

What on Earth is it all about?

Can I trust the Bible?

David K Clarke

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dave@understanding-the-bible.com

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Introduction

The outlook for the future of civilization in the 21st Century is extremely bleak, almost to the point of being terrifying. You can hardly pick up a newspaper or watch a TV documentary without realising that the world in which we live is rapidly deteriorating.

Green house gases that we have released into the atmosphere have apparently led to the ozone layer depletion and global warming, resulting in increasingly extreme weather patterns and rise in sea levels as polar ice caps melt. This in turn is leading to river and coastal flooding and tsunamis with multi-million pound damages to property and loss of life

Pollution of land, sea, rivers and air is leading to reduction in the availability of fresh clean water, which will result in disease and loss of animal, fish and plant life. Fresh water will eventually become as precious as oil. We will soon be overrun with mounds of noxious rubbish that landfill sites will be unable to contain. Recycling has been tried and proved to be ineffective, with the cost and damage to the environment of processing being greater than disposal.

The Earth itself seems to be under threat from earthquakes peaking at more than 2200 worldwide at magnitude of 5.0 or above during the year 2007. There are literally thousands of earthquakes every year, and increasing, most of which are not reported as they are so commonplace and usually do not result in loss of life.

We are beginning to experience serious depletion of non-renewable energy sources upon which we have become dependent. What oil reserves exist are often in countries with which we do not have friendly relationships. The price of oil generally continues to rise. Pipelines are vulnerable to hostile agents and terrorist activity.

Whilst we have had nearly 70 years without world wars, hardly a day has gone by without significant warfare somewhere on the planet. Ethnic cleansing continues to claim the lives of millions. Terrorism, and the fear of it, is on the increase with literally millions of children and young people being taught how to wage terror campaigns, create and execute suicide bombings. Perhaps most frightening is the stealthy development of nuclear warfare capability of fundamentalist groups and fanatical governments, with the capability of launching payloads into the west or importing nuclear components in suitcases.

Human fertility is decreasing at an alarming rate. It is estimated that by 2020 1 in 4 births will be with the help of IVF at a cost of £8000 a time. The result of this will be a new breed of genetically infertile people perpetuating the problem into the next generation.

Add to this the universal increasing lack of respect for life as 25% babies are aborted, the deterioration of moral values, with increasing divorce rates and the breakdown of marriage and family. Children growing up in such a climate lack discipline, respect and self-worth leading to an increase in violent crime.

The unstoppable rise in supply and demand of mind-altering and addictive drugs that can turn otherwise sane persons into killers. Couple this with easily available alcoholic drinks and you have a deadly cocktail roaming our streets. As a result we are seeing increased knife and gun crime on the streets of UK cities.

Diseases that we thought had been eradicated long ago suddenly re-emerge in forms that are even more virulent and resistant to technology. We see an increase in organisms that do not respond to antibiotics, like MRSA and bird flu.

On top of all this we are seeing the revelation of political corruption and the channelling of resources into the pockets of private individuals for their own personal gain. As a result we have governments that no one can trust.

We are also seeing the demise of erstwhile solid financial institutions and household name manufacturers as they collapse one after another. Governments are spending unbelievable amounts of money in attempts to bail them out. The money markets are becoming increasingly unreliable and vulnerable. There is no doubt that we are on the brink of recession or potentially worldwide depression.

We could add to these the increase in venereal diseases, AIDS, paedophilia, child abduction, child abuse, kidnapping, school massacres; the list goes on and on.

And it would seem that there is little or nothing we can do to change the trend towards the collapse of our civilisation and the destruction of the planet. Individuals and groups take up a particular banner and make a lot of noise about their pet subject, but any one of the above trends is potentially disastrous. So take your pick as to which one you want to fight against. It all seems quite hopeless.

But there is hope!

There is a book, written thousands of years ago in which all these things are predicted and it tells exactly why these things are happening. It also gives us the remedy. The answer is so simple and staring us in the face, but hardly anyone actually believes the solution can be so simple and so it gets overlooked.

Our universe, our planet and every living creature, were created by an intelligent designer, who has revealed Himself to mankind and has given us a manual for living. As individuals, nations and governments, we have systematically and deliberately rejected the Creator and ignored his manual of instructions. We have tried through science and philosophy, to argue Him out of existence, just because our finite minds are unable to comprehend Him. We have regarded His manual as myths and legends. Now we are paying the price.

I am not suggesting that the Creator is punishing us, so much as that, in rejecting Him, we have stepped outside the cover of His protection. We presumed that luck, chance or mother-nature, would be kind to us and ultimately make everything work out for the best, but now we discover these are not our friends, and nature is hitting back at us with a vengeance.

In this book, ‘What on Earth is it all about?’, I want to argue the case for believing in the Creator and His instruction manual in the hope that sufficient people will begin to take them both seriously. Only then will the tide begin to turn against these treacherous forces of destruction. After all, who would buy a car and totally ignore the instruction manual, never get it serviced, never replace the oil or check the tyres? It would run for a few thousand miles, but gradually and inevitably it would fall apart, cease to function and turn into scrap metal. Yet that is what we are prepared to do to our world, either deliberately or through unwillingness to take responsibility in the hope that someone else will sort it out.

So, now is the time to believe in the Creator, read the manual and start to implement the instructions. The alternative is to sit back and watch the ultimate disaster movie take place before our very eyes, certainly within the next 100 years.

The majority of people do not believe and have never even read the Creator’s Manual, which is known as The Bible. Of those that have a belief system, it has been estimated that 70% entering the western education system will end up losing their faith and probably never regain it¹. The reasons vary and might include intellectual objections, disappointment with the Church, unwillingness to accept the moral teaching, interest in other religions, occult and New Age and peer pressure.

Biology, sociology, psychology and other sciences, taught in our schools and universities, tend to reinforce a naturalistic interpretation of life, apparently relegating creation, miracles, sin, salvation and other theological concepts to the trashcan of obsolescence.

The purpose of this book is to address of these intellectual issues.

With regard to Creation, I believe one of the overriding reasons for rejection of faith is the almost universal acceptance of the theory of evolution, which obsoletes the necessity for a Creator to explain the emergence of life on Earth. Prior to 1859, when Charles Darwin came up with the Theory of Evolution, there was no other plausible explanation for the existence of life and most people in the western world would have believed in the Creator, and therefore what they understood from the Bible. Since then, the education system has built a protective and impenetrable wall of faith around the theory of evolution, regarding it as fact. So, as an intellectual or a scientist you would be expected to ignore the first chapters of the Bible or regard it as folklore; that is if you want to be taken seriously!

