved to be nothing more than a combination of ape and human bones mixed together, is the fossil known as *Pitdown Man*. This fossil was discovered in 1912 at the Pitdown quarry in England by a medical doctor and amateur palaeontologist named Charles Dawson. The cranium of the skull of Pitdown man appeared to be remarkably human, while the jaw was ape-like.

Shortly after the discovery, Dawson took the collection of bones to a friend of his at the British Museum for analysis, saying that he had found them in a gravel pit near Piltdown Sussex. Experts said the remains were about 500,000 years old and for the next forty years the fossil Piltdown Man, officially classified as *Eoanthropus dawsoni* (Dawson's Dawn Man), was hailed as, "The sensational missing link," and an early hominid between apes and modern man. It was forty years before this fraud became public.

Despite the fact that Piltdown Man was a giant hoax, the damage had already been done. From its initial discovery in 1912, to its final determination as a fraud in 1950, hundreds of scientists and university researchers had written numerous doctoral dissertations about the fossil Piltdown Man as the direct ancestor of modern man. In addition, hundreds of plaster casts of the find had been sent to museums around the world, and some years after Dawson's death in 1916, the three scientists responsible for establishing Piltdown Man's status in the ape-to-man sequence had received knighthoods.

Fortunately, the whole story took a turn in 1953 when it was exposed as a gigantic fraud. Piltdown Man was scientifically shown to be made up of a human skull and the jawbone of a female orang-utan, who had died about fifty years earlier, and whose teeth had been filed to give them a more human appearance.

Moreover, other fossils including fragments of rhinoceros, elephant, red-deer and a horse's tooth were found at the same site as Piltdown Man, but were all doctored to conceal their age and origin. It was also shown that some of these finds were discovered elsewhere, but brought to the Piltdown site to make the find more impressive.

An article in October 1956 in the *Reader's Digest* magazine recounted the new evidence from a scientific article entitled, *The Great Piltdown Hoax*, that had appeared earlier in the *Popular*

Science Monthly. The instigator of this fraud had dyed the teeth and skull fragments to convince other scientists that the skull was extremely old.

As all the people associated with the Piltdown plot are now dead, we shall never know for sure who perpetrated it. Malcolm Bowden wrote in his book, *Ape-Men: Fact or Fallacy*, that the evidence points towards the famous philosopher and evolutionist Pierre Teilhard de Cardin.

Others have suggested it may have been a local resident, Arthur Conan Doyle, and certain members of the British Museum. But all that we can say with certainty today is that Piltdown Man, once hailed as proof of modern man's evolutionary ancestry was unquestionably one of the greatest scientific frauds in history.

Java Man:

Another famous so-called ape-man was *Java Man*, discovered in 1892 by a Dutch palaeontologist, Eugene Dubois, in Java, Indonesia. The only evidence for this ape-man fossil was a skull cap, three teeth and a thigh-bone. Although these fossils were lying at least fifty feet from each other, and unearthed over a one-year time span, Dubois boldly announced that he had found *Anthropopithecus erectus* (upright, man-like ape).

Yet what scientists failed to tell the general public was that later in the 1920s in the same area where Java Man was found, the full skeletal remains of modern humans were also found.

These human bones, that provided concrete evidence that Java Man was not the transitional form that evolutionists hoped he would be, remained hidden under the floorboards of Dubois' house for many decades. So Java Man turned out to be another constructed missing link put together by the creative imagination of someone trying to fill the gap.

The Ramapithecus Fossil:

Ramapithecus is another alleged hominid fossil that was discovered in 1932. This fossil was presented by evolutionists as the missing link between apes and humans for almost fifty years. But what we were not told is that the whole illusive skeleton of Ramapithecus was based solely on a few fossilized teeth. When they were later examined more closely it was discovered that these teeth belonged to a modern orang-utan and not the teeth of an ape-man at all. So Ramapithecus was eventually rejected by scientists.

Nebraska Man:

More artistic imagination was used to construct a complete ape-man from nothing more than a single tooth! This fossil known as *Nebraska Man* was discovered in 1922 by the amateur geologist Harold Cook in the western side of Nebraska. Dr Henry Osborn of the American Museum of History, along with many other experts in the field, announced that this ape-man was the long sought after evidence of the missing link.

Despite the poor evidence scientists had to support Nebraska Man, detail drawings of this ape-man ancestor were printed in many publications, complete with the tooth's wife, children, domestic animals and cave! Experts used this *tooth* known as *Nebraska Man* as proof for human evolution during the famous Scopes Trial in 1925.

Obviously, anyone observing these drawings would naturally believe that there existed many fossilized remains to support the reconstructions, but this was not the case. In addition to the poor evidence for Nebraska Man, it was discovered years later that the tooth unearthed by Cook belonged to a wild pig which is believed to have become extinct about ten-thousand years ago. The

Southeast Colorado Man was another invention of such creative imagination.

Making Apes out of Men

In another desperate attempt to fill the gap between apes and modern man, certain fossil men were considered to be extremely ape-like and so were declared to be ancestors of modern man. These human fossils that are claimed to be ape-men are often classified under the genus *Homo*, which means *self*, and include *Homo erectus*, *Homo heidelbergensis*, and *Homo neanderthalensis*.

The best known human fossils are of *Cro-Magnon Man*, whose paintings are found on the walls of caves in France, and *Neanderthal Man*. Both of these fossils are clearly human and have longed been classified as *Homo Sapiens*. But much attention was given to these finds when Charles Darwin published his *Origin of Species* in 1859 and the search began for the imagined ape-like ancestors of man.

Neanderthal Man:

Neanderthal Man was first discovered in 1856 by workmen digging in a limestone cave in the Neander Valley in Germany. The bones of this fossil (a partial skeleton) appeared human, but had unusual features such as a prominent eyebrow ridge (like Australian Aborigines) and curvature of the thigh-bone. The fossil bones were examined by anatomist Professor Schaaffhausen, who concluded that they were fully human.

Also the eminent scientist Rudolf Virchow, who laid the foundation for modern pathology, argued that the Neanderthals were human in every respect and that the unusual features in the skull and elsewhere may have resulted from pathological changes caused by disease such as rickets and arthritis.

Nearly a century later another medical specialist reported that many of the remains of the Neanderthal specimens found in Europe showed that the individuals concerned had suffered from a Vitamin D deficiency, which is known to cause osteomalacia and rickets that would also produce a subtle change in the face. However, over the next few decades of the original discovery similar Neanderthal specimens were found throughout Europe, Africa and Asia and evolutionists eventually downgraded Neanderthal Man to a different species – *Homo Neanderthal*.

In the following years models were sculptured, designed and painted revealing semi-erect, barrel-chested creatures with short legs, prominent eyebrow ridges, long narrow skulls and a protruding upper jaw, and were said to have lived between 35,000 and 70,000 years ago.

These constructions certainly gave the impression of being apemen, but as one expert pointed out: “Only bones were found, all the rest of the reconstruction was speculation based on preconception.” In spite of this, most people who were taught evolution in school and elsewhere still believe that modern humans are descended from cave-men ancestors with these types of characteristics.

It should also be emphasized here that none of these so-called primitive features of Neanderthal people fall outside the range of normal human anatomy. In addition, the brain size (based on cranial capacity) of the Neanderthals was actually much larger than that of modern humans, even though the evolutionary dogma teaches that the reverse should be the case. Again, this fact is rarely emphasized.

Marcelin Boule, who studied two Neanderthal skeletons in the early nineteenth century, did much to provoke many misconceptions about the Neanderthals. He concluded that Neanderthal men were anatomically and intellectually inferior brutes, more related to apes than humans. These inaccurate views

of Boule were expanded upon by many other evolutionists right up until the 1950s.

Later, anatomists William Straus and A.J Cave totally disproved the claims made by Boule after they had examined one of the French Neanderthals and concluded that the individual actually suffered from severe arthritis which had affected the vertebrae and caused the posture to bend.

One of the world's foremost authorities on Neanderthal Man, Dr Erik Trinkaus, concluded that there is nothing about Neanderthals that is in any way inferior to modern man. He said:

Detailed comparisons of Neanderthal skeletal remains with those of modern humans have shown that there is nothing in Neanderthal anatomy that conclusively indicates loco-motor, manipulative, intellectual or linguistic abilities inferior to those of modern humans.

In addition to anatomical evidence, there is also a growing body of cultural evidence for the fully human status of the Neanderthals. For example, they conducted religious rituals in burying their dead, made a variety of stone tools and worked elaborately with skins and leather.

Moreover, the dating sequence by the *missing link* idea was shattered when a typical Neanderthal skeleton was found buried in a coat of armour in a tomb in Poland in 1908, another interesting fact not emphasized and not included in modern textbooks.

In 1998 a report by American anthropologists further added to the weight of evidence pointing to the fact that the Neanderthals were fully human by their conclusion that in Neanderthal people, "The pencil-sized hypoglossal canal, which carries the motor nerve controlling the tongue, closely matched that of modern humans."

In a 1998 editorial on the same subject the *Daily Telegraph* came to the same conclusion:

Far from being grunting oafs, the Neanderthals were accomplished conversationalists, with tongues quite as dextrous as our own. We have been wrong all along to use their name as a by-word for numb-skulled immobilism. On the contrary, they were the chattering classes of Upper Pleistocene Europe.

Cro-Magnon Man:

The fossil identified as *Cro-Magnon Man* is absolutely indistinguishable from modern humans. The sole reason the fossil was considered a primitive ape-man was because it was found near a collection of cave drawings that were considered primitive. Scientists no longer support this identification of the Cro-Magnon fossil.

The Conclusion of Ape-Men Finds

The cases and illustrations mentioned above, and there are many more, have for a long time been accepted as convincing scientific proof that human beings developed over millions of years by gradual transitions. The late Dr Stephen Jay Gould was Professor of geology and palaeontology at Harvard University and a strong supporter of evolution.

However, he had the honesty to admit that the illustrations of evolutionary development found in science books and television nature programmes are actually fictitious inventions that by no means represent the facts.

It is very clear from the fossil record that there is absolutely no evidence to support human evolution. Today universities and

museums have hundreds of thousands of fossils, but not one that bridges the gap between apes and man. Even the fossils found today only testify to separate creation acts.

Therefore, we should take the announcements of any new breakthroughs in the area of evolution with a good dose of scepticism; as scientists working in these fields are no more immune to temptations than others, and are more than willing to get carried away with a fragment of a skull and a few teeth!

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THE ANTHROPIC PRINCIPLE ***The Universe Was Made*** ***for Life to Exist***

For this is what the Lord says – he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited.

(Isaiah 45:18-19)

The highest heavens belong to the Lord, but the earth he has given to man.

(Psalm 115:16)

After examining the complexity of the variables that govern the Solar System and planet Earth, many scientists have declared that our Universe is *anthropic*. This means that the Earth bears evidence that it was designed by a superior intelligence to allow human life to exist.

The Anthropic Principle strongly suggests that a supernatural intelligent Being must have created our Universe to produce humanity; because the conditions that make our Universe and human life possible are the result of spectacular “*fine-tuning*” of more than a hundred scientifically vital values.

For example, the strength of gravity, the Earth’s distance from the Sun, the chemical composition of the atmosphere, magnetism, and many more scientific constants. Changing one or two of the basic numbers that define the Universe by even a small amount would mean there were no stars, atoms, or life as we know it.

This principle is discussed in technical details by John D. Barrow and Frank J. Tipler in *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle*. They show with many equations and references that the scientific

organization of the Universe is not coincidental, but appears to have been chosen in order to make human life possible.

Origins of the Design Argument

Questions to the nature of our Universe and our planet Earth have existed – in their broadest sense – since the Middle Ages, but elements of them can be traced back to the ancient Greeks. In 45 B.C. the Roman lawyer and statesman Cicero pointed to the beauty and harmony of the heavenly bodies and put forward an argument for an intelligent designer in nature. In *The Nature of the Gods* he asked the following question:

When we see a mechanism such as a planetary model or clock, do we doubt that it is the creation of the conscious intelligence? So how can we doubt that the world is the work of divine intelligence?

Also, the Reformation of the sixteenth century, and the scientific revolution of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, produced many thesis for the design argument. Eminent scientists such as John Ray and Robert Boyle used it to demonstrate God's creative power, wisdom and intelligence, and Isaac Newton's quantitative scientific account of celestial motions allowed the design concept to be used in the realm of astronomy.

But the most famous and popular argument put forward for intelligent design was by the English scholar and theologian William Paley, whose works have had a long and lasting influence on many scientific textbooks.

In his work *Natural Theology* Dr Paley presented a massive accumulation of evidence for an intelligent Designer behind nature to back up his famous watchmaker argument, which supports the Bible's claim that God purposely designed the

Universe for it to be inhabited by humanity. A key part of his argument is as follows:

In crossing a heath, suppose I pitched my foot against a stone, and were asked how it came to be there. I might possibly answer that, for anything I knew to the contrary, it had lain there for ever; nor would it, perhaps, be very easy to show the absurdity of this answer.

But suppose I found a watch upon the ground, and it should be enquired how the watch happened to be in that place, I should hardly think of the answer that I had before given – that, for anything I knew, the watch might have always been there. Yet why should not this answer serve for the watch as well as for the stone? Why is it not as admissible in the second case as in the first?

For this reason, and for no other, viz., that, when we come to inspect the watch, we perceive (what we could not discover in the stone) that its several parts are framed and put together for a purpose, e.g. that they are so formed and adjusted as to produce motion so regulated as to point out the hour of the day; that, if the different parts had been differently shaped from what they are, if a different size from what they are, or placed after any other manner, or in any other order than that in which they are placed, either no motion at all would have been carried on in the machine, or none which would have answered to the use that is now served by it.

Dr Paley's argument here is that a man who discovered a watch on the ground would be forced by sheer logic and common sense to acknowledge that the complexity and intricate design of the

watch, capable of measuring the exact passage of time, leads to the logical conclusion that there must be an intelligent purposeful watchmaker who originally designed and carefully manufactured such a complicated device.

Paley also stated that if the different parts of the watch had been differently shaped from what they are, it obviously could never have functioned at any level of effectiveness. Later, he pointed out that the argument for design becomes even more powerful when we consider the complexity of biological life in comparison to a device such as a watch.

Just as it is logical to assume a watchmaker from the perfect design and function of the watch, so we should assume an intelligent Designer when we see the perfect complexity and harmony in nature. He wrote:

For every indication of contrivance, every manifestation of design, which existed in the watch, exists in the works of nature, of being greater and more, and that in a degree which exceeds all computation. I mean that the contrivances of nature surpass the contrivances of art, in the complexity, subtlety and curiosity of the mechanism; and still more, if possible, do they go beyond them in number and variety.

Death Blow to a Personal Creator

The Scriptures continually assert that God purposely created the heavens and the Earth, and especially so that it could be inhabited by humanity. However, a great majority of scientists of the last century rejected the concept of a Designer in nature due to their belief that the Theory of Evolution could account for the existence of all the complex biological lifeforms that we observe in the natural world today.

They also rejected the biblical claim that everything in the Universe was created by God for mankind due to the popular theory that the Universe had always existed in a stable static condition, and because the man-centred claim made in Scripture seemed to contradict the existing scientific evidence, which demonstrated that the Sun was the centre of the Solar System, and not the Earth as was previously assumed.

In the Middle Ages the standard textbooks on astronomy were still the ancient work of the second century Egyptian astronomer Claudius Ptolemy, whose major thesis was that all heavenly bodies in the Universe revolved around the Earth.

This view was challenged first in the sixteenth century by the Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus, who created a philosophical revolution in the scientific world, because his research provided compelling evidence that the Earth rotated around the Sun, and therefore the Sun was the centre of our Solar System.

As stated earlier, at first Copernicus' discovery was rejected because many feared that it was a contradiction to the Bible – even though the Bible nowhere claims that the Sun revolves around the Earth.

Later on, the Italian astronomer and physicist, Galileo Galilei, came to the conclusion that Copernicus' discovery was correct, and in his work, *Dialogue of the Two Great Systems of the Universe*, he confirmed that the Earth rotates on its own axis and revolves around the Sun. Because of this discovery, Galileo was immediately in trouble with the ecclesiastical authorities of his day and was placed under house arrest for the rest of his life.