Almost every page of the Bible includes stories of the miraculous and supernatural. Angels appearing; seas and rivers parting to allow a million people to walk through on dry land; a nation fed for 40 years on dew; the incarnation of God the Creator as a human; the Virgin Birth; the dead being raised back to life; blind, deaf and terminally sick people healed at a word; the Resurrection and the Ascension. These are fundamental teachings of the Bible and yet most people do not take them seriously, either by having a plausible naturalistic explanation or outright rejection.

Much of the Bible, and particularly the book of the Revelation tells of supernatural events yet to come. To most people 'Jesus Christ' are swear words and yet the Bible teaches that he will return to reign as King of the Earth for a thousand years. It hints that a billion people are suddenly going to be airlifted into the sky to a place called Heaven and then some are going to come back. Is this crazy talk or can these ideas really be taken seriously?

Many people, including most Christians, live with the hope that everything is eventually going to turn out alright, that somehow we will get through the current crises and good will triumph. That is exactly what the Bible teaches, but before that it predicts that we will have to go through the worst period of disaster and horror the world has ever known. This will either take us completely by surprise or we will be ready and prepared if we read and believe the Bible and have the correct understanding of the text as it applies to world events.

But in order to take these predictions seriously, we have to believe the Bible; that it is the Word of God and as such is absolutely true and dependable, from beginning to end.

If you cannot accept the first few chapters of the Bible then how can you be expected to believe or have any confidence in the rest of it? What book would you expect someone to read and tell them that the beginning is legend and myth, the end is figurative and symbolic; and that most of the material in between is poetic cannot be trusted, and then expect them to regard it as a manual for living. They would naturally conclude that it was a waste of time to read let alone study and that there must be far better sources of inspiration.

I was brought up as a child to believe the Bible literally, but after years of studying scientific and theological subjects I began to question the authenticity of the scriptures. The literal creation, miracles and supernatural events all became highly questionable in my mind. I believed in the God who created the universe and all life, but that He created it through evolution over millions of years. I accepted the miraculous stories, as honestly reported, but thought that there would always be some rational explanation for them, such as hypnosis, mass hallucination or some form of deception or trickery, which people in that day and age would think were supernatural. But I never stopped seeking and questioning. I did not close my mind to new information and new ideas. God says that those who seek Him will find Him; and I did.

At one time, I had reached such a low point in my spiritual life that I was not sure what to believe any more. I was going through all the outward display of religiosity, but inside was a yearning emptiness. I believed in the God who created the universe and who controlled the big important things like stars and planets, but how could he know me, my thoughts and actions and did He really care? I remember sitting in an audience hearing my daughter sing with some other small children 'Jesus loves me very much' and I found myself weeping inside and crying out to God 'I wish it was true. Are you really there? Do you really care?' Quite soon after that I got the answer. He was and He did.

I hope this book will save someone from going through the agony of doubt and enable them to engage with this amazing book that God has given us, the Bible. It is even more relevant to us today than when it was written. Science and technology have opened our eyes to see that the universe is even more wonderful than anything the biblical writers could have imagined. Rather than thinking of God as obsolete, we should be standing back in awe or even falling down in worship at who He is and what He has done.

This book has been written to particularly help those who are struggling with, or have lost their faith because of what they have been taught, to enable them refute the arguments and to regain confidence in their earlier child-like beliefs. I therefore feel justified in using and quoting scripture, without having to explain every detail, with the assumption that the reader will have at least a rudimentary knowledge of the Bible. Having then established the veracity of the scripture as a dependable source of information, we will look at what the future holds for all of us as described in the Bible.

Whilst my primary target is the Christian struggling with matters of faith, I would hope that agnostics and even atheists would get to read this and allow God to change their heart. Hopefully the reader will take the position of having an open mind and be prepared to face the facts and be drawn to an appropriate conclusion. Start at least with the position that there could be a Creator; maybe miracles do take place; just maybe there is a supernatural world. At least please don't rule out the possibility before examining the arguments.

I would also hope this book will be read by Jews. It is about the book they gave to the world, the Bible, and very much focussed on the Torah. As discussed in this book, I believe that a thorough and open-minded search of the Law and the Prophets clearly reveals who is the Jewish Messiah. I expect to reveal much new information that is probably not known to many people and the implications are phenomenal.

References

The scientific arguments regarding evolution, relativity and cosmology are not intended to be in-depth, but rather designed to give the reader food for thought and if the interest is there, encouragement to carry out further research using the Internet or other written material.

I have read and studied a great deal of material to produce this book, but I have not included much by way of a textual bibliography. Instead, where I think it appropriate, I have referenced websites and provided links. The advantage of this is that the material on these sites is frequently updated with current information and they provide links to other resources, websites, books, etc. I have made the assumption that most of my readers will be Internet literate and familiar with search engines. If some of the sites referenced, over time cease to exist, searching on the key words will undoubtedly turn up lots of interesting and supportive material. Wikipedia never fails to produce useful reference material on just about every subject I have covered².

1. The Bible

The Bible is not just a history book or about things pertaining to a way of life thousands of years ago; it is highly relevant to our lives today and indeed the years to come. Much of the descriptions of events in the Bible are about OUR future. For example it speaks of a time to come when a person living to 100 years of age will be considered as just a child. So there is still a long way to go before the end of our world despite the concerns about global warming, possible future ice ages or running out of renewable sources of energy. However, try as we may to preserve the environment, it is probably too late for us to repair the damage to the atmosphere and the ozone layer. Humanly speaking the future does look bleak, and this should be of concern to all of us, but particularly the young, as it is their heritage that is being destroyed. The Bible does give us hope; not in our own ability to repair the damage and restore the earth's environment; but in the clear intention of the Creator to redeem and reclaim the earth. But it will be done in His way, not our way¹.

The Bible is not about a religion. It features the most gripping love story upon which all true romance is modelled. It describes and plans a union of the most powerful being imaginable, greater than the universe, creating and wooing a lover over thousands of years through treachery, unfaithfulness and warfare. Religion dictates a way of life, by adhering to rules and regulations. The Bible, and indeed this book, is about a relationship and a romance that is supernatural and yet totally real and tangible. This subject cannot be compared with religions, which are about people trying to improve themselves or attain some higher goal or find happiness. This is about a wayward and self-focused beloved, being pursued by a lover who is prepared to give everything, even his own life, to rescue and claim his bride². The story has not yet ended. We are right in the middle of it and approaching the climax of the story.