This incident is worth repeating here because it has been used by atheists to argue that science has proved the Bible to be in error and done away with the need for a Creator; but such an argument can easily be disproved.

First, Galileo's disagreement was not only with the Roman Catholic Church, but with the orthodox seventeenth century science as a whole – between astronomers who supported Ptolemy and those who supported Copernicus.

Second, to say that corrupt seventeenth century theologians and clergy members giving their consent to a false unbiblical model from ancient Egypt discredits the Bible and destroys the whole idea of God is illogical and nonsense.

Returning to Original Ideas

As we have pointed out in previous chapters, and as this chapter will further demonstrate, the last few decades have seen an extraordinary revolution in the thinking of many leading scientists worldwide, whose discoveries in their own fields have made the idea of a purposeless, accidental Universe impossible.

In fact, the scientific discoveries made over the last five decades are in favour of the ancient view, that both the Earth and the Universe were purposely created for humanity by a supernatural transcendent Being who is outside of time and space and completely distinct from the Universe itself.

This claim can be verified by an interesting article in a 1997 edition of the science journal *Nature*. The article reported on a survey carried out regarding the beliefs of leading American scientists in a personal God. Interestingly, the survey revealed that more than forty per-cent of the physicists, mathematicians and biologists confessed their belief in a personal God as supreme Being who answers prayers and is involved in earthly affairs.

This fact suggests that a large number of top scientists have encountered such compelling evidence in their research as to convince them that the only logical conclusion to account for the incredible harmony in nature and the Universe itself is that there is an intelligent Designer who made it that way.

NASA astronomer and scientist Professor John O’Keefe acknowledged the impossibility of life existing on Earth through random chance. He declared:

We are by astronomical standards, a pampered, cosseted, cherished group of creatures... If the Universe had not been made with the most exacting precision, we could never have come into existence. It is my view that these circumstances indicate the Universe was created for man to live in.

Dr Paul Davies is a physicist, writer and broadcaster, and currently a professor at Arizona State University, as well as the director of *Beyond: Centre for Fundamental Concepts in Science*. Although Davies is not attached to any religious tradition, he acknowledges that the perfect fine-tuning of the Universe can only be accounted for if we accept that an intelligent Designer created it. In his popular book, *The Mind of God*, he stated:

I have come to believe more and more strongly that the physical Universe is put together with an ingenuity so astonishing that I cannot accept it merely as brute fact. For those with eyes to see, everything about Earth has got intelligent design written all over it.

Nobel Prize winner for physics, Professor Arno Penzias, admitted that astronomy reveals our Universe was created out of nothing, and obviously must have been designed by a super intelligent Being to allow life to exist and prosper. He wrote:

Astronomy leads us to a unique event, a Universe which was created out of nothing, one with the very delicate balance needed to provide exactly the

conditions required to permit life and one which has an underlying, (one might say, supernatural) plan.

The astronomer and Director of *NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies*, Dr Robert Jastrow, reluctantly acknowledged that the new scientific evidence provides compelling proof that our Universe had a beginning and was purposely created by a super intelligent Designer to allow humans to exist.

Writing in the *New York Times* in 1978, Jastrow asked the question: "Have astronomers found God?" He came to the conclusion that they had, or had at least come close to doing so. The closing words in his article are incredible, especially since they are written by an agnostic:

This is an exceedingly strange development, unexpected by all but the theologians... We scientists did not expect to find evidence for an abrupt beginning because we have had until recently such extraordinary success in tracing the chain of cause and effect backward in time... At this moment it seems as though science will never be able to raise the curtain on the mystery of creation.

For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.

Writing along the same lines the cosmologist Professor Ed Harrison wrote in his book, *Masks of The Universe*, that the incredible new scientific discoveries point to the existence of God. He wrote:

Here is the cosmological proof of the existence of God – the design argument of Paley – updated and refurbished. The fine tuning of the Universe provides prima facie evidence of deistic design. Take your choice: blind chance that requires multitudes of Universes or design that requires only one... Many scientists, when they admit their views, incline toward the theological or design argument.

The late astrophysicist Dr Stephen Hawking, and author of the best-selling book, *A Brief History of Time*, was without considered the most famous scientist of this generation. Even though Hawking rejected the existence of God, he did acknowledge that there is remarkable evidence of the fine-tuning of the key constants controlling the nature of the Universe. He said:

In fact, if one considers the possible constants and laws that could have emerged, the odds against a Universe that produced life like ours are immense.

Dr Hawking also summarized the implications of his discoveries about the first moment of the Universe in this way:

The odds against a Universe like ours emerging out of something like the big bang are enormous. I think clearly there are religious implications whenever you start to discuss the origins of the Universe. There must be religious overtones. But I think most scientists prefer to shy away from the religious side of it.

Evidence Demanding a Verdict

Scientists use the word *anthropic*, derived from the Greek word *anthropos*, which means *man*, to indicate that science has uncovered a growing mass of evidence, including an astonishing number of variables that fit within a very narrow range that allows life to exist on planet Earth. This evidence supports the view that our Universe was in some way perfectly created and shaped to produce the exact conditions that promote life and especially mankind.

Below we will examine a small portion of these discoveries, beginning with the relative strengths of the four fundamental forces which glue our Universe together. They are called the gravitational force, the electromagnetic force, the strong nuclear force, and the weak nuclear force.

All of these fundamental forces have a specific and precise numerical value which is constant throughout the Universe. If any one of these four forces were not precisely what it is, our Universe would not exist at all.

The Gravitational and Electromagnetic Force:

The relationship between the relative strengths of the gravitational and electromagnetic forces is nothing short of remarkable. The precise balance between these two fundamental forces allows stars like the Sun to exist and radiate energy. The gravitational force holds the star together, while the electromagnetic force energizes the star to radiate its energy. In his book, *God and New Physics*, Paul Davies states:

Both forces play an essential role in shaping the structure of the stars. Stars are held together by gravity, and the strength of the gravitational force helps determine such things as the pressure inside the

star. On the other hand, energy flows out of the star by electromagnetic radiation.

For these two forces to balance out in such a way as to produce stars like our Sun, the range of the relative strengths of these two forces must be very narrow. The noted physicist Brandon Carter pointed out that even a tiny minute adjustment in the gravitation force, stars like the Sun would not exist, neither would any form of life that depends on solar-type stars to sustain it.

If the force of gravity were slightly stronger than it is, the Universe would not have even got off the ground in the first place, or if it had, it would have collapsed again as quickly as it had started. On the other hand, if the force of gravity were slightly weaker than it is, everything in the Universe would fly apart; nothing would hold together.

But as it is, the forces of gravity and electromagnetism are perfectly balanced and fine-tuned to allow life and consciousness to flower in our Universe.

The Strong and Weak Nuclear Force:

These two forces together determine how protons, neutrons and electrons interact in order to form atoms, the fundamental building blocks of matter, and again their precise relationship is truly incredible.

Physicists have shown that if the strong nuclear force had been even slightly weaker than it is, then the Universe would be all hydrogen and we would have none of the diversity that we see around us today. Instead, if the strong nuclear force had been slightly stronger, all the hydrogen in the early Universe would have converted to helium and therefore the stars would not have formed.

In his popular book, *Just Six Numbers: The Deep Forces that Shape the Universe*, the noted astronomer Sir Martin Rees said that the strength of the fundamental strong nuclear force, which expresses the strength of the electrical force that holds atoms together, was precisely balanced and calibrated to the force of gravity to allow the Universe to exist. Dr Rees wrote:

The cosmos is so vast because there is one crucially important huge number N in nature, equal to 1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000. This number measures the strength of the electrical forces that hold atoms together, divided by the force of gravity between them. If N had a few less zeros, only a short-lived miniature Universe could exist. No creatures could grow larger than insects, and there would be no time for biological evolution.

Also the weak nuclear force, the other fundamental force in the Universe, is precisely calibrated to allow our Universe to exist and humanity to prosper. Even a minute variation in this force would have devastating effects on life, but it is at just the right level to allow hydrogen to burn at a slow and steady rate in the hot interior of the stars. If this was not the case, the rate at which stars burn hydrogen would not be conducive to life which depends on their energy.

Nothing Comes from Nothing

It is an astounding fact that all the fundamental forces mentioned above have a specific and precise numerical value which is constant throughout the Universe. An astounding fact that demands an explanation. Why is it that the Universe in which we live is governed by such universal laws which themselves make the practice of science possible?

The physicist Tony Rothman wrote an article in *Discovery* concerning the need for scientists to seriously consider the implications of the astonishing fine-tuning of the most fundamental forces that define the nature and existence of our Universe:

When confronted with the order and beauty of the Universe and the strange coincidences of nature, it is very tempting to take the leap of faith from science into religion. I am sure many physicists want to. I only wish they would admit it.

In his book, *The Blind Watchmaker*, the famous scientist and agnostic Richard Dawkins claims that we do not need to postulate a designer in order to understand life or anything else in the Universe. Such a statement hardly qualifies as an explanation for the incredible harmony we see all around us in the nature of the Universe.

The very laws of logic demand that every known effect must be the result of a previous cause. The Romans created a maxim that included the natural and logical conclusion of logic, *Ex nihilo, nihil fit* – nothing comes from nothing. Universal laws suggest a law-giver and the observance of laws a law-enforcer.

This means the created Universe must have had a first cause – an eternal Being existing outside of time and space and the Universe itself. It is obvious to any intelligent person that there cannot be an infinite series of causes.

Logic demands that there must have been a first cause, that was obviously not created by anything else. The Bible tells us that the first cause is God – a unique, personal, self-existent, eternal, transcendent, independent, perfect, holy, loving, omnipotent spiritual Being, who inhabits eternity and has the freedom and power to bring about anything that He wishes, including matter, time and space, and who sustains the whole of His Creation by

laws of nature that He alone ordained and whose limits He alone determined long ago! The famous Irish writer Jonathan Swift coined the frequently quoted illustration which says:

That the Universe was formed by a fortuitous concourse of atoms, I will no more believe than the accidental jumbling of the alphabet would fall into a most ingenious treatise of philosophy.

Portraying the same idea, the modern British author Rod Garner says:

We could suppose that the plays of Shakespeare came into being as a result of random typing by monkeys. But it is not a proposition that any reflective person would rush to defend. A more cogent explanation – and one we should note that is deeply embedded in human consciousness – is that the existence of a complex yet structured world leads us to the notion of a supreme cause or Being. Creation supposes a Creator.

In a book called *The Emperor's New Mind*, the British mathematician and physicist Roger Penrose, who worked with Stephen Hawking to develop our current knowledge of black holes, calculated the incredible degree of precision with which the Universe was created.

Dr Penrose computed the odds of a *natural* big bang producing by accident our incredibly ordered Universe, as opposed to a chaotic, disorderly one, and devised a number so large that it is said to have more zeros than the total number of particles in the entire Universe.

Above we have examined only a few of the indications which prove that life on Earth needs an extremely complex and precise arrangement of terrestrial and extra-terrestrial elements and laws

in order to exist and function, but there are many more. Below I have listed some of the most obvious examples.

The Earth's Distance from the Sun:

If our Earth was located much further away from our Sun, we would freeze like the planet Mars. If it was much closer, we would be burned up like the hot surface of Mercury. The Earth happens to be in the right place in relation to the Sun, and its temperature has to stay in a narrow band in order to sustain life. Moreover, our Sun is a very special type of star in relation to the others.

Most of the other stars in our galaxy are smaller than the Sun, and are called red dwarves. These give off red light and infrared radiation, but not enough blue light and ultraviolet radiation to support life. However, the large stars like F dwarves give off too much ultraviolet and blue light, whereas our Sun is just right.

The Sun also burns very steadily, so steadily that its heat output is practically constant. In contrast, red dwarves are inclined to flare much more violently than the Sun, so that their output of light and heat varies a lot from time to time.

The Earth's Orbit around the Sun:

Our planet Earth has an almost perfectly circular orbit round the Sun. If it did not revolve every twenty-four hours, the one half of our planet would be in permanent darkness without vegetation, while the other side of the planet would be an uninhabitable desert, as it suffered from permanent exposure to the Sun's heat. Orbits are not necessarily circular: elliptical orbits are just as possible.

But an elliptical orbit would mean that the Earth would be much further from the Sun at the end of its orbit and therefore much colder, and much nearer to the Sun in the middle of its orbit and

so much hotter. This would make Earth's temperature very variable.

Again, our Earth has to rotate on its axis at the right speed. If the rotation were too slow, there would be too great a temperature difference between the night when it cools down, and the day when it heats up. All these facts demand an explanation. Why is it that our Universe is governed by such universal laws which make the practice of life possible?

In his book, *The Early Earth*, Dr John C. Whitcomb examines the compelling scientific evidence in favour of intelligent design and reaches the obvious conclusion that our Universe, Solar System and planet Earth were purposely constructed by a powerful intelligence within very narrow parameters to allow human life to exist. He wrote:

The overwhelming evidence of design throughout the entire Universe as well as the solar system and our own planet has never been more obvious than now. The perfect mass of the proton, and the exact factor of 2 in gravitational and electrical force equations demand a supreme Designer.

So remarkable are these universal mathematical proportions that the term Anthropic Principle is being widely used among astronomers to describe the 'neat and tidy' cosmic mathematical formulas which are independent of the human mind and yet seem to be in beautiful harmony with the way we think.

The more we learn of the astronomic Universe, the more we realize that evolution, even theistic evolution offers no rational answers.

The Precise Size of Earth's Moon:

Another important sign of very fine-tuning is the precise size of our Moon in proportion to the Earth and its precise distance from our planet. If the Moon were any bigger or nearer our planet, it would provoke huge tidal waves and destabilize the Earth's motion. If it were any smaller or more distant, it would have no significant effect on the Earth at all.

But the Moon is very important to life, as it helps to keep our planet stable on its axis and it creates the tides, which are important in flushing out nutrients from the rivers and increasing the ocean currents. These are an important factor in stabilizing the temperature of the Earth because they carry heat from the warmer equatorial regions to the colder arctic ones.

The Earth's Perfect Atmosphere and Size:

There are many factors which determine a planet's atmosphere. The atmosphere of Earth is composed of precisely the right gases necessary to sustain life. In addition, these gases exist in the exact ratio to facilitate the complex biological processes that are essential for the requirements of plant and animal life as well as human beings.

Our atmosphere is composed of 78% nitrogen and 21% oxygen (both of which gases are fundamental to the life cycles of plants and animals), a small quantity of other gases and an abundance of water.

But the composition and density of the Earth's atmosphere are by no means self-explanatory. The planet Venus is much the same size as the Earth, but it has a completely different atmosphere altogether. It is composed of 96% carbon dioxide and around 3% nitrogen, and the atmospheric pressure at the surface of the planet is ninety-six times greater than atmospheric pressure on Earth.

Also the planet Mars – our nearest neighbour in the Planetary System – has literally no atmosphere at all and what there is, is 95% carbon dioxide.

The size of our planet Earth is also vital for life to exist and flourish. If it were any smaller, it would not have the right gravitational pull to retain the water and atmosphere essential to life. A smaller Earth would also produce a much thinner atmosphere that would diminish our protection from the many harmful cosmic rays and the hundreds of meteors that assault our planet very frequently.

On the other hand, a much larger planet would have a greater gravitational field that would greatly increase the weight of every living thing and make life impossible.

The Existence of Carbon and the Strange Nature of Water:

Two other basic necessities for life on Earth are carbon and water, which need to be present in abundance because carbon atoms are the essential building blocks of the molecules of life, while water is the medium of transport.

All life systems on Earth are based on the existence of the element known as carbon. Interestingly, scientists have discovered that it is extremely unlikely that the element carbon could have come into existence by random chance at the beginning of the Universe.

Science tells us that at the very fraction of a second following Creation, our Universe consisted of only helium and hydrogen. But the collision of a helium nucleus with another helium nucleus produced an unstable new element called beryllium. Then another helium nucleus collided with a beryllium nucleus and produced a new element – carbon.

The famous astrophysicist Sir Fred Hoyle had the honesty to admit that when he considered how totally unlikely it was that carbon could have been formed by accident, his atheism was shaken to the core. *In the Universe: Past and Present Reflections* he wrote:

A common-sense interpretation of the facts (concerning the energy levels in 12 Carbon and 16 Oxygen) suggests that a super intellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature. The numbers one calculates from the facts seem to me so overwhelming as to put this conclusion almost beyond question.

Although they reject the idea of a personal Creator, Astronomer Royal, Sir Martin Rees, and science writer John Gribbin stated in *Cosmic Coincidences*:

This combination of coincidences just right for resonance in carbon-12, just wrong in oxygen-16, is indeed remarkable. There is no better evidence to support the argument that the Universe has been designed for our benefit – tailor made for man.

The other vital element for the existence of all life – water – has a whole range of physical and chemical properties; many of which are unique and uniquely adapted to sustain life. Water plays an important part in maintaining temperature stability in the bodies of living creatures and in the Earth as a whole. In fact, our bodies are made up of 62% water and its weight, in relation to the weight of other elements, is another crucial property.

If water were even slightly heavier than it is, we would not be able to stand up. In addition, water is thin, so it can easily flow, an important fact for the body's circulatory system which is based on water. If water were thicker, the heart would have to work incredibly hard to pump it through the veins in our body.

In his book, *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle*, astronomer John D. Barrow noted that the vital element water is an unusual and unlikely element to have formed in our Universe unless purposely designed. He said:

Water is actually one of the strangest substances known to science. This may seem a rather odd thing to say about a substance as familiar but it is surely true. Its specific heat, its surface tension, and most of its other physical properties have values anomalously higher or lower than those of any other known material.

The fact that its solid phase is less dense than its liquid phase (ice floats) is virtually a unique property. The fact that ice floats allows aquatic life to exist in cold temperature zones.

Experts tell us without the unique qualities mentioned above all marine life would die because water would freeze from the bottom and kill all aquatic life in cold climates. Moreover, the proteins and nucleic acids in DNA could not exist without the unique qualities of water. Yet this essential substance for all life existence is found in abundance on the Earth's surface!

For life to exist on our planet we also need a quantity of many other elements such as oxygen, nitrogen, iron, calcium and so on. No other planet in our Solar System has anything like the right chemical composition to support life as planet Earth has. Biologist Dr Lawrence J. Henderson wrote about the appearance of the absolute essential elements in our Universe, hydrogen and

oxygen, necessary for human life to exist and the odds against these elements being formed by chance. He declared:

There is in truth not one chance in countless millions of millions... These are no mere accidents; an explanation is to seek. It must be admitted however, that no explanation is at hand.

But to anyone who seriously considers the evidence there is one logical explanation: “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*”

In his book, *The Unrandom Universe*, Sigmund Brouwer showed that the odds against the essential atmosphere, together with the water cycle, forming on Earth by chance are one in a hundred trillion-trillion.

The physical properties of our planet are by no means self-explanatory, as are the properties of the vital forces of the Universe itself. Their combination cannot be accounted for by a matter of chance.

And the same can be said when we consider the extraordinary balance between the Universe’s rate of expansion and collapse, the slight excess of matter over antimatter, and the rate of the proton and the electron – two of the three subatomic particles which form the atom – that is precisely that which enables life to subsist.

The precise ratio between the proton and the electron is a fundamental number governing our Universe and without it there would be no life, no chemistry and no physicists to figure it out! In *A Brief History of Time* Dr Hawking stated:

The remarkable fact is that the values of these numbers seem to have been finely adjusted to make possible the development of life.

The Anthropic Principle is supported by many leading scientists around the world today. These scientists are seeing that the early formation of the Universe was all the while leading up to man, exactly as the prophet Isaiah announced almost three thousand years before these modern discoveries by man.

Denying God's Existence Requires Faith

There are those who accept the overwhelming evidence of the Anthropic Principle, but still deny the existence of a Creator. They conclude that the special numbers in our Universe which make life possible on planet Earth will all be worked out some day. They believe that scientists will come up with new theories that will explain all of these wonderful minute coincidences.

To deny God in this way, and to say that the Universe with all of its mathematical completion and perfection came into existence by itself with no cause or meaning or reason, requires a lot more faith than a person who believes the Universe exists as it is because of a powerful intelligent God who designed and created it that way.

The physical laws of our Universe are not random. The Anthropic Cosmological Principle strongly suggests the ancient biblical view that they were purposely designed by God for the support of human life. Therefore, God had man in mind right from the beginning! Dear reader, the Bible goes even further and says that He had *you* in mind too. You were created and chosen to be His child and to share in His glory! Paul says:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will.

(Ephesians 1:3-6)

The Bible also says that you were created in God's image; something not said of anything else in the entire created order:

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

(Genesis 1:26-28)

Since God is Spirit and has no physical size, weight shape or any other kind of concrete dimension, to be made in His image means to be like Him in other respects. First, to be made in the image or likeness of God means to have a unique personality, feelings, and powers of thought, which far exceed the brute instincts of animal life. It means to have a unique level of intelligence, an ability to reason, and a will and conscience to choose and distinguish between right and wrong, and to make moral choices, rather than act by irrational instinct.

Finally, and above all, man is a unity of spirit, soul and body. This means that he has a spiritual dimension, a unique capacity to relate to God, to worship Him and to have fellowship with Him. Let us therefore take courage in the words of the distinguished modern thinker Francis Schaeffer, where he wrote:

The Bible tells me who I am. It tells me how I am differentiated from all other things. I do not need to be confused, therefore, between myself and animal life and between myself and the complicated machines of the second half of the twentieth century. Suddenly I have value, and I understand how it is that I am different. I understand how it is that God can

have fellowship with me and give me revelation of a propositional nature... Any man, no matter who he is... is made after the likeness of God. A man is of great value not for some less basic reason but because of his origin.

21

IN THE BEGINNING: ORIGINS RECONSIDERED

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.

(Genesis 1:1-3)

You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.

(Nehemiah 9:6-7)

It is difficult to imagine how anyone can avoid experiencing an incredible sense of awe and wonder when we contemplate the immensity and complexity of the Universe. “Space is big. Really big. You just won’t believe how vastly mind-bogglingly big it is.” With these words began the classic of modern astronomy – *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*.

In the previous chapter we spoke of the size, complexity, richness and energy of our earthly home, which allows it to sustain thousands of varieties of animal and vegetable life as well as human beings. And we said that as far as we know there is no place like it in the entire Universe.

Yet for all its worth and glorious endowment, planet Earth is – as Stephen Hawking described – no more than, “A medium-sized planet orbiting around an average star in the outer suburbs of an ordinary spiral galaxy, which is itself only one of about a million million galaxies in the observable Universe.”

The Sun is orbited by nine planets with over sixty moons and a great number of asteroids and comets. To paraphrase one commentator, planet Earth is the fifth largest of these planets and once every twenty-four hours it spins on its north-south axis, which is tilted at an angle of 23.45° , and once every year, travelling at about 66,500 miles an hour, it orbits the Sun, ninety-three million miles away.

The other planets which orbit the Sun are Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto. All these except Mercury and Venus have other bodies, known as moons, which orbit around them. Mars has got two, Jupiter sixteen, Saturn twenty-three, Neptune eight and Pluto one.

There are also large numbers of asteroids moving around within the Planetary System. These are small planets revolving around the Sun, mainly between the orbit of Mars and Jupiter.

Other natural objects include thousands of comets, which are often described as dirty snowballs, and millions of loose pieces of matter which burst into flames when they enter the Earth's atmosphere. These are often referred to as meteors or shooting stars.

As noted, all these bodies are dominated by the Sun, whose visible surface has a temperature of 6,000 degrees Celsius, rising to at least fourteen million degrees Celsius at the core. I quote:

The Sun loses four million tons of its mass every second, yet it is so incredibly big that it still has enough fuel to last another 5,000 million years! These figures are really unbelievable, yet the Sun is no more than an average-sized star in the *suburbs* of the Milky Way, which itself is a gigantic galaxy that contains about 100,000 million stars, the nearest of which is about twenty-three million-million miles away.

And that is just one single galaxy! During the last century, very powerful telescopes of astronomers revealed that the known Universe contains more than fifty billion galaxies with each galaxy containing more than two hundred million stars.

In order to write of what lies beyond the Solar System without having pages full of zeros after each number, astronomers speak of distances in terms of *light years*. To quote another expert:

This is the distance travelled by light, at its constant speed of approximately 300,000,000 metres per second, over the time of one year. Using these units, the distance to the nearest star, *proxima centauri* is about four light years.

The Most Important Questions of all

It is very difficult for the mind to conceive of such a vast Universe in which stars extend from our Solar System for millions of trillions of miles in all directions. Yet it is even more difficult to avoid some of the most fundamental questions that the existence of this immense and magnificent Universe raises: What is it that we are seeing? How does it work? When will it end? Why are we here? What is our significance? When and how did it all begin?

If the elements that are in my body came from supernova explosions, and supernova explosions came from stars, and these from clouds of hydrogen gas, then where did the hydrogen come from in the first place?

The search for the answers to these questions has a history which goes back to the beginning of time itself. Modern science believes that the answers can be found in an event which is commonly called the Big Bang.

However, in opposition to the theory of an aimless random explosion, the Bible affirms that God created everything in the

Universe with absolute purpose and intelligence at a definite point in the distant past.

The opening words in the Book of Genesis quoted above could not be more simple or more inclusive, “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*” As the Hebrew language had no single word to describe the Universe, the phrase *hassamayim we’et ha’ares – the heavens and the earth* – was the only one they could use to describe the totality of all Creation or reality.

This can be proven through a linguistic analysis of the words *heaven and earth* used elsewhere in Scripture. For example, in *Genesis 14:19* God is called *Creator of heaven and earth*. In *Jeremiah 23:24* God speaks of himself as filling *heaven and earth* (See also *2 Kings 19:15*; *2 Chronicles 2:12*; *Psalms 115:15, 121:2, 124:8, 134:3, 146:6*; *Isaiah 37:16, 42:5*; *Jeremiah 51:15*).

The *heavens and the earth* is a way of saying everything that exists from the farthest reaches of outer space to the smallest grain of sand on the seashore. All things whether the Solar System, galaxies, nebulae, electromagnetism, gravity, every form of life, every form of matter and energy, and every single law by which nature operates were created by God – not out of any kind of pre-existing substance but out of nothing! As the Scriptures say, He “*Gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.*”

A World with no Beginning?

Up until the 1920s virtually all astronomers believed that science had established that the Universe had existed forever in a static condition. They concluded that if the Universe was eternal, that it was never created, then there was no need for a Creator.

This all changed in 1915 when Albert Einstein published his general theory of relativity, which proved that cosmic space expands. This meant that the Universe was not static or eternal, but that it had an initial beginning.

The discovery was so unpleasant to Dr Einstein that two years later he added a cosmological constant to his equations, a hypothetical force which compensated for the cosmic expansion and he made the Universe static once more.

It was left to two other great scientists, the physicist Alexander Friedman and the cosmologist Georges Le Maitre, to develop the original thrust of Einstein's general Theory of Relativity and they proposed in the 1920s that the Universe was indeed expanding. This fact was to have not only far-reaching consequences on our understanding of the nature of the Universe, but on the claims made in the Bible as to its origin and purpose.

These two men reasoned that if the Universe is expanding over time, as Einstein's original equations indicated, then it had obviously expanded from something. This led them to the conclusion that at some time in the past all the energy in the Universe must have been closely packed together into an infinitely small and infinitely dense point.

This dramatic conclusion – which produced the first version of the universally known Big Bang Theory – proposed that contrary to the static model of the Universe, which had prevailed for centuries, the Universe had a definite starting point and that it has been changing ever since.

Hubble Confirms an Expanding Universe

The next breakthrough, which marked a significant milestone in the advancement of our scientific knowledge of the origin of our Universe, came in the year 1929. Working at the Mount Wilson Observatory in California, the celebrated American astronomer Edwin Hubble came to the conclusion that no matter where you gaze in the sky, all the other galaxies are moving rapidly away from us.

Hubble used the new Hooker telescope to discover that the distant light sources he observed were not individual stars, but were actually astronomical phenomena called nebulae. They were distant galaxies, each containing billions of stars like our own home galaxy – the Milky Way. Dr Hubble discovered that these enormous galaxies were moving away from our galaxy and from each other at tremendous velocities, rather like the expansion of the surface of a balloon.

If you take a balloon, blow it up and mark a number of small galaxies on the surface, and then blow it up some more, you will notice all the galaxies move away from each other. This is like the expansion of the Universe.

That is, the Universe is expanding, not because the galaxies are moving through space, but because the space between the galaxies is expanding. Although Hubble was not familiar with the big bang model, his observations confirmed experimentally that we do not live in a static Universe, but in one that is expanding.

After Albert Einstein had met Le Maitre and Hubble in person at the Mount Wilson observatory, and had personally verified through Hubble's enormous telescope that the galaxies were indeed expanding away from us at tremendous velocities, he realized that the Universe must logically have had a definite beginning in the distant past. Einstein also confessed that adding the cosmological constant to his general Theory of Relativity was one of the biggest "blunders" of his life.

Not all Accept the Cosmic Balloon Discovery

These new discoveries to the nature of our Universe produced a revolution in the thinking of many scientists and forced them to abandon all of their previous atheistic assumptions. The Static Theory was philosophically the most attractive one because it less resembled the Creation account given in the Book of Genesis.

If the Universe had a definite beginning in time – as the evidence revealed it had – then this radical truth strongly implied a supernatural Creator who stands outside of the Universe itself.

A Universe that comes into being, together with time, space, mass and energy obviously does not agree with the philosophy of atheism, or the pantheism philosophy of the New Age movement that teaches God is the Universe. The astronomer Dr Hugh Ross proves this point where he wrote in *The Creator and the Cosmos*:

If time's beginning is concurrent with the beginning of the Universe, as the space-theorem says, then the cause of the Universe must be some entity operating in a time dimension completely independent of and pre-existent to the time dimension of cosmos. This conclusion is powerfully important to our understanding of who God is and who or what God isn't. It tells us that God is not the Universe itself, nor is God contained within the Universe.

Naturally not everyone welcomed the idea that the Universe had a beginning because of the serious religious implications that this truth involved. In 1948, the popular Cambridge scientist Fred Hoyle helped to formulate a contrary theory. Hoyle admitted that the Universe was indeed expanding, but insisted that it was infinite and eternal with no beginning and was creating matter all the time.

This model called the Steady State Theory, meant that instead of matter emanating from a centre in the Universe in the distant past, it was being produced all the time equally throughout space forever.

In other words, the whole cosmic process was kept in balance as matter simply sprang into existence out of nothing at a regular rate to replace the matter which had died through expansion.

However, Hoyle's concept that the Universe had no beginning was said to be more of a philosophical one than anything else. The steady state model that proposed an expanding Universe that was eternal and without beginning or end certainly did away with, and was frequently used against, belief in a Creator.

Nevertheless, an overwhelming majority of scientists came to reject the steady state theory (which caused Hoyle and others to alter their theory to an oscillating Universe) not because of religious reasons, but because of observations made in the 1960s by the physicists Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson, whose discoveries did not fit the steady state model.

More Problems for an Eternal Universe

Another reason why the Steady State Theory was rejected by a number of scientists is because it violates the Laws of Thermodynamics. As we have seen in previous chapters, the First Law of Thermodynamics states that matter and energy can neither be self-created or destroyed.

Matter can be converted into energy and energy into matter, but the sum total remains the same. The Steady State Theory, which proposed that matter was continually created out of nothing, and without cause, clearly violated this Law.

The Second Law of Thermodynamics, which states that in an isolated physical system things become less ordered and more random over time, caused another problem for Hoyle's theory. This Law states that our entire Universe is running down as it decays to a lower order of available energy. Here is how one expert describes it:

As the rotation of the planets and their moons slow down, and as stars and complete galaxies burn themselves out, the matter in the Universe is

becoming more and more disordered as its energy is dissipated.

The logical consequence of this is that the universe cannot be eternal. If it were, the stars would have ceased to shine long ago, and all the energy in our universe would have long since been evenly spread throughout space. At the same time, this suggests that if the universe is becoming less ordered, it must have been more ordered in the past, and have had a highly-ordered beginning.