The Bible is really about one person, God, manifested in human form in the person of Jesus Christ, and his dealings with humanity. Every book and many of the major characters in the Old Testament reflect or teach us about Jesus in some way. The Old Testament is mainly about preparation of the world for Him to come the first time. The New Testament focus is on preparing the world for Him to come the second time.

Jesus is concealed in the Old Testament and revealed in the New Testament.

For example, in Genesis chapter 1, He is the Light; in chapter 2, He is the Gardener; in chapter 3, He is the Seed of the woman. As we go into Exodus, He is that Passover Lamb. In Leviticus, He is the Great High Priest; and so on. We see Him portrayed in major characters, such as Joseph, Joshua, Boaz and Elisha.

If you read their stories you can see many parallels with Jesus and similar aspects in His life, rejection, deliverance, redemption, healing and miracles. He is present, woven into the very fabric of the Bible culminating in the book of the Revelation where He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is called the Alpha and Omega, which in Greek is equivalent to A to Z. He is given over 600 different Names in the Bible such as Provider, Counsellor, Lamb, Lion³. The most important event in the history of mankind and the focal point of all time was His death on the cross. The Old Testament was preparing the world for that event and from then on we can look back on His sacrifice with gratitude. His death purchased our life. We will look at the incredible lengths to which God went to teach mankind the meaning of substitutionary atonement; that the life of one can be traded for another to put right that which was wrong.

The Bible can be seen as totally trustworthy, believable and factual. There is no deception in it, deliberate or accidental. The first part of this book aims to establish credibility; that every concept, teaching and even the very words can be trusted. Then we look forward to see what the Bible has to say about OUR future and how we can prepare for it.

As you hold your Bible, treasure it, remembering that much of it was written over 3000 years ago and it is the very word of God the Creator. Some of the words were carved in stone, other parts carefully inscribed on to leather and papyrus before becoming the concise book you can hold in one hand. The Bible was written over a period of about 1500 years by about 40 writers, from many different walks of life: kings, fishermen and farmers; all inspired by one author. Yet its message is totally consistent. They had no reason to write it other than that they were compelled to do so by a force outside themselves, reporting what they saw and heard. Mankind has developed a current understanding of the universe that he inhabits and his views and perceptions have changed accordingly over the centuries, but the message in the Bible does not change. Science is continually making new discoveries and we now realise that the 'Laws' and definitions even from 20 years ago are invalidated by later findings. One of the purposes of this book is to challenge some of the misunderstandings and deliberate deceptions that have kept us from the truth. It aims to present a comprehensive overview of our destiny. The Bible is a history and yet it is a prophetic book. It is about things that have happened but that were accurately described hundreds of years before the events happened, authenticating the veracity of the writings. It is also about things that are yet to come, some of which we are seeing unfold before our eyes. Because of its accuracy of forecasting of things that have already happened, we can have faith in what it says about those things that are prophesied but have yet to occur.

There are many other ancient writings and manuscripts that have been found which authenticate and validate the Bible, such as the writings of Josephus and Tacitus

which make reference to Jesus and His contemporaries. The Dead Sea Scroll confirm much of the Bible although, as they appear to have been written around the same time as Jesus lived on Earth, He is not mentioned. There are literally millions of books describing and commenting on the biblical history and theology, but God has provided us with a single volume that we can hold in one hand, that is all we need. Researchers have spent lifetimes perusing and studying Hebrew texts, but what God has provided by divine inspiration is all that we need to understand and intimately know Him, as far as that is possible for a human being. John the Apostle says ‘There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.’ (John 21:25). But he condensed all he felt was needed to convince people that Jesus was the Son of God into a short biography. He also wrote 3 other short letters of which he said, ‘These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.’ (1John 5:13)

Archaeological finds continue to confirm the validity of the Bible. For example, the Hittites were only to found mentioned in the Bible until their capital and records were recently discovered in Turkey; the Assyrian king named Sargon as mentioned in Isaiah 20 was thought to be myth until his palace was discovered in Iraq; the very recent discovery of King Herod’s tomb in Judea (May 2007) are all examples of archaeology confirming scripture⁴.

I often come across people who do not think it is necessary to read, study or understand the Old Testament, saying that it is the old and obsolete covenant, which has been superseded. The God of the Old Testament seems like a different person, with all the blood and thunder and they do not want to know about Him. But God has chosen to provide us with a fuller picture. He is a God of mercy and forgiveness, but also a God of justice and righteousness. We must hold these attributes in tension and not discard 75% of the Bible as irrelevant. In fact, it has been estimated that 80% of the New Testament comprises direct quotes from the Old Testament. I hope this book will restore or initiate a deep reverence for the whole Bible and encourage the reader to read the Bible over and over and over, each time going deeper and gaining greater understanding and deeper relationship with God.

The author of the Bible is clearly not a person living in our space and time, but one that is outside and above our dimensions, who somehow communicated with the 40 writers. It is not a scientific textbook written for the 21st Century but the historic facts are nevertheless to be viewed as true. If we regard it as fables, myths or allegories, then how can we rely on it as a handbook for life? How can we say the God is faithful to his promises? How can we put any confidence in what it says about the future? How can we trust Him?

2. The Search for Truth

When Pilate stood in judgement of the Creator of the Universe in a complete reversal of roles and declared rhetorically, 'What is truth?', he did not realise he was staring it in the face. Jesus said 'I am the truth'. Jesus, the Word of God and Truth are synonymous. Post-modernism would assert truth to be relative and transient, being different things to different people in opposition to the Biblical teaching that there is an absolute truth. I believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God and therefore absolute and dependable truth. This book is an attempt to substantiate and support that belief with reasoned arguments.

Many people find difficulty in accepting the early part of the Bible. In fact some would say that the most difficult parts to understand and accept are the beginning and the end, the books of Genesis and Revelation. If I were to read any other book and say I did not accept the beginning or the end, it would rather cast doubt on the whole book. But on the contrary, as we will be discussing, both Genesis and Revelation are reliable, believable and true, as is the rest of the Bible.

People reject faith in God for many different reasons. In my observation, there are three main reasons: intellectual, moral and relationship.