Despite the evidence that our Universe had an initial beginning, others besides Hoyle have continued to resist the idea and have come up with a whole new range of theoretical alternatives.

One of them is the *oscillating model* in which the Universe is said to expand, collapse back again and repeat the cycle indefinitely. Another suggests that the Universe we see is just one of an infinite number of Universes.

In 1992, Stephen Hawking and cosmologist James Hartle employed what they called “imaginary time” to propose yet another alternative theory. But as Hawking explained in his book, *A Brief History of Time*, this imaginary time is simply a mathematical device which he and Hartle used to construct a model of the Universe.

There is not one single piece of evidence to any of these alternatives to a non-eternal Universe. There is no observational evidence to support any of them and none of them can be experimentally verified.

The general Theory of Relativity, the Laws of Thermodynamics, and the astronomical observations made by Edwin Hubble, Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson all give clear evidence which points to a Universe that had a definite beginning in the past and is changing over time as the prophet Isaiah announced almost three thousand years ago:

He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in.

(Isaiah 40:22-23)

It is I who made the earth and created mankind upon it. My own hand stretched out the heavens; I marshalled their starry host.

(Isaiah 45:12-13)

Big Bang and Here We Are?

The conventional wisdom today is that at some point between ten and twenty billion years ago our Universe started by means of a big bang. According to this theory, everything in the Universe, all the energy and matter that would be in the billions of stars and the billions of galaxies, was concentrated in a tiny, infinitely hot and dense point, commonly defined as a *singularity*.

It was so small that it could pass through the eye of a needle. From that point the singularity expanded very violently and rapidly in all directions, spreading out the energy and space itself as it went along.

A large number of secular scientists today subscribe to one form or another of the Big Bang Theory. The model most widely held is the inflationary version. This says that the early Universe went through a period of very rapid expansion, and inflated at an increasing rate rather than the decreasing rate we observe today. Scientists say that this explains how the force of gravity was able to form stars, galaxies and planets.

As stated previously, it is also believed that the Universe did not expand into existing space after the big bang, but it was space itself that expanded outwards.

The question that we must ask ourselves now is how can we know that all this is true? Obviously, scientists only appeared on the scene “fourteen billion years” after the initial big bang (if we are to agree with the big bang time scale), never mind the first few seconds! One of the difficulties we encounter when we consider the question of origins is that we are confronted with the limitations of scientific inquiry. I quote:

By definition, empirical science is the study of things in our Universe that can be measured and tested in a repeatable way by other scientists. But if an independent scientist in another laboratory cannot reproduce an experiment, then this experiment fails the universal scientific standard of repeatability.

The creation of our Universe is clearly a unique one time only event that cannot be repeated. Therefore, it is a real challenge for science to ever positively and authoritatively describe the process by which our Universe and life itself originally came into existence.

Big Bang Under Revision

Despite all the apparent confirmations of the current big bang model, and the fact that it seems to work in explaining many features of the origin of the Universe, it now seems that the theory – only a few decades old – is in need of further examination, because the sums simply do not add up.

For example, if the conventional model of the Universe is true, then there is a vast amount of both matter and energy missing. Astronomers estimate that as much as 90% of the Universe could be made up of invisible dark matter and dark energy, which means that it is energy and matter that cannot be seen or detected in any of its usual forms.

In the 1930s the Swiss-American astronomer Fritz Zwicky noted that a mysterious invisible force appeared to be preventing some galaxies from taking part in the expansion of the Universe and proposed that this force was the gravity of so-called *dark matter* in and around galaxies.

It is important to emphasize that many calculations about the big bang rely on estimates about the amount and content of this dark matter; and if the present estimates changed by even 10% the big bang equations would produce a Universe much different from the one we have.

In fact, Dr Stephen Hawking says it would disprove the idea altogether. Theories of the origin, size and eventual end of our Universe depend a lot on this hypothetical dark matter, but what it is and if it exists at all remains to be seen.

The Finely Tuned Universe Problem

The second unanswered question for the Big Bang Theory is how the Universe came to be so finely tuned in so many respects. It teaches that the entire Universe came into being some fourteen billion years ago by a natural event. But this raises the important question as to how a random explosion could produce the elegant and dependable laws of nature that govern our Universe, some of which we addressed in the previous chapter of this book. To quote another example, the Big Bang Theory is unable to answer the question as to why the Universe is so near the critical rate of expansion. I like this explanation:

At the moment of Creation God caused our Universe, including space, energy and matter, to begin expanding at an extraordinary rate, which continues to this day. He also created the gravitation force to be precisely balanced with a marvellous precision to match the Universe's powerful expansion force. The

Creator used the force of gravity to cause matter to combine together to form galaxies and stars, while the expansion of space caused the Universe to continue to grow in size and not collapse back upon itself.

How precisely did the expansion speed of the expanding space need to be balanced against the force of gravity? These two fundamental forces needed to be balanced to an astonishing level of precision that totally defies the odds of probability! To see what this means Dr David Wilkinson, a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society, tell us to:

Imagine you had a machine which made universes. On this machine you would have two dials. One dial would control the expansion force of the Big Bang. The other would control gravity, the force which pulls everything back together. Set the dials to whatever you wanted and out would come a universe. The trouble is you would find it to be a very boring experiment!

After a few billion attempts, you would begin to realize that in order to get a universe which would produce carbon-based life those two dials need to be set quite precisely. If you get the gravitational force too high, then the universe would appear but within a microsecond, gravity would pull everything back together into the opposite of a Big Bang, a Big Crunch!

If you get the expansion rate too high, then the Universe would expand at such a rate that gravity would be unable to form stars and galaxies. In fact, in order to get structure within the Universe these dials

need to be balanced to within 1 part in 10^{60} (1 followed by 60 zeros).

In Paul Davies' words, that is the same accuracy as shooting at a target one centimetre square on the other side of the Universe – and hitting it! Why is it that early in the expansion, the expansion force of the Big Bang was balanced so carefully with the gravitational force?

The respected Professor of theoretical physics Dr Paul Davies calculated how fine-tuned the speed of expansion after the initial moment of Creation was and reached this remarkable conclusion:

Careful measurement puts the rate of expansion very close to a critical value at which the Universe will just escape its own gravity and expand forever. A little slower and the cosmos would collapse, a little faster and the cosmic material would have long ago completely dispersed.

It is interesting to ask precisely how delicately the rate of expansion has been “fine-tuned” to fall on this narrow dividing line between two catastrophes. If at time I S (by which time the pattern of expansion was already firmly established) the expansion rate had differed from its actual value by more than 10^{18} (1 followed by 18 zeros), it would have been sufficient to throw the delicate balance out.

The explosive vigour of the Universe is thus matched with almost unbelievable accuracy to its gravitating power. The big bang was not, evidently, any old bang, but an explosion of exquisitely arranged magnitude.

Similarly, Stephen Hawking admitted that, “The odds against a Universe like ours emerging out of something like the big bang are enormous. In *A Brief History of Time* he stated:

Why did the Universe start out with so nearly the critical rate of expansion that separates models (of the Universe) that re-collapse from those that go on expanding forever, so that even now, ten thousand million years later, it is still expanding at nearly the critical rate?

If the rate of expansion one second after the Big Bang had been smaller by even one part in a hundred thousand million-million, the Universe would have re-collapsed before it ever reached its present state.

Richard Dawkins also recognized this problem, and in his book, *The God Delusion*, he agrees that: “If the laws and constants of physics had been even slightly different, the Universe would have developed in such a way that life would have been impossible.”

However, having ruled out the intervention of God, Dawkins concedes that the creation of the Universe cannot have just happened, but that perhaps the reason it did is that there were lots of attempts.

In other words, there could have been many instances of the Universe expanding and contracting until it got to exactly the right conditions, but Dawkins says that science has now discounted that idea.

The other possibility he suggests is that there are billions of Universes, and it just happens that the one we can observe has got it exactly right. But if Dawkins chooses the multiverse hypothesis, what is the evidence to support it? It is a theory based on absolute blind faith!

As we have just seen, many secular scientists have admitted that even infinitesimally small differences in the original explosion that cosmologists see as the starting point of our Universe would have resulted in a world where conscious life would not have occurred. Yet all around us we witness the most precise and complex development of a Universe of incredibly intricate designs, that our scientists have only recently discovered. The idea of a natural big bang explosion producing such order without the intervention of a supernatural Designer is – as the Oxford Professor of mathematics Sir Roger Penrose says – completely absurd. As we all know a random explosion would merely throw things apart, but, quite mysteriously, the big bang has produced the opposite effect.

The Excess of Matter over Antimatter Problem

Another challenge to the Big Bang Theory is the slight excess of matter over antimatter. Remember the theory supposes that matter – hydrogen and helium gas – was created from energy as the Universe expanded. But experimental physics tells us that whenever matter is created from energy, such a reaction also produces antimatter. I quote:

Antimatter has similar properties to matter, except the charges of the particles are reversed. So whereas a proton has a positive charge, an antiproton has a negative charge. Any reaction where energy is transformed into matter produces an exact equal amount of antimatter, and there are no known exceptions.

This means the big bang should have produced exact equal amounts of matter and antimatter, and that should be what we

observe today. But the Universe is comprised almost entirely of matter, with only traces of antimatter anywhere.

This problem for the Big Bang Theory is more consistent with the biblical Creation account which says that God created everything in the Universe with absolute purpose and divine intelligence. Our Creator created the Universe to be essentially matter only and it is just as well that He did.

As astrophysicist George Smoot pointed out in *Wrinkles in Time*, had the Universe come into existence with equal amounts of matter and antimatter, a vast annihilation event would have occurred, leaving only very few particles of matter and antimatter in scattered isolated remnants. To put this more clearly, our Universe as we know it would not exist!

A Model, Not a Verifiable Theory

It is important to point out here that many other key components quoted in the big bang model of the Universe – and there are quite a few – are no more than estimations. However, the small example of the unanswered questions we have just mentioned above should be sufficient to remind us that, for all its popularity in certain circles, and for all the apparent confirmations and claims made on its behalf, it constitutes a model and not a verifiable theory.

The earliest moment of the Universe's formation, of which scientists claim to have experimental verification, according to their estimation, is some three-hundred thousand years after the Big Bang, when the radiation released by the formation of the first atoms was detected by the COBE Satellite.

In 1992 the newspapers, television and radios went wild when the NASA Space Probe sent back pictures of the first ripples in the Universe. The whole story revolved around data collected by a satellite called COBE – the cosmic background explorer.

The ripples that COBE discovered were taken as evidence of the seeds from which galaxies had formed after the Big Bang. When the first atoms were formed, a burst of radiation, released in all directions, created a snapshot of how matter was distributed in the early Universe.

The discovery was made by George Smoot and a team of scientists from Berkeley University, California, who received international stardom overnight and was offered two million dollars to write a book on the discovery.

The importance of this discovery was that it seemed to slot perfectly into the current Big Bang Theory, which says that the Universe expanded from a size small enough to fit through the eye of a needle to its present size over billions of years.

But in spite of all the excitement and publicity the COBE Satellite caused, many of its conclusions have occasioned hot dispute among scientists, and everything thought to have happened before that time, and especially in the initial moments is pure speculation and mathematical conjecture. As Edgar Andrews, Emeritus Professor of Materials Science at the University of London, said in *God Science and Evolution*:

No matter how close to the instant of origin one may be able to press the scientific model of the cosmos, it remains impossible for such an explanation to be applied at or before the zero-time point. Thus, it follows that science, even at its most speculative, must stop short of offering any explanation or even description of the actual event of origin.

If this is the case, as Professor Andrews and many others in the scientific field openly admit, then it would be wise for all of us to take heed to the humble and personal conviction of Albert Einstein when he said:

Everyone who is seriously interested in the pursuit of science becomes convinced that a spirit is manifest in the laws of the Universe – a spirit vastly superior to man, and one in the face of which our modest powers must feel humble.

Big Bang Also Abandoned

With all the problems listed above, as well as others too numerous and technical to mention in detail here, quite a few secular astronomers – and Christians alike – are beginning to abandon the Big Bang Theory altogether. Although it is still the dominant model at present, an increasing number of physicists and astronomers have realized that it is simply not a good explanation of how the Universe began.

In the May 2004 issue of *New Scientist* an open letter appeared to the scientific community written mainly by secular scientists who challenge the model. Among other things, these scientists stated:

The big bang today relies on a growing number of hypothetical entities, things that we have never observed – inflation, dark matter and dark energy are the most prominent examples. Without them, there would be a fatal contradiction between the observations made by astronomers and the predictions of the big bang theory.

In no other fields of physics would this continual recourse to new hypothetical objects be accepted as a way of bridging the gap between theory and observation. It would, at least, raise serious questions about the validity of the underlying theory.

This statement has been signed by hundreds of other scientists and professors at various other institutions since its first publication. Despite all of the billions of dollars – and scientists too – that society has given to astronomers in the quest as to the origins of our Universe, scientists have failed to come up with a credible theory to account for its existence. In a 1980 publication of *New Scientist* the astronomer Professor Herman Bondi declared:

As an erstwhile cosmologist, I speak with feeling of the fact that theories of the origin of the Universe have been disproved by present day empirical evidence as have various theories of the origin of the solar system.

In *The Earth: Its Origin, History and Physical Constitution*, the great astronomer Sir Henry Jeffreys wrote:

I think that all suggested accounts of the origin of the solar system are subject to serious objections. The conclusion in the present state of the subject would be that the system cannot exist.

Here Professor Jeffreys admits that none of the atheistic theories can account for the Universe as it exists. Perhaps it would be better for us to return to the first words recorded by Moses in the Book of Genesis!

Those Things Science Cannot Explain

To pull together the main points of this chapter we have shown that the First and Second Laws of Thermodynamics proves that the Universe could not have produced itself, but that it had an initial beginning. We have also shown that there are many

unanswered questions and flaws in the Big Bang Theory and that many scientists no longer accept it as a good explanation of how our Universe began.

But even if we were to accept the fact that the Universe as we know it evolved in some incomprehensible way over billions of years, we are still faced with many questions: Where did the necessary energy come from to begin with? What was the source of such energy? Did anything exist before time and space? How did the laws of nature come about? And, most importantly, why is there something rather than nothing; why does the Universe go to the bother of existing?

If an infinite and omnipotent Designer – whose existence explains why science can explain what it can explain, and why it cannot explain everything – is ruled out, then science is left at the crossroads.

One reason for this is because science cannot go any further back than the moment at which the laws on which it leans began to operate. Fortunately for the general public, most scientists honestly admit the limitations of what science can explain in this area. The Danish physicist Niels Bohr, who pioneered quantum mechanics, wrote:

It is wrong to think that the task of physics is to find out how nature is. Physics concerns what we can say about nature... Our task is not to penetrate into the essence of things, the meaning of which we don't know anyway, but rather to develop concepts which allow us to talk in a productive way about phenomena in nature.

Here Dr Bohr points out that a scientist's task is to describe the Universe around us using the mathematical laws of physics. But science is limited to explain *why* the Universe exists or *why* these laws exist, and *why* the Universe follows these particular laws.

In 1997 the BBC ran a six-part series, entitled *Stephen Hawking's Universe*, in which the physicist enthusiastically pursued the idea of a “*theory of everything*,” a total explanation of the Universe that could be expressed in a single line of mathematics.

And in *A Brief History of Time* Hawking speaks about a Universe without boundaries of space and time and about “*imaginary time*.” However, he finishes his book with these words:

What is it that breathes fire into the equations and makes a Universe for them to describe? The usual approach of science of constructing a mathematical model cannot answer the question of why there should be a Universe for the model to describe. Why does the Universe go to all the bother of existing?

With a similar view to Professor Hawking, the astronomer Sir Martin Rees wrote in his book, *Just Six Numbers*, the following:

Theorists may someday be able to write down fundamental equations governing physical reality. But physics can never explain what breathes fire into the equations, and actualizes them in a real cosmos. The fundamental question of “Why is there something rather than nothing?” remains the province of the philosophers.