Intellectual rejection is based on the apparent conflict between science and the Bible. Some try to rationalise this saying that much of the Bible is poetic, figurative or symbolic, but others simply reject it as not relevant today.

Others reject their faith because the moral standards it requires are unattainable, particularly with regard to sex. The idea of monogamous heterosexuality - one man and one woman together for life - is seen by some as too restrictive. I intend to show in this book that monogamy and marriage are much more than at first appears. The special relationship that the Author and Creator of the universe is seeking with mankind is modelled in marriage. In the same way that there are forces at work in our culture trying to destroy marriage and the family, there are cosmic forces at large seeking to annul and annihilate the relationship between the Creator and his beloved. However, the Creator is not a passive lover prepared to lose his bride. He will die and kill to protect her. He is a passionate and jealous lover.

Thirdly, many have rejected their faith because of associations and relationships: friendships and peer pressure to conform that take the person in a different direction from that which they might otherwise have gone. The flip side of this coin is the hurt that can be caused by criticism or rejection.

These may cause a person to leave the Church and in doing so lose their faith.

Yet another aspect is the inability of some to reconcile the God of the Old Testament with the one that appears in the New. Whilst the Bible says He is the same, yesterday, today and forever, there seems to be a disconnect between the God who commanded Israel to totally destroy the inhabitants of Canaan, with dire consequences for lawbreakers, and a loving Father. As a result they develop their own idea of God, cherry picking the scriptures and the attributes of God to produce something that is actually an idol. It is necessary to fully understand the nature of God and hold these seemingly contradictory attributes in tension. This requires diligent searching of the scriptures, which few are prepared to do, in order to understand the full council of God and understand His heart.

Once you begin to carve up the Bible into what bits you want to believe and reject those that are unpalatable, it is easy to end up in a confused state of mind and spirit, not knowing where to draw the line. Your Bible will get thinner and thinner with the latest 'scientific' or archaeological discovery until it comprises a nice little set of acceptable verses from the Psalms, Proverbs or Gospels. At the same time your faith gradually diminishes until it becomes compromised by input from all kinds of spurious sources; the latest pop religion.

The combination of all of these is perhaps the deadliest recipe for rejection of faith: a young Christian, perhaps criticised for immature behaviour is hurt and leaves the Church. They then begin to question the foundations of their belief system, meeting up with atheists and hedonists who take them down a road to scepticism and immorality from which recovery is going to be exceedingly hard.

I hope that the following discussion will enable some to overcome the intellectual inhibitors to faith and that having overcome that hurdle they will then be able to deal with the other issues.

Everyone sees the world through filters, some of which are inculcated by the family, but most of which come about through the education system. The western education system negates much of what the Bible teaches and as a result closes the mind to the truth of what is in the Bible. The teaching of evolution, in particular has eroded belief in God and the Bible. In fact, Charles Darwin did not just happen to stumble upon evolution by chance. He started out with an agenda, which was to prove that God was unnecessary to explain life. He was upset at the idea that some of his friends and family, according to the Bible, were destined for Hell and damnation and set out with an agenda to disprove this. And, of course, he found what he was looking for.

In order to find truth, it is necessary to start with an open mind.

Many people accuse Christians of having a closed mind, but usually the opposite is true. I hope the reader is prepared to take off the filters and look dispassionately at the arguments put forward, without preconception or prejudice. At least, begin by regarding evolution as a theory and the maybe there is more to life than what we can perceive with our senses.

Evolution is the belief that all life on Earth has descended from a common ancestral population, which through process of change over time, has resulted in the diversification of all forms of life. Belief in evolution is as much a matter of faith as based on data, evidence or reason. Adherents argue with religious fervour, from the premise that there is no God or higher order designer than man himself. If you use the arguments discussed in this book to confront an evolutionist, such as a science teacher you are likely to be met with hostility and unreasonableness rather than open willingness to share and discuss the theories. Many will refuse even to recognise the word 'theory' as applied to evolution and present it as 'fact'.

The basic problem is unwillingness to face the facts that point to a Creator. For some reason which is hard to fathom, many people have decided in advance that the 3 dimensional world they can see and measure is all there is and there cannot be a higher realm, let's call it a spiritual world. To convince themselves that there is no God they have to force the data, select the facts and manipulate the information to substantiate this position.

The Bible says: 'Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water.' (2 Peter 3:3 – 5).

Natural man does not want interference from a higher being. He is continually looking for ways to squirm out of accountability to God. A spiritual enemy, called Satan, who we will discuss later, will do everything possible to foster and further this rebellion against God. The God-less man will find a million reasons not to worship God. He will find a million fossils and artefacts that disprove the very existence of God because that is what he wants to find. He will write books and produce films and documentaries with very convincing arguments that in his mind justify the conclusion that there is no God and therefore he cannot be accountable to him.

The material is very impressive and has all the hallmarks of scholarship, science and logical reasoning, but it is actually false. If a person wants to follow such a philosophy, there is little that you or I can do to change their mind. Their views are fixed and it is rare for someone to change from such entrenched positions without some spiritual enlightenment. People are rarely converted from one belief system to another by argument or reason.

What is most grievous, is that, because all this so called evidence and scholarship has been produced and is being taught in schools and universities as fact, many young or immature Christians are deceived by it. Jesus said that to deceive or offend one of these little ones, it would be better that such a person was thrown into the sea with a large millstone around his neck (Matt 18:6). Harsh words from 'gentle Jesus'. Yet that is exactly what is going on in our education system. We have been forewarned that there will be deception of all types in the last days (Matthew 24). The cry of my heart is that many people who are wavering in their faith due to false teaching will think again and come to the conclusion that the Bible is indeed the very word of God and it can be relied upon in every book, chapter, verse and word: to regard it as inerrant truth and let it speak into the deepest recesses of their heart.

It is important in searching for truth that we do not spend too much time looking at error. In the days before there were machines to validate paper money, experts would examine the notes visually to check for counterfeits. Their training consisted in looking over and over at the real thing, valid notes. Then they would easily spot a counterfeit. We need to focus on truth, not looking to the right or left; not looking at apparent 'proof' that God does not exist or that he is not the Creator: not getting sidetracked by every latest discovery that 'proves' evolution. In spite of all the changes in science and new discoveries, the truth of the Bible has stood the test of time.