If this is the case, then every human being must be a philosopher, because the question as to why the Universe and life itself exists remains the most important and fundamental question for all of us. Every man, woman and child longs to know where we come from and why we are here. Even the hard-core atheist Bertrand Russell self-admitted:

The centre of me is always and eternally a terrible pain – a curious wild pain – a searching for something beyond what the world contains, something transfigured and infinite... I do not find it, I do not think it is to be found, but the love of it is my love.

The only reasonable answer to this question – that is compatible with science and truly satisfying to the soul of each individual – is that there is an infinite, transcendent and omnipotent God, who created the heavens, the Earth and every living creature that breathes upon it!

This is the only answer to what we all feel and know deep inside of us; that however vast the Universe may be, and however small and insignificant we may seem to be in it, there is a divine meaning and purpose to our existence and that meaning and purpose lies in the hands of our Creator!

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?

(Psalm 8:3-5)

Why Not God?

Some people may dismiss all of this as sheer wishful thinking. But if our extremely complex, and incredibly ordered Universe is not the result of natural processes – as the recent scientific discoveries powerfully indicate – why can it not be the result of something supernatural?

The fact that in human beings matter has intelligence, reason, logic, a sense between right and wrong, the capacity to create and, most importantly, an insatiable hunger for meaning and purpose,

is in itself a sufficient indication that the Universe has a transcendent and personal origin and significance.

Now there are some who will obviously ask the question, “Who made God?” To such a question the simple answer is, “Nobody.” God is not a Being like all other beings in the Universe that demand a Maker. God’s existence is un-derived and independent. The Bible speaks of Him as the eternal God, who is *from everlasting to everlasting*, and God revealed Himself to Moses as *I Am*. There was never a time when He did not exist and there will never be a time when He will cease to exist.

Moreover, such a question implies that there must be someone or something greater than God, but this only pushes the question further back. Yet however far back we choose to go, we cannot deny the need for an uncreated Creator.

Towards the end of *A Brief History of Time* Stephen Hawking goes on to say that if we should ever discover why human beings and the Universe itself exist then, “It would be the ultimate triumph of reason, for then we would know the mind of God.” The Book of Revelation provides the precise answer to his question:

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.

(Revelation 4:11)

This verse tells us that nothing in all Creation needs any justification other than the fact that in His infinite wisdom God willed it to be that way, and in His infinite power He brought everything into being. At the end of the Creation narrative in Genesis we are told that God saw everything that He had made and it was very good.

God called Creation very good not only because He made it, but because the perfect harmony and beauty that the Universe displayed conformed to His wishes and reflected His perfect and beautiful nature.

As we have powerfully demonstrated in the previous chapters, a growing number of scientists in many disciplines are turning in this direction, and are being drawn to the conclusion that divine intelligence preceded and planned the natural Universe and the laws by which it is governed, “*So that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.*”

22

THE AGE OF PLANET EARTH

For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day.

(Exodus 20:11)

Over the centuries there have been various interpretations among Christians and biblical scholars when it comes to relating the time scale of Genesis chapter one with the discoveries of modern science. During the last two-hundred years these interpretations have changed, or one interpretation has gained more support over the others.

In order to accommodate the geological ages and the time required for the Theory of Evolution, many Church leaders of the nineteenth and early twentieth century accepted the idea of an *old Earth*, and tried to fit millions of years into the Book of Genesis, by suggesting that the days of Creation in the opening chapters of the Bible were not literal, but figurative for very long ages.

So by the early twentieth century a large part of the Body of Christ adopted the popular belief that the days of Creation were *age days* and the Earth in which we live was billions of years in the making.

These Church leaders quickly compromised the plain teaching of Scripture and used various theories like the *Day-Age View*, the *Gap Theory*, the *1,000 year Day Theory*, and the *Local Flood View* to fit the discoveries of science into God's Word, not knowing that the idea of long ages for Earth's history was developed by geologists whose ideas about the Earth emerged from naturalistic atheistic assumptions, and not from scientific observation.

Only in the last few decades has there been a great upsurge among Christians, and a growing number of scientists, who have returned to the traditional view and interpret the days of Creation in Genesis to be solar days of twenty-four hours. This is because they see this view to be the only one true to Scripture, and the view that fits the scientific evidence far better than the old Earth evolutionary theory.

Origins of Old Earth View

Today, most people around the world take for granted that the Universe and planet Earth are billions of years old. Prior to the 1700s very few people believed in an old Earth. The universal belief among Christians at that time was that God created the world in six literal days and later destroyed the Earth with every living creature upon it by means of a global Flood.

The Dutch anatomist and geologist Niels Steensen was one of the most important geological thinkers of the early seventeenth century. He established the principle of *superposition*, namely that sedimentary rock layers are deposited in a successive horizontal fashion, so that a lower stratum was deposited before the one above it. Steensen believed that the Earth was roughly about 6,000 years old and that the fossil-bearing rock strata were deposited by Noah's Flood.

Over the next century several authors, including the English geologist John Woodward, and the German geologist Johann Lehmann, wrote some books reinforcing Steensen's view. But in the last decades of the eighteenth century the idea of an old Earth began to take hold in geology when men like Abraham Werner, James Hutton, William Smith and George Cuvier used *their* interpretations of geology as the standard to interpret Earth's history.

These men rejected the biblical account of the universal Flood and attributed the rock strata record to natural processes occurring over long periods of time. Although some of them believed in multiple catastrophes, separated by long periods of time, the uniformitarian concept had by that time become the ruling dogma for geologists.

Idea of Universal Flood Dies out Completely

The last massive blow to the catastrophic view came in the middle of the eighteenth century, when Charles Lyell published his very influential book, *Principles of Geology*, a work built upon the ideas of James Hutton. In his work Lyell established what came to be known as the *Uniformitarian Principle*, which states that only present-day processes of geological change, at present-day rates of intensity and magnitude, should be used to interpret the rock record of past geological activity.

In other words, Lyell stated that geological processes of change have been uniform throughout the history of our Earth. By explaining the whole rock record to slow gradual processes, he reduced the global Flood of the Bible to a non-event.

Biologists Influenced by Uniformitarian Ideas

Later Charles Darwin, who was a good friend of Charles Lyell, along with other biologists, applied these slow and gradual uniformitarian processes to biology and developed his Theory of Evolution. Together these geologists and biologists used the Uniformitarian Theory to date the Earth's rocks and biological life and added millions of years to Earth's history.

By the end of the nineteenth century the age of the Earth was considered to be hundreds of millions of years old. Radiometric dating methods were later introduced, and over the course of time the Earth's age expanded to billions of years in the making.

These anti-biblical principles dominated geology right up to the 1970s until men like the prominent British geologist Derek Ager challenged the assumptions made by Lyell and his predecessors. The research and observations of these modern geologists greatly reduced the millions of years involved for the formation of the many geological deposits.

They argued that much of the rock records reveal evidence of rapid catastrophic erosion, or sedimentation, as opposed to long uniformitarian processes.

What Are Sedimentary Rocks?

The sedimentary rocks are the fossil-bearing rocks and are inextricably linked to the Theory of Evolution. Sedimentary rocks generally consist of sediment like mud, sand or gravel that has been turned into rock. Sedimentary rock is usually formed under water and is easy to recognize due to its many layers.

A good example of this would be the layered rocks of the Grand Canyon. There are a lot of fossils around today, which means a lot of plants and animals died and left their fossilized remains in these sedimentary rock layers.

Evolutionists and most evolutionary geologists would have us believe that the formation of these rocks happened over millions of years, during which animals lived, died, and then were occasionally buried and fossilized.

When these fossilized animals and plants are found in the Earth's rock sequence in a particular order of appearance, such as invertebrates in lower layers, followed progressively upward by fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals, for many this is considered convincing proof for the Theory of Evolution. But what most people are unaware of is that most rock layers are dated by the fossils they contain, and the fossils are dated by guessing their age based on the Theory of Evolution.

How Sedimentary Rocks Are Dated

To date the rock layers scientists will choose a special reference fossil called an *index fossil* and then assume, based on the phylogenetic tree, that the *simple* index fossils were the oldest. Finding one of these *oldest* index fossils in a layer identifies that layer as the oldest. They then assign a date to that rock layer based on the Theory of Evolution and record that date on their geologic time scale.

This process is continued with the more complex index fossils, assigning each increase in complexity to a younger rock layer until they complete filling out the geologic time scale. Some fossils like clams, however, are found in all strata, which makes it difficult to decide which are millions of years old and which are not.

Now herein lies the problem with this method: Although the rock layers of the Earth were dated using index fossils, the index fossils were dated by guessing their age based on the Theory of Evolution. This, as many other scientists have also argued, is not a valid application of the scientific method. But when questioned about it many palaeontologists will tell you that they accurately date the fossil using the date of the rock layer in which it was found.

This means they assigned a date to the fossil, then dated the layer of earth which contained that fossil, and so concluded that they knew the age of the fossil because they knew the date of the layer. This method is known as *circular reasoning*.

Assistant professor at Kansas State University, Professor Ronald West, wrote an article in the scientific journal *Compass* in 1968 where he pointed out the inconsistencies of using the Theory of Evolution to interpret the fossil record. He wrote:

Contrary to what most scientists write, the fossil record does not support the Darwinian theory of evolution because it is this theory which we use to interpret the fossil record. By doing so we are guilty of circular reasoning if we then say the fossil record supports this theory.

The 1954 edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* agreed with Professor West:

It cannot be denied that from a strictly philosophical standpoint geologists are here arguing in a circle. The succession of organisms has been determined by a study of their remains embedded in the rocks, and the relative ages of the rocks are determined by the remains of organisms that they contain. This fact alone means that the geologic column cannot rightly be used to prove a vast age for the Earth, any more than it can be used as conclusive evidence for the Theory of Evolution.

Rock Layers Deposited Over a Number of Days

When sediments turn into rock or becomes hard, we say it has become *lithified*. Experts say this occurs during sediment compaction, which drives out the water and glues together the sedimentary grains, and that this process is not time dependent, but rather depends on whether the rock becomes compacted or not, and whether a source of cement is present, usually a mineral like calcite or quartz. If such conditions are met, sediments can be turned rapidly into rock.

Many such examples of rock forming rapidly have indeed been reported. In May 1980 one of the most devastating volcanic eruptions of modern times took place in Washington State USA.

The eruption blew out the entire north face of Mount St. Helen's with a force equal to thousands of atomic bombs.

The blast completely flattened over 500 square kilometres of forest and tore the foliage and branches from trees, even uprooting their heavy trunks. Geologist Dr Stephen Austin, who investigated the devastating eruption of Mount St. Helens, showed that thousands of layers of rock were deposited over a number of days rather than being laid down gradually over geologic ages of billions of years.

This great eruption of Mount St. Helens, and the events which it set in motion, have done much to confirm the speculation that the geological formation of the Earth does not have to be the result of slow uniformitarian processes, but rather of a sudden and worldwide catastrophe.

Evidence for Global Flood Shocks Geologists

In the last forty years geologists have begun to re-examine the role of catastrophe in the history of the Earth. They admit that the vast ages of time required for the formation of the Earth's rock layers are unproven, being based on assumptions about how quickly sedimentary rock layers were deposited in the unobserved past. Biologist and palaeontologist Leonard Brand wrote in *Geoscience Reports*:

The science of geology has abandoned Lyell's rigid uniformitarian view, and is recognizing the important role of catastrophe in Earth's history.

The strongest evidence that the Earth had a catastrophic past comes ironically from the fossils themselves. In today's conditions fossilisation is a rare event. It is supposed to occur when a living organism, whether a leaf of a tree, a fish or a dog, dies and falls to the ground.

Where it falls, either on dry land or into water, it is slowly buried in wind or water borne sediment. But this rarely happens, because as soon as the organism dies, the natural process of decomposition immediately sets in, or they would be eaten by other animals and blown around by the wind and rain until a complete skeleton was no longer available.

On the contrary, the impeccable state of preservation of most fossils we have today shows that these animals and plants were buried very rapidly and virtually alive by vast amounts of sediments before decay could destroy any details of their appearance and anatomy.

Such fossilization under present-day conditions is exceedingly rare, so evolutionary geologists who maintain that the present is the key to the past have difficulty in explaining how the vast number of fossils in the geologic record could have formed.

The only answer at hand is the global destruction of all the pre-Flood animals and plants brought about by the year-long Flood described in the Book of Genesis, though some fossils may also have been formed since the Flood due to localized residual catastrophic events.

Not only did the animals and plants have to be buried rapidly by huge masses of water-transported sediments in order to be fossilized, the vertical order of burial is also consistent with the biblical Flood.

The first fossils in the record are of marine animals; and it is only higher in the strata that fossils of land animals appear. This is because the Flood began in the ocean basins, and the ocean waters then flooded the continents. Following this, the flood-gates of heaven were opened which may have caused volcanism and earth-movement.

If most sedimentary rock layers were deposited rapidly over a short period of time, the animals and plants buried and fossilized in those rock layers may well have all lived at about the same time and then were rapidly buried progressively and sequentially.

Noah's Flood Is the Best Alternative

In light of the evidence at hand many modern geologists now realize that the rock layers contain evidence of rapid accumulation, and that catastrophic processes, as opposed to the uniformitarian view, could just as easily have formed many parts of the geologic record that we see today.

But if we are looking for a worldwide catastrophe to account for the geological record of Earth's history, it would be impossible to discredit the One which is remembered by the whole human race and of which there are accounts in many of the world's historical records.

The well-known anthropologist Sir James Frazer collected over a hundred traditions of a Universal Flood in the folklore of peoples from every continent on the Earth. As we saw in chapter three, there are also many written accounts of a Universal Flood in the ancient Sumerian, Babylonian and Jewish literature. Many of these have been uncovered recently through the many fantastic archaeological excavations in the ancient Middle East.

Signs of Rapid Burial

Not only does the biblical Flood explain the burial in water-borne sediment of so many fish, animals and plants, it also accounts for the accumulation of hundreds of fossils in animal graveyards throughout the world.

There are very extensive fossil-bearing rocks in North-Eastern Brazil known as the *Santana Formation*, which contain many of the best-preserved fossils we have today. Of these, the fish are the most extraordinary, as the evidence shows they were all buried quite rapidly before decomposition could set in.

Many of the fossils still have their scales intact, while others still maintain their dimensional form, with soft tissues and petrified eyeballs, just as they were at the moment of death. When a fish dies, one of the first indications of decay is the loss of scales.

These fossils of the Santana Formation are a good indication of the extreme rapidity of their burial.

Woolly Mammoths Found Frozen in Siberia!

The permafrost of Siberia, on the Liakhov Islands of Northern Siberia, contains other astonishing animal graveyards. Thousands of woolly mammoths are frozen in the ground as if in some gigantic deep freeze.

Some are found complete with flesh, skin and hair, and even with undigested food in their stomachs. More astonishing still, they are found alongside woolly rhinoceros, musk, ox, saiga, antelope, reindeer, tiger, bear and horse, creatures which we would not expect to find in the frozen wastes of Siberia.

One commentator says, "Many of these were found when the melting ice of Siberia poured out their remains, including a whole woolly elephant preserved fresh in the ice with the grass it was eating still green in its mouth." These creatures did not die in their beds nor were they eaten by predators. They were overtaken by a sudden catastrophe.

Mammoth Bones Discovered in Columbia

Researchers say that the mammoth bones which were discovered at a construction site on Ironton Drive in West Richland are one of the best archaeological finds ever discovered in Mid-Columbia. These massive bones were excavated and examined by the head of an archaeology team of a Washington university. The Columbian Newspaper recorded the interview:

Martin, head of a university of a Washington archaeology team brought in to examine and excavate the huge bones... *"We can't say for sure how old they are until we get them back to the*

laboratory... This is one of the best finds we've had. The thing is very well preserved. I'm guessing it's a mammoth." Martin called the site very productive. "The neat thing about this site is, beside the mammoths, we are finding rodents, frogs, birds, rabbits and other small mammals all close together. Often a find is spread out all over."