In looking for truth we look for reality and yet the only true reality is that which is eternal. What we now see and perceive is only a virtual reality that is represented in 3 dimensions. There is a much greater reality that includes, but exists outside of our physical perception. We are going to discuss this in the next chapter.

3. Perception

Our perception of the world is based on 5 senses: taste, touch, smell, hearing and sight in order of proximity.

Taste requires the perceived objects to actually be inside your mouth.

Touch requires you to be physically in contact with objects.

You can smell objects at a distance if they give off some kind of chemical that can be carried through the air to your nose where a reaction takes place.

Hearing is possible from a much greater distance, but it requires a medium, such as air, through which sound can travel until the waves reach your eardrum.

Sight gives us the greatest reach since light can travel immense distances and does not require a medium through which to travel. Light from stars millions of miles away travelling through the vacuum of space, can be perceived through sight. With one eye in a stationary position we can only perceive in two dimensions so that everything appears as a flat plane. The second eye has a slightly different view of objects and therefore gives perspective and depth so the image appears to be 3 dimensional. Moving the eye also gives a different perspective, which enables viewing in 3 dimensions. As light penetrates the eye through the lens, a chemical reaction takes place on the retina at the back of the eye, which transmits a series of electrical pulses through nerves. At the end of the nerve another chemical reaction takes place in the synapse to pass the message on to the next nerve in the chain and so on until the impulse reaches the brain. The brain learns to unscramble these pulses adding depth and turning them into 3 dimensional images. So it is actually the brain that interprets what we see given the information available.

So what we see as what we think of as the real world is in fact the best job the brain can do to unscramble the continuous pulses and reactions it receives into some kind of meaningful information. So the 3 dimensional world we think is out there, is actually being reconstructed inside our brain. The brain can be fooled by optical illusions, seeing what does not exist. Even the world of dreams can appear to be as real as the world outside.

Our actual receptors are very crude by comparison to what they could be reporting on. We don't have x-ray vision; we cannot read each other's thoughts; we cannot hear the music of the stars.

In fact we are only able to perceive a tiny fraction of what we know about. Our ability to perceive visible light can only detect a very small proportion of the electromagnetic spectrum. Electron microscopes and radar telescopes, for example

can increase our range artificially. Geiger counters and spectrosopes can enable us to detect radiation and waves that our senses cannot detect.

The universe that we can perceive is in fact part of a much greater reality. God can see the whole, but we are constrained to 3 dimensions, which we can only partially and inaccurately comprehend. As the Bible puts it, 'For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known' (1Corinthians 13:12). One day, with our new spiritual bodies and enhanced senses we will be able to perceive and know so much more than we can in these mortal bodies. There is a lot to look forward to in the next life.

We perceive our world and our universe as solid 3 dimensional material, and yet when it is examined at the atomic level, there is nothing there. For example, a diamond, that we would regard as pretty solid, if it could be viewed with a powerful enough microscope would appear to be something like single golf balls in the middle of billions of football pitches, each with 14 pinhead sized bundles of energy flying around the edges of the fields and nothing in between. Hydrogen gas would be an even smaller ball with one bundle of energy flying around. So our perceived physical reality is literally empty space. Everything in our universe is so empty that we have to wonder if it's really there, and yet it appears to be. What we consider to be so real is in fact a virtual reality created for our benefit by a Higher Being. It is a place for us to develop and grow into who we really are after which we will leave this virtual reality to enter the real reality, the Eternal Kingdom.

There is so much more in this universe than we can perceive with our senses and yet some people think we know about all of it. The dimensions inhabited by the One who could create this universe are so far beyond our comprehension, that we have no way of being able to understand it. This is why we walk by faith. He knows the end from the beginning. Outside of our 3-dimensional universe the future is as clear to Him as to us looking at a map.

What we think of as reality is only contained within 3 dimensions, but there is a much greater reality outside of our physical perception.

We see our universe as it is at a point in time. We actually can only perceive the present within immediate proximity. Sound travels at about 330 metres per second. So if I hear a sound from 100 meters away, I am actually hearing what happened 0.3 of a second ago. If I look at the sun, I am seeing what happened about 8 minutes ago, which is the time it takes for light to travel the 93 million miles to the Earth. When I look at the stars, I am seeing what happened at the very least 4 years ago and in most cases hundreds or thousands of years ago.

So, as we start to examine the universe, we have to recognise we are perceiving it in a very inaccurate and fragmented way by making the best use of the information available to our senses to build up a picture that we call reality. Hundreds of years ago, people thought the earth was flat and the sun and moon went across the sky, which is what is actually perceived. By means of instrumentation and mathematics, we now have a different understanding of the solar system, although it belies what our senses tell us. We still talk of the sun rising and setting even though that is not what actually happens.

So let us now take a closer look at the universe, not as we perceive it, but rather what we have come to understand from careful instrumentation, observation and calculation.

4. The 3 Dimensional Universe

The universe had a beginning at a particular point and time, when there was a massive release of energy that we call the 'Big Bang'¹. No one knows or can explain how or why it started. Since then it has continued to expand like a huge explosion. In any explosion, as you go further from the point of origin, the slower the motion of the particles as the energy is lost. However, in the case of the universe, from our observation, it appears to be accelerating the further out you go². This is strange because acceleration requires a force or propulsion. What could possibly be propelling the stars and particles in space to make them accelerate faster away from the point origin? Gravity would slow them down and we are not aware of any other force that could cause acceleration outwards. In fact, according to all known laws of physics, the universe should be slowing down and shrinking as the overall effect of gravity attracts the objects towards each other. Something strange is going on!

No one understands the universe and in particular, gravity. Here is a possible way of looking at a model which may help us understand the universe. Think of a two dimensional fabric, very stretchy and infinitely long and wide. Someone forcefully throws a handful of small different sized balls on to it. Initially the balls fly in all kinds of directions, rolling across the fabric away from the centre of the impact, but after a while they begin to settle down. Large balls would stretch the fabric, making deep depressions. The stretched fabric creates a force against all of the objects, as it tries to level itself off. The larger balls create deeper depressions and hence a greater force; the smaller balls would have less force and shallower depressions. Small balls would be attracted and spin around the large depressions until they eventually came to rest against the larger balls, until gradually over a period of time all of the balls get attracted to each other and the depression in the fabric would get deeper, until eventually everything ends up in a single mass.

Space-time is a continuous fabric having no end onto which the universe was thrown and hurtled out in all directions. The stretching force in the fabric is called Gravity, which causes the particles of the universe to be attracted to each other, with small objects spinning around larger ones. After a very long time, the gravitational force in the fabric will pull all of the matter in the universe to coalesce into a single body. Maybe if the body gets too 'heavy' it actually breaks through the fabric and leaves the dimension.

If you can handle that, now try to project the same concept on to a three dimensional fabric with the same kind of properties and the same effect.

However, those are just helpful models, because the space-time fabric is actually a four dimensional fabric. That hurts your brain to think about, because you are a 3 dimensional being. Thus, whilst you can easily understand the 2 dimensional model, it takes at least a 5th dimensional person to understand and interact with the space-time fabric.

Einstein's classic discovery of the relativity of time and space opened up a new way of looking at the Universe. Energy is proportional to matter and the speed of light squared: $E=mc^2$. (For those who are interested: energy in Joules, mass in Kilograms and speed of light in metres per second). It had been thought for centuries that the speed of light, C, is a constant of about 300,000 Km per second. Recent discoveries have shown that light is subject to gravity and that the speed of light is variable and in fact slowing down³. (Currently estimated to be 299,792,458 m/s).

We have to remember that light is a created force. It has not always existed. In the beginning God said, 'Let there be light and there was light'. (Gen 1:3). Light is therefore subject to the laws that God created. We see light from the sun and stars, as well as fires and light bulbs, as particular instances of light, but light as a creation exists apart from any source of light.

The square of the speed of light is proportional to energy, of which the force of gravity is prevalent throughout the universe. What is thought to be constant, is the total amount of mass and energy in the universe. It is a closed system. Since it was created, matter and energy have been interchanged, but none is being lost. We can observe the sun converting matter into energy as heat and light, but nothing is actually lost.

If we regard the universe as a sphere, then the closer you approach the boundaries, the lesser is the influence of the gravitational force. At the centre of the universe, wherever that is, gravity is at its greatest. The force of gravity, being inversely proportional to the square of the distance from a mass diminishes increasingly rapidly as you approach the edge of the universe⁴. Since the square of the speed of light is proportional to energy, we can infer that the speed of light decreases as the boundary of the sphere of the universe is approached, tending towards zero. In other words, we cannot see beyond the edge of the universe as nothing physical is beyond it. Light emanating from bodies at the extremity of the universe would begin very slowly, speeding up as it gains energy and approaches the central core of the universe to the constant of about 300Km /sec.

If, as has been thought previously, we make the assumption that the speed of light is a

constant throughout the universe and indeed is unbounded, bodies that are nearer the edge of the universe would appear to be much further away than they really are, approaching infinity. Hence we can observe constellations which appear to be 90 billion light years away, which in fact are only a few thousand light years distant, but because the speed of light is approaching zero they appear to approach infinity. This makes the universe appear to be extremely old and much larger than it really is.

Since speed is inversely proportional to time, this also infers that time speeds up as the boundary of the universe is approached so that beyond edge of the universe, time becomes infinite.

There is another factor that supports this theory, which is the background radiation that pervades the universe. You would expect the temperature of the universe in outer space to be absolute zero temperature or 0 deg Kelvin, which is calculated to be -273 deg C, yet there is a slight raising of temperature pervading the universe of 3 deg absolute or Kelvin⁵. Light is reckoned to comprise waves of tiny particles known as photons⁶ that require energy to be propelled even through the vacuum of outer space. As you approach the edge of the universe, it can be assumed that this background radiation reduces to zero and light would have no energy to take it beyond the outer edge. So whether light uses gravity or the background radiation or both to propel photons, there is energy as far out as it is possible to go and beyond that, who knows. No one can see or measure, only speculate. My proposal is that at the edge of the universe, there is no matter; gravity becomes zero; energy reduces to zero; the speed of light reduces to zero, and time becomes infinite.

Therefore the universe is not infinitely old or infinitely immense. Given the variability of all of the attributes we have been discussing, it becomes impossible to give any dimensions. Measurements depend on some basic units like metres or seconds. We can only measure within a very limited locality. If we stray too far from where we are, we can no longer rely on these basic measurements. The universe could be as little as around 6000 years old and 6000 light years in radius from the Big-Bang starting point. Light travels about 6 million million miles in a year in our part of the universe, so that could make the universe a maximum of 72×10^{15} miles across.

All of this discussion gives a rational basis for believing in the Biblical description of the creation. Somewhere around 6000 years ago, God said 'Let there be light and there was light.' There is no other plausible explanation for the Big Bang. No scientist can give any better explanation for the first cause. There has to be a first cause. The only counter argument that I have seen put forward is that everything has always been and since the Big Bang is pretty well proven, this argument has no foundation. The fact that something started it is uncontroversial. The arguments are about who or

what it is: and that is where faith takes over.

We can see the past but cannot change it. We can change or manipulate the future but we cannot see it. We can predict and extrapolate, using mathematical or computer models, but they are only predictions based on assumptions. The weather forecasting relies on patterns of previous behaviour, but even these can be disturbed by unforeseen circumstances. So we don't really know what happened 6000 years ago any more than we know what is going to happen in 1000 years to come. We can only interpret the information available given our present knowledge and assumptions.

Another interesting aspect of the 3 dimensional universe that we inhabit is that it is actually digital. To illustrate this with another example from technology, consider the television or video screen. As you look at a modern television screen you can see in very high detail the lives of the world being portrayed. So much so that it seems real. However, if you take a powerful magnifying glass and examine the screen, it is filled with coloured dots that we call pixels. Normally a palette of 256 colours is used. This is a digital representation of the 'real' world. It is not the 'real world, but only a virtual reality. Technology could take it further and give it depth to give an even greater impression of 3 dimensions, but it is still not real. When we now look at the 'real' world, we find that the same thing applies albeit at a much deeper level. If you took a virtual piece of string and cut it in half again and again, you might think you could go on indefinitely halving it until the length of the segment is infinitely small. However, there is a length below which it is impossible to go. Even if you kept on cutting, it would not get any smaller. This length is 10^{-35} metres, and is known as the Planck Length, Similarly there is an irreducible time constant shorter than which it is impossible to go, known as Planck Time, which is about 5×10^{-24} seconds. We have already discussed that light has a finite speed beyond which it cannot go. So the main attributes on which our universe is based, distance, time and speed are all finite and bounded.