He said the area of Ironton Drive, one mile from downtown West Richland, was once a flood plain of the Yakima or Columbia River. *"There is some reason that we are finding all the bones together"* he said. *"Somehow this area became a death trap for all of them, probably due to a flood."*

Further Proof of Widespread Catastrophe

The Old Red Sandstone, which covers much of Scotland, also contains fossils of thousands of fish buried in their rocks. The self-taught geologist and writer Hugh Miller investigated them in the nineteenth century and concluded that these fish did not die a natural death; they were overcome by a widespread catastrophe. He reported:

The remains exhibit unequivocal marks of violent death. The figures are contorted, contracted, curved; the tail in many instances is bent round to the head; the spines stick out, the fins are spread to the full, as in fish that die in convulsions.

The attitudes of all the fish fossils are attitudes of fear, anger and pain. The remains too, appear to have suffered nothing from the after-attacks of predaceous fishes... The record is one of destruction at once, widespread and total.

Evidence reveals that the fish of the Santana Formation and the Old Red Sandstone were overwhelmed in very large numbers by a sudden catastrophe that killed them and buried them alive very rapidly. Among these fossilized fish there are several which were caught during their dinner, some with a smaller fish halfway down their throat. Whatever happened to them was a widespread and total catastrophe comparable to nothing we see today.

In the Grand Canyon in Arizona there is a stratum of rock known as the *Redwall Limestone*. Geologists reckon that such a limestone would be deposited at the rate of about 30 centimetres per 1,000 years. Not so long ago it was discovered that the Redwall Limestone contains billions of nautiloids with a hard, straight shell, sometimes 60 centimetres long. “Judging from the way that these creatures lie,” said one expert, “It is plain that they were buried instantaneously in a fast-moving underwater slurry. These rocks would appear to have been deposited in hours rather than thousands of years.”

Heaps of Dinosaur Bones Puzzle Palaeontologists

The extinction of the Dinosaurs has been very puzzling to palaeontologists in their study of the fossil record. According to their timescale the dinosaurs died out about 65 million years ago, due to a disruption of the Earth’s climate caused by the impact of a giant meteorite.

The Jurassic Morrison Formation in Utah and Colorado contains a mass of bones, representing over 300 species of dinosaurs along with some mammals. One report says what is most unusual about these bones is that they are collected together in big fossilized heaps, and not scattered about over the area covered by the rock formation. It appears that they also were brought to their final destination by water and were killed all at once with their bones collected together.

Fossilized Trees Span Multiple Layers

The evidence for a global catastrophe is no less compelling when we turn to the remains of fossilized plants. Fossil trees are often found in an upright position, where a single fossil occupies many geologic layers at the same time. These are referred to as *polystrate fossil trees*.

It appears very unlikely that these trees died and remained partly buried for millions of years until they became completely buried and fossilized. A flood, which would cause massive amounts of earth movement, is a much better explanation for the unique placement of these fossilized trees and animals that are around the globe today. As another expert in the field pointed out:

Trees broken off or uprooted during a flood would float until they became water-logged. Then the denser root end of some of the trees would sink lower in the water, placing them in an upright position. Later, after completely sinking, the now upright trees would be buried in sediment, much like what happened to many trees when Mount St. Helen's erupted. Anyone scuba diving in Spirit Lake today can find many half-buried upright trees like these.

These fossils, and others that span multiple layers, reject and disprove the concept that geologic layers always represent long periods of time. Therefore, dating fossils by the layer of earth they are found in to support the Theory of Evolution is not valid. We are not denying the fact that rock layers can be laid down over long periods, but that the existence of such layers in the earth does not prove the passage of any specific time. The eruption of Mount St. Helens and the chain of events which it set in motion have done much to confirm this point of view.

Biblical Flood Explains Other Geological Facts

We have seen that the geological formation of the Earth is not necessarily the result of slow uniformitarian processes, but could also be the result of a sudden and worldwide catastrophe. We have seen that the deposition of sedimentary rocks can take place in a matter of days as opposed to millions of years.

And we have seen how the fossil record shows how many of the marine organisms and land-dwelling creatures perished due to a global catastrophe when the waters transported their bodies and bones from all over the Earth to their final destination as the Flood waters receded.

We can also conclude that the sequence in which the different classes of animals are found in the fossil record is due to their location in the ecology of the Earth before the Flood, and in their mobility and behaviour during the Flood, and not in the sequence of their evolution, as is supposed.

Moreover, the Flood alone explains the accumulation of the many fossils in graveyards that are found around the world today. Indeed, the many geological facts which are inexplicable from a uniformitarian point of view can only be explained by the words recorded in the Old Testament:

The waters swelled so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered; the waters swelled above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits deep. And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, domestic animals, wild animals, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth and all human beings; everything on dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died.

(Genesis 7:19-23)

Why Does It Matter?

The Word of God must be the final authority on all matters about which it speaks, whether it is to do with history, archaeology, science or spiritual issues. Once Christian leaders give way to the secular view that the Genesis account of Creation is not true literal history, but is to be interpreted to fit the latest scientific facts, they leave the way open for this to be done throughout the whole of Scripture.

If the opening chapters of Genesis are not historical, the whole of the Bible is undermined, especially its teaching on Judgement, Original Sin and Salvation, which is the very foundation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the first chapter of the Bible we read that when God finished Creation on the sixth day, He called everything “*very good.*” But when we compromise on the historic value of the Creation account in Genesis, by adding millions of years to Earth’s history, we are forced to believe that death and disease were part of God’s Creation before Adam sinned, as the alleged millions of years of Earth’s history in the fossil record shows evidence of animals dying from disease and violence before man appears on the scene, and before sin and the curse.

If we accept millions of animal deaths and thorns before the fall of man, we undermine the character of God and totally contradict and destroy the Bible’s teaching on the full redemptive work of Christ.

The prominent humanist Thomas Huxley pointed this out when he vehemently attacked those who tried to re-interpret Scripture to fit the popular scientific thinking of his day. He argued that if we are to consider the New Testament seriously, we must believe the accounts in the Book of Genesis to be historical truth.

Huxley was convinced that Darwin’s Theory of Evolution had proven that one could not intelligently accept the Genesis account of Creation and the Flood as historical truth, so when people tried

to harmonize evolutionary ideas with Scripture, and re-interpret it, he quickly attacked their position.

To substantiate his claims, Huxley pointed out that various doctrines in the New Testament Gospels and Epistles are dependent on the historical reliability of the Creation account in the Book of Genesis, including Paul's teaching on the doctrine of sin, Christ's teaching on marriage and His warning of future judgement.

Huxley's point was that the religious leaders of his day had no choice but to accept the evolutionary theory and millions of years for Creation, but for them to be consistent they would have to reject the Bible as a whole.

How the hearts of those Christian leaders of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, who held on to a literal reading of Scripture in the face of such strong, but false, arguments, would have rejoiced to witness the compelling evidence that scientists of the twenty-first century have produced.

At the expense of their intellectual integrity, these churchmen held to a literal reading of the Creation account in the Book of Genesis and insisted that if the Bible said it was true, then it was, whatever evidence to the contrary science may produce.

The Perfect New World

The sin of Adam and Eve brought sickness, suffering and death into the perfect world that God originally intended for man to enjoy. As a result, the whole of Creation now groans in bondage to corruption and waits with eager longing for the final redemption of the children of God, when all things will be restored to a similar state before the Fall:

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now, and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan

inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

(Romans 8:22-24)

In His mercy, God denied Adam and Eve access to the Tree of Life after they had sinned so that they would not have to live in their sinful state forever. The pronouncement of the death penalty on them was, in fact, both a curse and a blessing. A blessing because it prevented them from living forever in a state of sin and all its consequences.

But because God in His righteousness had to punish sin, He sacrificed animals to make a covering for Adam and Eve. However, such sacrifices could not remove their sin, but could only covert it. They pointed toward the time when the true Lamb of God would come and make the ultimate sacrifice and remove sin *once and for all*:

And every priest stands day after day at his service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, and since then has been waiting until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

(Hebrews 10:11-15)

Not only has God delivered all those who will come to Him through Jesus from the curse, He has also promised in His Word that He will one day deliver His Creation from its state of decay and corruption and make a New Heavens and a new Earth, where righteousness is at home.

The prophets Isaiah (*Isaiah 11:6*) and John tell us there will be no more carnivorous animals, no more crying or pain, no more death, and that God Himself will dwell with us:

See the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them, He will wipe every tear from their eyes, death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away. And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See I am making all things new."

(Revelation 21:3-5b)

ALLEGED ERRORS AND CONTRADICTIONS IN SCRIPTURE

All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

(2 Timothy 3:16)

Throughout Scripture the Bible claims to be a Book totally inspired by God, trustworthy and completely free from error. By *inspired* we mean the means by which the Holy Spirit worked through human agents to produce His perfect authoritative Word, completely true in everything it affirms, whether it has to do with doctrine, history, science or morality.

The vast majority of the thirty-nine Old Testament Books explicitly claim that they are God's direct Words to man. Phrases like *God spoke*, *God said*, and *the word of the Lord came*, occur hundreds of times in the first five historical Books alone.

And the prophets had no hesitation in saying that they were God's spokesmen and that the message they spoke was to be treated as coming directly from God Himself. The declarations of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Jonah, Zephaniah, Haggai, and Zechariah are all prefaced with, "*The word of the Lord came.*"

The New Testament writers were no less explicit concerning the source of their writings. The apostle Paul, who wrote thirteen of the twenty-seven New Testament Books, not only described the Old Testament as the very oracles of God, but was equally certain about his own authority for he said:

Anyone who claims to be a prophet or to have spiritual powers, must acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord.

(1 Corinthians 14:37)

And later Paul commended people who received his message, “*Not as a human word but as what it really is, God’s word.*”(1 Thessalonians 2:13b). The apostle John, another contributor to the New Testament, began the Book of Revelation by saying that what he was about to write was the *Word of God*. In his final chapter of the same Book he assured his readers that his words were, “*Trustworthy and true,*” as they were given to him by, “*The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets.*” These are just a few examples, but in each case the writers claimed to be God’s spokesmen and said that their teaching should therefore be accepted without question as having divine authority.

But be careful here, dear reader. This does not mean that we are to consider the biblical writers as co-authors with God, as they had nothing to do with the *origin* of the message. The Bible’s most concise statement on this is to say that, “*All scripture is God-breathed.*” Older versions render the last words, *Inspired by God*. But God-breathed is a more perfect translation of the Greek word *theopneustos*, from the noun *theos* (God), and the verb *pneo* (to breath).

Therefore, the Bible was not inspired in the same way an artist or singer would be inspired in today’s common language, but it was *God-breathed*. It claims to be God’s very Word that has come from His own mouth. This is why Peter was able to say that prophecy never had its origin in the will of man:

First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

(2 Peter 1:20-21)

All of this tells us that the biblical writings are writings of divine revelation, and in a certain sense this should not surprise us. It is only logical to say that if an infinitely personal God exists, He is by nature greater and high above all human understanding, and that finite human beings could not begin to understand Him unless He had revealed Himself to us. As C.S. Lewis wrote: “If He can be known at all, it will be by self-revelation on His part, not speculation on ours.”

But in spite of what the Bible affirms, many people today totally reject the inspiration of Scripture in the false belief that the Bible is full of errors and contradictions. As we saw elsewhere in this book, this all started in the nineteenth century, when so-called scholars in England and Germany led a popular school of thought which denied the accuracy of the Old and New Testament and gave birth to generations of amateur critics who came to the false conclusion that the Bible is full of mistakes and could not be trusted in matters of historical fact.

Before we go on to examine some of these alleged errors and contradictions in more detail, it must be said that from the very nature of the case difficulties when studying the Scriptures are to be expected.

The Bible is a Revelation of the mind, will and character of an infinitely, perfectly wise and Holy God. But this Revelation is given to human beings, imperfect in intellectual development, knowledge, character and spiritual discernment.

Even Christians have, at some stage, encountered problems in Scripture that seemed impossible to reconcile with other biblical facts, and were led to question if the Bible was, after all, the Word of God.

However, it is true to say that many of these problems have occurred more with superficial readers of Scripture than with profound students and earnest seekers of truth. People who have learned to study and meditate upon the Word day and night, year after year, are never discouraged by difficulties they may

encounter. Every year of study finds these difficulties and apparent contradictions disappearing more and more rapidly.

Finally, many of the allegations made against the divine inspiration of Scripture are not only based on sheer prejudice most of the time, but on a failure to recognize some basic principles when interpreting ancient literature.

Many years ago the literary genius Samuel Taylor Coleridge established the golden rule for one to apply when he encounters an apparent error in a good author. He wrote: “When we meet an apparent error in a good author we are to see ourselves ignorant of his understanding until we are certain that we understand his ignorance” (please refer again to chapter fourteen for more on this subject.)

Keeping this rule in mind, in this chapter we will give a few basic rules and principles to remember during biblical study. They are designed to help you discern whether there are true errors and contradictions in the Bible, or whether the difficulties are due to our own ignorance or limited understanding. Let us begin with the first principle.

Differences Do Not Constitute Contradictions:

An important point to remember when interpreting a piece of ancient literature, in this case the Bible, is that differences do not constitute contradictions. Writers have the right to omit or include those facts that fit their purposes and to exclude those that do not. When Bible critics reject this principle, they are applying an unjust standard to biblical writers that they would not apply to others.

An example of an apparent contradiction comes from the Gospel of Matthew in his account of the two demoniacs that were healed by Jesus. We read:

When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no-one could pass that way.

(Matthew 8:28)

In the same account the Gospel writers Mark and Luke speak of only one demoniac while Matthew speaks of two. On the surface this may appear a contradiction between the biblical writers, but in reality they are actually complimenting each other. Even when the Gospel writers gave Jesus' words exactly, they did not always claim to record *everything* that He said and did. The four Gospels and Epistles relate the same stories and doctrines in different ways to different people.

In the above passage Matthew is giving a full report of the healing of the two demoniacs, while Luke and Mark are giving a report that focuses on the more prominent of the two. It is well that they were given in this way, for it is one of the many incidental proofs that the Gospels are independent of each other and were not composed by writers who were in collusion with one another.

Another example of an apparent contradiction can be found in the four Gospel accounts of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. But again, these differences in the four accounts are in themselves proof of the accuracy of each writer and disappear upon careful study.

If four people sat down in collusion to invent a story of a resurrection that never occurred, they would have made their four accounts appear to agree, at least on the surface. And whatever contradictions there might be would only come out after minute and careful study.

In the Gospels, however, the case is just the opposite. It is all on the surface that the apparent contradictions occur, and only through careful and protracted study does the real agreement shine forth; the kind of harmony that would not exist between four fabricated accounts written in collusion. What we have said here can apply to all other apparent discrepancies in the Bible.

The Bible Does Not Approve of all It Records:

Failure to recognize that not everything contained in Scripture is commended by God is another chief error of those who find fault with the Bible. They fail to see that the recording of the gross sins of God's chosen people, their leaders and the biblical writers themselves, are some of the many proofs of the origin of the Bible. Throughout Scripture the inconsistencies and shortcomings of all biblical characters are revealed.

None of the great Jewish heroes; David, Moses, Elijah, and the greatest of Israel's kings are presented without blemish. This is a radical difference between biblical biographers and other writers, whose normal tendency is to protect their reputation by reducing their failures and weaknesses.

In contrast, the Bible deals openly with the sins of its characters and authors, even when this reflects badly on God's people. Take for example King David; unless the writer had been inspired by the Holy Spirit he would have concealed, or at least tried to palliate, this vile act of their greatest hero of that time. Instead, the event is portrayed in all its hideousness and sinfulness, just as it occurred.

Likewise, the New Testament contains some very embarrassing material about the disciples and hard to explain sayings of Jesus that most certainly would have been edited out if the writers had had the freedom to manipulate the records. Yet, as can be seen from Scripture, the New Testament evangelists paint their own

faults and those of the apostles because they recorded the events exactly as they occurred. Below are just a few examples:

But when Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.

(Galatians 2:11-14)

Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worst. For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you.

(1Corinthians 11:17-19)

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans; for a man is living with his father's wife.

(1Corinthians 5:1-2)

After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you." Then he began to curse, and he swore an oath, "I do not know the man!" At that moment the cock crowed. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: "Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

(Matthew 26:73-75)

The truth of Scripture is found in what it reveals and not in all that it records. If we do not learn to distinguish between these two, we might be led to the conclusion that the Word of God teaches immorality, murder, polygamy and so forth.

The Bible focuses on reality and presents the good with the bad, the worst with the best and the right with the wrong. This is because the writers were committed to reporting the truth even when it was uncomfortable for them, and because the ultimate author is God Himself, *who cannot lie*.

God Used Different Personalities:

Inspiration of Scripture does not exclude the Holy Spirit using a variety of people who have different literary styles, forms of expression that are part of the individual's vocabulary, and forms of thought to which the individual is accustomed.

The traditional biblical writers came from all walks of life and included prophets, generals, kings, poets, musicians, doctors, scholars, taxmen, statesmen and fishermen. But it is obvious from the way in which their writings reveal their own character, style and culture that these human writers were not being used in the same way as computers or typewriters are used to record messages.

God used this great variety of men to write exactly what He wanted them to record, and at the same time used their unique vocabulary, personality and individuality to convey His message completely free from error. This would explain, for instance, why the apostle Paul always uses Pauline language, and the apostle John, Johannine language.

Inerrancy Applies Only to the Originals:

As we have already pointed out, the Bible claims to be the inspired Word of God to man. And if this is true then we must logically assume that the Bible is completely truthful and inerrant. The very character of God demands this. Jesus said of God's utterances, "*Your word is truth*" (John 17:17) and the psalmist wrote, "*All your words are true*" (Psalm 119:160).

The doctrine that has persisted throughout the centuries of Church history, and that is common among evangelical Christians today, is that the Scriptures as originally given were absolutely infallible and inerrant, and that our English translation is a substantially accurate rendering of the originals.

As is the case with all ancient literature, we do not possess the original manuscripts of our Bible. And even though the original manuscripts were copied many times with great care and exactness, naturally one or two small errors crept into these copies.

This occurred because when our authorized version was made, some of the best manuscripts were not within reach of the translators and so the translation was made from an imperfect text. An example of such an error comes from the Gospel of John in the following text:

Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatever disease he had.

(John 5:2-5)

For a number of reasons this statement seems very improbable and difficult to believe, but upon close investigation we find that it is nothing more than a gross mistake of the copyist. Some earlier scribes added an explanation of the healing properties of the intermittent medical springs into the margin which a later copyist incorporated into the body of the text.

Another example of copyist mistakes comes from the discrepancies in figures in different accounts of the same event recorded in the Book of Kings and Chronicles. These differences can be seen in the different ages of some of Israel's kings, which would be very easy to make since the Hebrew numbers are made by letters, and letters that appear very much alike have a very different value as numbers.

For example, the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet denotes one, and with two little points above it, it denotes a thousand. So a very slight error of the copyist would make a drastic change in the value of the numbers.

The remarkable fact, however, is that so few errors of this kind have been made. We now possess so many copies of the Bible that by comparing them one with the other, we can accurately tell with great precision just what the original text was.

And while each of these manuscripts differ slightly, as one would expect, the differences are minor, not major. In fact, the original text is now settled and there is not one important doctrine that depends on any doubtful reading of the text. Prolific author and Gold Award winner Dr Ron Rhodes supplies the following New Testament illustration:

Manuscript 1. **J**esus Christ is the Redeemer of the whole wor**l**...

Manuscript 2. **C**hrist Jesus is the Redeemer of the whole world...

Manuscript 3. Jesus Christ s the Redeemer of the whole world...

Manuscript 4. Jesus Christ is **th** Redeemer of the **whle** world...

Manuscript 5. Jesus Christ is the Redeemer of the whole **wrld**...

By comparing the various copies of each manuscript as shown in the sample above, we are able to reconstruct the original manuscript to an accuracy of more than 99 per-cent, with the remaining uncertainties being insignificant.

What Cannot Be Explained Is Not Unexplainable:

It is a serious mistake to assume that what cannot be explained is unexplainable, and that a grave objection to a doctrine proves that doctrine to be untrue. Most people will agree that there are very few scientific doctrines believed today that did not undergo some great difficulties in the way of their initial acceptance. On the contrary, nearly all of the mysteries of the Universe to date have yielded their explanations only to the relentless pursuit of much research and study.

Likewise, when a Bible student encounters something for which he has no explanation, he should continue to do research in the belief that an answer will eventually be found. We can also be encouraged by the fact that many of the alleged errors in Scripture have already been proven true from the many discoveries of archaeological, historical and scientific information over the last few centuries. Dr Gleason Archer gives his reassuring testimony to the issue:

As I have dealt with one apparent discrepancy after another and have studied the alleged contradictions between the biblical record and the evidence of linguistics, archaeology or science, my trustworthiness of Scripture has been repeatedly verified and strengthened by the discovery that

almost every problem in Scripture that has ever been discovered by man, from ancient times until now, has been dealt with in a completely satisfactory manner by the biblical text itself, or else by objective archaeological information.

This gives us full confidence that problems currently unresolved for lack of data will eventually have a similar outcome. We can also say that God's infinite wisdom may have a very easy solution to that which our limited minds and ignorance appears unexplainable.

It May Be Our Defective Knowledge:

As stated in previous chapters, other difficulties arise from our defective knowledge of history, geography, and customs of biblical times. For example, in the Book of Acts Luke speaks of the *proconsul* of Cyprus. Roman provinces were of two classes, *imperial* and *senatorial*. The ruler of an imperial province was called a *proptraetor*, and the ruler of a senatorial province a *proconsul*.

Up to the last century, according to the best historical information at hand, Cyprus was an imperial province, and therefore its ruler would have to be a *proptraetor*, but Luke calls him a *proconsul*. This clearly seemed like an error on the writer's part until archaeological investigation brought to light the fact that just around the time Luke wrote, the senate had made an exchange with the emperor whereby Cyprus had become a *senatorial* province, and therefore its ruler a *proconsul*. So the Bible was proved right after all and the literary critics were themselves in error.

It May Be Our Ignorance of Conditions:

Other problems that we may encounter arise from our ignorance or lack of knowledge regarding the conditions under which many of the Books of the Bible were written and commands given. The extermination of the Canaanites may appear cruel and horrible to some, but when we understand the moral condition to which these nations had fallen, and the utter hopelessness of reclaiming them, their extermination seems to have been an act of mercy to all succeeding generations. I have dealt more fully with this subject in another chapter.

It May Be Our Dullness of Spiritual Perception:

Even the man far advanced spiritually is still immature and cannot expect to see things as a Holy God would see them, unless he accepts it upon simple faith. An example of this is the doctrine of eternal punishment, which often appears untrue or impossible even to mature Christians. The whole problem arises from the fact that the best of us are still so spiritually blind that we have no adequate conception of the awfulness of sin and of our rejection of the glorious Son of God. Of this the apostle John wrote:

And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgement; about sin because they do not believe in me.

(John 16:8-10)

Notice that the sin of which the Holy Spirit convinces men is not the sin of murder, adultery, or other, but the sin of unbelief and rejection of Jesus Christ, which clearly reveals man's rebellion and daring defiance against God. When we become more like God in our thinking and see as He sees, we will have no difficulty

whatsoever with the doctrine of eternal punishment, or any other difficult doctrine in the Bible.

WHAT NOT TO DO WHEN STUDYING

Never Interpret a Text out of Context:

A gross error when interpreting biblical literature comes from a failure to note the meaning of a given text or verse in light of its context. Although the Bible was written in different periods, places, languages, and by different people, it presents a single unfolding story – God’s redemption of human beings through His Son Jesus Christ.

So just as any part of the human body can only be properly explained in reference to the whole body, each statement of Scripture must be interpreted in light of its context, each paragraph in reference to the Book in which it is found, and each Book or Epistle, in reference to the whole Bible.

When we do not apply this principle, some passages of Scripture will appear to contradict other passages in the same text or elsewhere in the Bible. Consider the following dialogue where Jesus challenges a rich young man concerning material wealth and God’s kingdom:

As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered, “No-one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honour your father and mother.” “Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.”

Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack" he said. "Go sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come follow me." At this the man's face fell.

He went away sad, because he had great wealth. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. It would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

(Mark 10:17-26)

Now this passage of Scripture seems to be in stark contrast with other passages of the Bible where one of God's blessings to godly men was material wealth:

So he said, "I am Abraham's servant. The Lord has greatly blessed my master, and he has become wealthy; he has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female slaves, camels and donkeys."

(Genesis 24:34-36)

I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honour all your life; no other king shall compare with you.

(1Kings 3:13-14)

One thing you will notice from the study of Scripture is that Jesus did not demand that Zacchaeus or other rich men in the Bible sell all of their possessions before they could follow Him. The problem with this rich young man in question is that his money had become his god, as can be seen from the fact that he chose to reject Jesus' instructions if it was going to cost him his possessions.

The Lord's difficult answer to sell all and follow Him was to show the man that he had broken the very first of God's commandments which says:

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, you shall have no other god before me.

(Exodus 20:2-4)

The young man was under the illusion that he had kept all of the commandments from his youth, but that was not the case. His money had become his god and had to be dethroned if Christ was to become his Lord. So, in context, Jesus is not speaking against being rich, but against greed and covetousness, which He also warned against elsewhere in Scripture:

No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

(Matthew 6:24)

Never Build a Doctrine on Obscure Passages:

Some passages of Scripture can at times be a little obscure and quite hard to understand. This might be because the key word in the text is used only once and is difficult to interpret, unless it can be understood from the context.

In other situations the words are clear but the meaning is difficult to understand because we are not sure as to what the author is referring, and the passage in question is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible. For example, Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth:

Otherwise, what will those people do who receive baptism on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf?

(1Corinthians 15-29-30)

The above passage is the only reference in Scripture to this custom of being baptized for the dead and so is quite difficult to understand. Is the apostle referring to living representatives for those who have died in order to ensure their salvation, or is he referring to the believer's spiritual baptism into his own death and burial with Christ?

Or does the apostle use the term *baptism for the dead* to refer to those who have been martyred for their faith in Christ? Jesus certainly applied the term to Himself to describe His suffering and death when He said:

Ye know not what ye ask. Are you able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of or of the baptism that I am baptised with.

(Matthew 20:22)

Even if it is quite hard to understand what Paul is saying here, we know that this is not an endorsement for baptizing living people for the dead, and there is a lot of scriptural evidence for rejecting this practice.

First, water baptism has no saving power even for those who are alive, unless it is preceded by repentance, so it certainly could not help someone who had died. Once a person dies and enters into eternity without Christ, there is absolutely no way to alter his destination.

Some scholars have suggested that in Paul's time there was a custom among heretics in which people were baptized on behalf of those who had died without baptism.

This custom is still practiced by the Mormons today and they use the above verse of Scripture as a warrant for their practice. But as we have just mentioned, this is not a custom that the Bible commands or sanctions, and the great apostle was certainly not sanctioning it here.

Paul could simply be referring to it as existing, and he referred to those who practiced it as showing that they believed in the resurrection, for otherwise the baptism for the dead would have no significance.

If Paul had wanted us to follow this custom, he most certainly would have said more about it than he did, or he would have at least endorsed it. But not only did he not endorse the custom, he actually separated himself and those to whom he wrote from it when he said: “What will *they* do who are baptized for the dead?” When we meet an obscure passage like this we should never make the error of building a doctrine on it. When something is important in Scripture, it will be clearly taught in more than one place.

Never Build a Doctrine on Passages that Oppose other Plain Teaching in Scripture:

Some passages of Scripture are hard to understand because they appear to contradict other passages of Scripture which speak on the same topic. For example, James appears to say that salvation is based on human works, whereas the apostle Paul insists that salvation is obtained through faith in Christ alone, and not through works or human effort:

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

(James 2:14-18)

But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith.

(James 2:18-19)

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not the result of works, so that no one may boast.

(Ephesians 2:8-10)

For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law.” Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law; for, “The one who is righteous will live by faith.”

(Galatians 3:10-12)

This difficulty in the Bible is more apparent than real. One of the great words that the New Testament uses to describe the Christian salvation is *justification* (*Romans 5:1, 8:30*). This is a legal term and literally means that a person trusting in the finished work of Christ is acquitted at God’s Judgement Seat. Faith in Christ means that His perfect obedience in life and death is imputed to the believer at the moment we accept the Gospel truth and will stand to our credit on Judgement Day.

The apostle Paul glorified in this universal offer of salvation through faith, because it was a message of power to save the worst and most unworthy of men and women, regardless of who they were, or what they had been or done before coming to repentance.

Yet when it came to the question of *how* that salvation could be appropriated, the apostle was unchangeable in his insistence that salvation is a gift of God’s grace (please see table A at the end of this chapter for biblical references related to this subject).

Therefore, the biblical references which link salvation to good deeds, or *works of the law*, should not be interpreted in such a way that puts this fundamental doctrine in dispute.

Faith in Christ is not merely something external, but means being united to Him in such a way that our whole life is bound up in His (please see table B). As a result of this union, there should inevitably be some moral change in our life and character. We cannot claim to be Christians walking in faith without having something of the righteous nature of our precious Saviour being manifest in the way we live and behave.

Our actions are an indication of our inner faith says James above, and can be used to determine where we stand with the Lord; or if we stand with Him at all!

Therefore, to summarize what we have just said, James and Paul do not disagree in their teaching on salvation, but approach the same subject from different perspectives. Paul plainly emphasized that justification is by faith alone and James agrees with him, but puts emphasis on the fact that genuine faith in the Lord should produce actions.

Paul actually says the same thing in many of his writings. Immediately after telling us in his Letter to the Ephesians that we are saved by faith not works, he goes on to say that we were, “*Created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life*” (Ephesians 2:10).

However, these are “*works of faith,*” the direct fruits of being united with Christ through the Holy Spirit. They do not represent any virtuous human attainments that could become the basis for our salvation, but are offered to God in gratitude for all He has already done for us in Christ (see *1Thessalonians 1:3; 2Thessalonians 1:11*).

When our hearts are truly converted, we see it a privilege and an honour to be even allowed to serve Jesus, or to suffer reproach and great loss for our allegiance to Him (*Luke 17:10; Acts 5:41*).

God designed our salvation in this way so as to totally eliminate any boasting, bragging or pride from man about his holiness or spiritual accomplishments, and so that all the praise and glory would go to Him alone, because He alone is worthy (see *Luke 18:9-15; Romans 3:27; 1Corinthians 1:31; Ephesians 2:9*).

This of course does not mean that a Christian does not, or cannot, sin. On the contrary, it is a common testimony that it is only after conversion that a believer begins to see how deeply sin is entrenched in his whole intellectual, emotional and discretionary nature. But, nevertheless, the child of God, walking in obedience to Christ, is being changed slowly but surely from, “*One degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.*”

Note the Bible Sometimes Uses Non-Technical, Figurative and Symbolic Language:

Sometimes problems can arise from the language in which the Scriptures were written. Just because a term in the Bible is not scientific, it does not necessarily indicate that it is in error. The Word of God is a Book for all ages and people and therefore written in the language that would be understood by all – the language of the common people.

It was not written in the terminology of modern science, although, as we know by now, it does demonstrate tremendous scientific foreknowledge, but in the way certain events appeared to those who saw them and in the language idioms of that time.

The Bible also makes claims that it should be understood mostly by plain reading and does not contain secret codes or mystical teachings that are hard to understand. When figurative language is used to describe certain characters and events, usually the context will dictate whether we should take the term literally or figuratively.

Likewise, when symbols are used, they are explained either in the context, in another part of the Book, or in other Books of the Bible. For example, the woman of Revelation chapter 17 is clearly explained further on as being a symbol of the great city that was ruling over the ancient world of that time – the city of Rome itself:

I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication.

(Revelation 17:3b-5)

The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.

(Revelation 17:18)

Finally, sometimes biblical descriptions may appear symbolic, but are really the ancient prophets trying to describe their divine visions of twenty-first century prophetic phenomenon. Think of the beloved apostle John in the Book of Revelation, seeing World War 3, with all its modern weapons and machinery, and trying to describe it with first-century knowledge and language.

What Books Should a Young Convert Read First?