All of this discussion drives us to the conclusion that we are living in a digital virtual reality that is only a small part of the whole. Even as the video screen is a digital representation of what we think of as reality, so our universe is a larger and more comprehensive digital representation of an even greater reality. By the way, this makes our attempts at technology appear very feeble compared to God's technology. The pixels on my computer screen are about 2×10^{-4} metres in size, which is 2×10^{31} times bigger than God's pixel!

We now go on to consider the significance of the bigger picture in God's universe.

5. Other Dimensions

In March 2007, a new physics research facility was set up at Cern on the Swiss border, to explore the origins of the universe. It includes a 27 Km circumference particle accelerator 100m underground to smash atoms together in the hope of re-enacting the Big-Bang. A stated objective is to identify the Higgs boson, known as the ‘God particle’, because of its importance to the standard model of physics, and to look for so-called supersymmetric particles, and to seek out the existence of additional dimensions. However, the particle accelerator cannot create matter, only destroy or change it. Man cannot create something from nothing. Presumably the aim is to try to create a particle that may have existed immediately after the Big-Bang, but it would probably only survive for a microsecond. We will watch this with interest¹.

On March 16, 2009, the Templeton Foundation announced the winner of its annual £1M prize to Bernard d’Espagnat, a French physicist at the University of Paris-Sud. He receives the award from the Duke of Edinburgh at Buckingham Palace for his work using theoretical physics to predict the reality of a hypercosmic god, who exists outside of the physical universe².

So science now recognises the existence of God as well as additional dimensions, although the Bible and other ancient Hebrew writings show recognition of their existence thousands of years ago. The Spanish scholar Nachmonides in the 12th century, studying of the text of the early chapters of Genesis, concluded that they express the universe as having ten dimensions³.

There are 7 Hebrew words for Heavens found in the Old Testament:

Vilon – is the word for curtain or tent as where God stretches out the heavens. (Isaiah 40:22)

Rakia – refers to the physical or visible heavens containing the sun, moon and stars (Genesis 1:17).

Shechakim – refers to the atmosphere (Psalm 78:23).

Zevul – is the habitation where God’s glory exists as in the Heavenly City (Isaiah 63:15).

Maon – is the place where angels reside from which come songs (Psalm 42:8)

Machon – refers to the storehouses where the treasures of rain, snow and hail reside (Deuteronomy 26:15).

Aravot – is the storehouse of righteousness and peace, where angel beings reside and possibly the spirits of those not yet born in waiting (Psalm 6:4).

To our understanding, these descriptions may seem primitive, but they illustrate the revelation to the early Jews that there are unseen realities above and beyond what can be seen.

We live in a 3-Dimensional world: Height, length and depth or x, y and z coordinates. However, mathematically or conceptually, there are many more dimensions, although we can only perceive and understand 3 dimensions. Time or duration can be regarded as the fourth dimension. Though an object travels through time, we can only see it at one point in time. Mathematically it can be shown that there are in fact 10 possible dimensions⁴.

Our 3 dimensional universe is not all that God created. There are other dimensions, referred to in the Bible as the heavenlies. As we have mentioned, there are 7 words which are definitions of 'the heavens' in the Hebrew Bible, which, when added to the 3 we can perceive gives us the 10 dimensions. Some of these may be populated by other beings, known as cherubim, seraphim, angels and demons that we are unable to communicate with. We are only able to perceive and understand a small part of the whole. This is why the supernatural is so hard for us to grasp and accept. We have to be prepared to accept what we cannot see, hear or even understand and not lock ourselves into the small cave of our limited perception. Logic and reason often inhibit us from believing. We have to become like a child emerging from the womb, ready to learn and absorb the richness of the real world.

To help us understand the concept of other dimensions, let us first look at the relationship between the dimensions we can perceive. Consider, as an analogy, how we 3 dimensional people, if it were possible, might interact with a 2 dimensional world. Suppose I were able to take a large imaginary sheet and draw a flat 2D world that was actually alive, but I could control. Suppose there existed in that flat world some people that we will call flat people. I could see them, but they could not see me. In fact, flat people would not be able to see anything, as light and lenses are 3 dimensional. Therefore eyes would not be possible. So all they can do is touch each other at the edges as they come close to each other. They would not be able to comprehend us 3D people in our 3D world. If a ball were to be pushed through their world, it would appear initially as a dot, expanding into a circle of increasing size, then decreasing back to a dot before disappearing. I could paint and add 2D shapes to the flat world. I could move things in and out of their world as if by magic, but any 3D shapes would only appear as 2D cross-sections. I could get much closer to them than they could to each other, even touching many at the same time. I would have total power over them but they would have no power over me.

They might have an awareness of some presence from the 3D world, but it would be

very primitive. If I pushed my finger or hand into their world, they would perceive a round shape filled with moving pulsating shapes (blood vessels) moving around changing shape and size, but have no comprehension of the real me. They would never be able to fully understand me, but at best would get a sense of 2D attributes. If they were aware of my presence at all, individual flat people would have different interpretations and views of me that might seem arbitrary. I might even appear to them as something that was inconsistent and made no sense.

Flat people would be totally visible to me. There would be nowhere they could hide. I would be able to see everything they do, think or plan to do, because everything would be visible. I would be able to do anything I want to their world at the flick of a finger.

What a primitive and restricted existence it would be to live in a 2D world, compared to a 3D world. Now consider how primitive our 3D world is to God.

We cannot comprehend God, but we are totally visible to Him and He can see our every move, plans and motives. There is nowhere to hide. 'Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.' (Psalm 139:7-10)

Imagine a flat people rebellion in which they try to attack me or overthrow me. They could shake their fists and shoot rockets at me without any effect. It would be laughable. But that is exactly what man does with God. Man tries to ignore Him, rebel against Him, resist Him, all to no avail. 'The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.' (Psalms 2:2-4)

We are absolutely dependent upon God and should welcome His presence in our world and into our lives. To resist and fight against Him is futile.

Consider another example. In the world of the Internet, we are familiar with communication using chat rooms. This is a virtual reality in which people set up a name and identity for themselves. They can enter and leave and communicate in real time. Now it would be possible for a person to live in such an environment and almost never interact with real life. Or take something like the film *The Truman Show* in which the main character lives in a contrived artificial world, which is being

observed as a live TV show. There could be a virtual reality that the person could create for himself, and never venture out into the world of face-to-face relationships. It may even be possible that they could get to think that this was the only reality. We live in a 3D world, but there are in existence many more dimensions that we cannot perceive with our senses or understand with our minds.