There is nothing that a young believer needs more than to come to an intelligent and fixed faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. Therefore, if you have never read the Bible before, I would suggest that you begin with the Gospel of John, which was written for the sole purpose of bringing people to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that by believing they might have life in His name.

Then after the Gospel of John, I would suggest you read the other Gospels and the Book of Acts, and then the Epistle to the Romans. Then you could read the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation over and over again to become familiar with the Scriptures in general. Then you could begin to study the various commentaries, and attend Bible study at your local church so that you may always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you (*1Peter 3:15*).

Table A

Romans 1:16-18, 3:20-29, 4:1-25, 6:14, 23, 10:9-14

Galatians 1:8-10, 2:15-21, 3:1-6, 3:10-12, 23, 5:5-7

John 3:14-19, 5:24, 6:40; Ephesians 2:4-10, 3:10-13

Acts 10:43, 13:38-40; 1 Corinthians 1:21-24

1 Peter 1:3-6; 1 John 4:13-16

2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9

Joel 2:32; Mark 16:16; Genesis 15:6

Hebrews 11:7; Titus 3:5

Table B

Romans 6:13-22; 1 John 4:13

Ephesians 1:18-20, 2:10, 3:16-20; 2 Corinthians 5:17, 13:5

1 Corinthians 2:12, 6:17; 2 Timothy 1:6; Ezekiel 36:26

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WHY SOME REJECT THE BIBLE'S AUTHORITY

And this is the judgement, that the light has come into the world and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.

(John 3:19-22)

In light of the overwhelming evidence presented in this book, that absolutely authenticates the inspiration and divine origin of the Bible, any fair-minded reader will admit that only a supernatural intelligence could have produced the Scriptures.

In *Why We Can Trust The Bible* we have explored a great number of fascinating archaeological discoveries, which confirm that all the peoples, places, characters, cultures and history described in the Bible are true, accurate and factual. We have examined the unprecedented influence the Bible has had on the laws, cultures and history of many nations of the Western world and beyond.

We have seen that the fantastic new scientific discoveries made during the last few decades, together with the collapse of the Theory of Evolution, strongly supports the biblical account that the Universe and humanity itself were created by God with a divine purpose and plan.

Finally, we have demonstrated that the Bible contains hundreds of extraordinary and accurate prophetic and scientific statements that could not possibly have been known by the biblical writers thousands of years ago unless God inspired their writings.

Given these incredible facts – and the many others mentioned in the previous chapters that bear witness to the supernatural origin

of the Bible – it is rather surprising that millions of people from the most educated nations in the world today are not only ignorant of its contents and truths, but some refuse to even seriously consider them. With an interesting statement the famous British philosopher and writer Aldous Huxley gives us an idea as to why this is so. He said: “Most ignorance is vincible ignorance. People don’t know because they don’t want to know.”

Huxley was one of the most influential writers who did much to promote the Theory of Evolution. However, he confessed that the real reason for his commitment to Darwin’s theory was to enable him to escape the implications of a Universe created by a moral Being to whom he would one day have to give an account.

Like Huxley, most people in society today prefer not to accept Scripture as God’s inspired Word, as they recognize it would interfere with how they wish to live. They would be forced to abandon their unbelief and think seriously about God and their responsibility towards Him. So their problem is not that they *cannot* believe the evidence pointing to the truth, but that they *will not* believe, no matter how powerful that evidence may be.

After discovering that there is almost no possibility that the very first life could have spontaneously generated from the inorganic chemicals that were supposed to have existed in the Earth’s atmosphere and surface water at the beginning, atheist and co-discoverer of the structure of DNA Dr Francis Crick resorted to space fiction as an alternative to account for the origin of life.

In his book, *Life Itself*, Crick declared that the only alternative to account for the existence of the extremely complex organisms found on planet Earth was the suggestion that life actually developed through evolution in some other galaxy (Panspermia) and was then transported to Earth through alien star-ships or solar winds.

This man acknowledged his theory had no evidence to back it up but, like Huxley, he preferred it to admitting that God exists and is the Designer of all existence of life on Earth.

Someone compared Crick's conclusion to a person who says that a super computer had formed itself by accident in his living room, together with all the other machinery needed to operate the system, and fell together as the result of a big storm! Incredible as it sounds, there are many intelligent men today who have a similar outlook to Dr Crick, choosing fantasy to facts.

The famous British astronomer and physicist Sir Fred Hoyle admitted that enormous problems existed with the Theory of Evolution. In his book, *The Intelligent Universe*, he said the chance that higher life forms might have emerged by coincidence is comparable with the chance that a tornado sweeping through a junkyard might assemble a Boeing 747 from the materials, whirl them round and leave behind a fully functioning jet plane.

The fact, as we all know, is that a hurricane picking up the pieces of a jumbo jet would whirl them around and leave behind a scrapyard, not the opposite. After such an admission you might have expected Professor Hoyle to admit the obvious, but sadly he preferred to take refuge in the theory that life was purposely *seeded* upon Earth in the distant past by some intergalactic space aliens who were themselves created in another galaxy by some super-intelligent being of a higher intelligence.

Hoyle furthered claimed that the aliens that seeded life to Earth have a responsibility to serve the higher intelligence, but humans, as a secondary life form, do not. Because the evidence forced Hoyle to admit that God exists and is the ultimate Creator of all, he deluded himself that he could escape the spiritual consequences of his affirmations by inventing an entirely imaginary intermediate group of alien beings from another galaxy.

Entities Multiplied Unnecessarily

There was a fourteenth century Oxford teacher by the name of William of Ockham, who enunciated a scientific and philosophical principle that became widely known as *Ockham's Razor*. This recognized principle states that, "Entities should not be multiplied unnecessarily," and was used by evolutionists and atheists in the past to exclude God as an explanation for all life existence. It was said that the world was self-explanatory and God was therefore an entity that was not needed.

However, with the recent and incredible advances in science over the last few decades, some of which we have examined in the previous chapters, the less self-explanatory our world has become. It appears quite impossible to explain the overwhelming complex mechanisms in our Universe without adding another entity, or entities. Bible believers postulate *one* additional Entity, while evolutionists are being forced to postulate all sorts, some of which are even beyond the realm of discovery.

As shown previously, the problems involved with the original, gradualistic form of Darwinism are so great that many scientists have now been forced to abandon it in favour of some modified or alternative form. Below I have listed just two of the current most popular alternatives.

Punctuated Equilibrium:

Since many evolutionary scientists were faced with the obvious fact, that the fossil record provides no real evidence whatsoever of the millions of gradual transitional steps or missing links required by the Theory of Evolution, they proposed a new theory of evolution called *punctuated equilibrium*. The idea was actually developed in the 1970s by Niles Eldredge and Stephen J. Gould and is one of today's most widely accepted theories.

In this model there is no evolutionary change in a species for millions of years (equilibrium) and then suddenly these creatures change spontaneously to a new species in one leap within a single generation without any gradual or transitional process. Then followed periods of stagnation, which could last for anything up to ten-million generations, after which there would be another burst of life, where new types and species suddenly appeared on the scene. Evolutionists claim that this is why there is no fossil evidence in the rock strata for evolution.

While the punctuation idea gets itself out of the problem as to why there are no transitional fossils in the record, it has not yet offered any genetic or mechanical evidence in support of its own premise. As Eldredge himself admitted: “The idea is still very evolutionary and arguments about mechanisms are still going on within the evolutionary camp.”

It is quite obvious that the real motives behind this new theory of punctuated evolution is the growing embarrassment that the fossil evidence does not demonstrate any gradual transitions from simple life forms to more complex forms of animals and plants. As one expert in the field commented:

It is imperative to emphasize that the punctuated equilibria theory is unique. It must be the only theory put forth in the history of science which claims to be scientific but then explains why evidence for it cannot be found.

Panspermia:

Some scientists who recognize that the scientific evidence for macro-evolution is non-existent, and that chance mutations could never explain the marvellous design and biological complexity that our planet displays, have made an extraordinary and bizarre suggestion that the prebiotic soup, or life forms, evolved on some other rock in the Universe and were brought to Earth in the

distant past on a giant meteorite. They call this new theory *panspermia* as noted in the *Scientific American* magazine in 1992. In my opinion this is more close to science fiction than to science. As one observer rightly pointed out:

Why should it be more likely for life to arise and survive in the regions of outer-space than on the hospitable planet Earth? And if the mathematical probabilities make the evolution of life forms on Earth impossible, as many evolutionists themselves admit, then the same probabilities would make evolution impossible in another galaxy or Universe, no matter how many billions of years scientists claim to have.

All these theories are in no way supported by scientific evidence, but have become a new scientific religion for those who wish to escape the consequences of the truths of the Bible about God's Creation, salvation and our ultimate judgement before Him when we die.

As stated previously, this alternative to many people is so unthinkable that they desperately seek alternative theories which, as Sir Fred Hoyle himself admitted are, "Socially desirable and even essential to the peace of mind of the body politic."

Tragically, they are without excuse! The Scriptures themselves declare that nobody can plead ignorance of the existence of God. Though invisible to the human eye, His existence power and glory can be plainly seen through the beauty, vastness and perfect design that our Universe and life itself displays.

Therefore, it is obvious that those who deny the existence of an intelligent Creator do not do so for scientific or philosophical reasons; unbelief has a deep spiritual root. Sceptics and unbelievers *deliberately* do not honour God, or see fit to acknowledge Him and give Him thanks.

In his Letter to the Romans the apostle Paul describes this spiritual rebellion and gives the divine verdict behind the spiritual motives of those who embrace and teach false theories, all the while knowing that there is a total lack of evidence to support them:

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made, so that men are without excuse. Claiming to be wise they became fools; and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles.

(Romans 1:19-21, 22-24)

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JESUS IS THE ONLY WAY

The evidence presented in this book takes us to a place where there is a very important personal choice for each one of us to make. If the Bible is true in all that it affirms, then we are not dealing with simple questions here, but with the most serious question of every individual's life – his eternal destiny (see *John 3:36, 5:24, 11:25-28*).

If the Bible is true and Jesus Christ was not mistaken about the truths He declared about Himself, then we are accountable to Him who will judge each one of us at the end of this age. The Scriptures say that:

While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

(Acts 17:30-32)

There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.

(Acts 4:12)

These declarations of the apostles Paul and Peter are in stark contrast to the natural inclination of mankind to believe that if you are a sincere and good person, God will allow you into heaven regardless of what you believe. This is not even close to what the Bible teaches. If you have chosen to place your faith in *your own* righteousness, false religion, or even the fact that you believe in the inspiration of Scripture, you are wrong.

God never told us to believe in the inspiration of the Bible and you will be saved. Satan and his demons believe this, but their intellectual knowledge will not save them (*James 2:19*).

However, the evidence proving the Bible's inspiration can remove the intellectual barriers that many in our modern society have raised against seriously considering the claims made in Scripture and, most importantly, those made by Jesus Christ concerning His own identity. The Gospel of John records the simple answer Jesus gave to the religious leader Nicodemus when he enquired about the true path of salvation:

I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but Spirit gives birth to spirit."

(John 3:3-7)

Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a respected ruler of the Jewish people who believed in God, prayed, fasted, read the Scriptures, and tried to keep high moral standards. Yet with all of this to his credit, it was not enough. Jesus told him he must be "*born again.*" In other words, the New Birth; the death of our old sin nature when we identify with the death and resurrection of Christ on our behalf, is the key to true reconciliation with God and a prerequisite for eternal life. To receive this new life you must simply:

1. Acknowledge that we are all sinners and come short of the glory of God, and that our sinful rebellion has alienated us from ever entering heaven unless we are forgiven by Him and cleansed by the blood of Christ (*Romans 3:22-27*).

2. Reject any possibility of being reconciled to God on the basis of moral achievements, membership of a church, the giving to charity, or anything else that we may judge to be an acceptable moral standard of living.
3. Repent of our sins, place total faith in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on our behalf and receive Him into our hearts as Lord and Saviour.

To repent means much more than to simply confess our shortcomings, but it involves shame, sorrow, regret, and a total distaste for sin, together with a deep longing to lead a life that is centred on God as opposed to being centred on self.

Now Is the Acceptable Time

The plain teaching of Scripture tells us that the generation of men and women who are alive prior to the Second Advent of Jesus Christ will experience the greatest evil ever unleashed upon mankind (*Matthew 24:21; Revelation 12:12*).

The apostle John reveals that a great part of mankind will die in horrific judgements, wars, famines and plagues during this unprecedented seven-year period known as the *Great Tribulation*, or *Jacob's Trouble*.

During this period Satan will be left to attempt his greatest rebellion against God in his relentless pursuit to establish a satanic kingdom throughout the Earth under the rule of his representative, the Antichrist.

However, the same ancient Scriptures assure us that our Lord Jesus will return from heaven in great power and glory at the moment the world faces its most horrific crisis, to defeat the forces of the Antichrist gathered in rebellion against Him and to save our planet from total destruction (*Revelation 19:11-21; 2 Thessalonians 2:4-9*).

Christ will then judge the inhabitants of this Earth (*Matthew 25:32-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-11*), establish His righteous government throughout the world and reign from the throne of David in Jerusalem for a thousand years (*Revelation 20:1-7; Isaiah 2:1-5, 11:1-9*).

The Bible tells us also that the Second Coming of the Lord to establish His millennium reign will be marked by two separate resurrections (*John 5:28-30; Daniel 12:2-4; Revelation 20:5-7*). The first resurrection will include all believers who have died in Christ (*1Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1Corinthians 15:51-53; Revelation 20:4-5*). The second and final resurrection will be for everyone else for judgement at the end of Christ's thousand-year reign on Earth. *"The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended."*

Scripture refers to the final resurrection as the *"resurrection of condemnation."* Jesus promised that none of those who believed in Him would come to this final judgement, but is reserved for all unrepentant sinners who chose to reject God's plan for their salvation:

Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

(John 3:17-19)

Then I saw a great white throne and the one who sat on it; the earth and the heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, the book of life.

And the dead were judged according to their works, as recorded in the books. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them and all were judged according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire, and anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

(Revelation 20:11-15)

This passage of Scripture is very difficult to imagine and is totally contrary to our politically correct and morally relativistic world. It is almost impossible to believe that a loving God could cast people who have consciously rejected Him into a lake of fire for all eternity.

In our humanness and through our close acquaintance with the complexities of human experience and suffering, a part of us cries out, “No God that is not fair.” But we must remember that God’s judgements are totally fair and just and that He has done everything in His power to save people from destruction. If we as human beings feel such compassion and concern for the unrepentant, then we can be sure that our Creator feels this compassion at a much deeper level.

But as ruler and judge of the Universe God cannot overlook wrongdoing or take it lightly, and we have witnessed this at Calvary. There we see what sin does to God, and what immense physical, spiritual, and psychological suffering He had to undergo to pardon it.

Therefore, if men and women choose to cling to their sinful way of life in the face of such great love and sacrifice that God displayed for them in Christ, then it is only just that they should face the consequences of falling under His righteous judgements on Judgement Day.

In light of the indisputable evidence presented in the previous chapters of *Why We Can Trust The Bible*, for the authority and divine inspiration of Scripture, we can fully trust the words of the apostles and prophets when they urge us concerning the necessity of the New Birth and our personal faith in Jesus Christ to inherit eternal life. It is a recurring theme throughout the New Testament and is foreshadowed in the Old Testament Law and Prophets.

Eternal life is not only living forever but knowing “*You, the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent*” (John 17:3). This means a personal and intimately close relationship with God the Father *who is not ashamed to call you His child*. Eternal life also means that your decision to follow Christ will unleash His supernatural power and grace into your life at this very moment; transforming it into an immense joy and peace beyond anything you have ever imagined.

If you are willing and ready to place your faith and trust in Him right now, it is as simple as just saying the following prayer with your whole heart, and you will be instantly born again, a new creature, translated from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of God’s glorious Son:

Father I come to you through your Son Jesus Christ just as I am. I believe that Jesus came to Earth and died for my sins on the Cross and I now accept you as my Lord and Saviour. I repent of all my sin and rebellion and ask you to forgive and transform me so I can forgive others for what they have done against me and receive courage to live my new life in Christ and share my faith with others.