Yet another way of looking at this is to consider how an earth-worm, whose perception of life is nothing more than the pressure of its immediate environment on its nose and body, would appreciate the world of humans with all its complexity. We would find it extremely difficult to communicate with the earthworm, but it would have much greater difficulty in trying to communicate with humans. In fact, it would be impossible without assistance from humans.

These are just analogies, but they illustrate how we can be unaware of these other higher dimensional worlds. God, by definition dwells in another dimension, but is able to interact with our 3 dimensional world without us being able to understand how.

Think then of the richness of a 3 dimensional world, compared to a 2 dimensional world. We can comprehend the fourth dimension, which is duration or time. We can only observe the instant of time we are in. If we were able to see into the fourth dimension, everything would appear to us as a series of tubes, like spaghetti. Take the simple example of a ball rolling down a static hill. At the start of our time slot it would appear as a ball. A second later we would see the ball further down the hill, joined by a ball sized tube. After a minute the tube would be a lot longer. A being outside of time, would be able to see the whole of the existence of the universe, starting with the point of the big bang and ending with the end of time, with the part in the middle expanding to the maximum size, filled with intertwining trails of spaghetti. Hard to imagine, but hopefully you can get the picture.

The fourth dimension comprises actually what happened during the passage of time; the actual choices made and how they are consequentially resolved. The fifth and sixth dimensions comprises all of the possible other outcomes of the fourth dimension, which is hard to visualise.

You can get from one dimension to the next by folding. A straight line is one dimension, but if it is folded it becomes a plane or 2 dimensional. If you take a 2 dimensional sheet and fold it, you create the 3rd dimension, which includes solid objects with form. If you fold the 3rd dimension, you get the 4th dimension which is an object moving through time. If you fold the 4th dimension, you get the 5th

dimension which is every possible direction the moving object could have gone, and so on. After that it gets mind blowing. It can be shown mathematically that there are 10 dimensions, although this is far too complicated to explain in this book³.

A possible way of looking at the 5th and 6th dimensions is to think of the 3 dimensional universe as it is moving along the line of the 4th dimension, which is duration or time as it actually happened. This time line is analogous to the first dimension, length, in our 3 dimensional world. The 5th and 6th dimensions are equivalent to the breadth and height representing what might have happened if things had taken a different turn of events. We can now begin to see that God, inhabiting at least the 7th dimension, could look into the 6th dimension and see what would have happened if things had been different.

The reason for introducing the concept of dimensions early on in this book is because we will make frequent references to it. Having a rudimentary understanding of dimensions helps us understand some seemingly impossible miracles as feasible when the One who performs them is outside of space and time.

This now begins to give us feasible solutions to some of the questions that people have wrestled with and have not found satisfactory answers. I will deal with a few.

For example, in Joshua 10:12-13, Joshua cries out to God to make the sun stand still so that he can complete and win the battle, and God does it. Again in Kings 20:8-11, Hezekiah asks Isaiah to request that God would give him a sign by moving the shadow backwards by 10 degrees. God brought the shadow backwards 10 degrees. Now, confined to a 3 dimensional universe, these are impossibilities. Did the Earth actually stop turning for several hours? Did the Earth actually stop and reverse by 10 degrees on its axis? If so, everything on it would have stopped dead and gone into reverse. At the equator, the surface of the earth is moving at close to 1000 miles per hour. Imagine the effect of an instant stop and reversed spin. If it were possible it would be catastrophic with everything flying off into space.

But looking at this from a 5th dimensional perspective there is a solution. These kinds of ‘impossibilities’ are extremely rare events because God does not trivially digress the laws He created. But for some exceptional situations He can use the 5th dimension to take the universe along a different path than it took in the 4th dimension and reverse an event that has already taken place. He could equally well change a future event that is destined to happen.

Another example of miracles that seem impossible is that of resurrection from the

dead. Take the case of Lazarus in John 11. When Jesus arrives on the scene, Lazarus has been dead and buried for 4 days, by which time serious decomposition has set in. When Jesus cried 'Lazarus come forth!', did that command immediately reverse the decomposition of the body or provide him with a complete set of organs or a new body? I think not. More likely, in the 5th dimension, the event of Lazarus's death was stopped and another path taken in which he lived.

These are incredible miracles and not to be detracted from by such analysis, but it does give a possible solution to some seemingly irrational situations.

The resurrection of Jesus as we shall discuss later is a totally different situation, since Lazarus and other such examples were resurrected only to die again some years later.

These miracles cannot be performed by anyone within our universe and illustrate the fact that God, manifested in Jesus truly is from outside of our dimension and far above our capacity to understand by human reasoning. All we can do is believe what He says and walk by faith.

Let's consider a couple of philosophical questions.

What happens to people who die prematurely, in particular, babies and even the foetus that is aborted? In the 4th dimension of time, an event took place, such as an illness, an accident, a miscarriage or abortion, which made the time line of that being to cease. But in the 5th dimension there is a path that would have been followed had they continued to exist. We can perhaps speculate, but cannot see what might have happened, but God certainly can. He can actually see what would have happened to that person had the catastrophic event not taken place. He can therefore see and judge the person as to what they would have done with His offer of salvation and on that basis he can decide on their eternal destiny. I believe that every person who has ever been conceived will be in eternity, either in Heaven with God or in hell, without him. Therefore people who have lost babies before or after birth can take comfort in that they can look forward to meeting up with them in eternity, not as babies, but as fully matured spiritual beings.

The second thorny question that is answerable by the dimension theory is that of predestination versus free will. Theologians have argued for centuries on this one. Essentially the question relates to whether a person is predestined to follow a certain path or whether they have total free will. In particular, whether a person is saved because they chose to be or whether it is the sovereign will of God overriding free will. If you adopt the latter position then it could be claimed that God is unjust in sending anyone to hell, when it is He who has made that decision. Statements such as

the words of Jesus ‘You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit’ (John 15:16) appear to be at odds with ‘whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.’ (John 3:15) The first statement indicates that God chooses to save a person. The second that anyone may believe and receive God’s offer of salvation, that is forgiveness from sin, because of the sacrifice of Jesus. It is open to anyone, and in that sense everyone is chosen. At a point in time an individual may have accepted or reject God’s offer, but God knows what they will do in the future and in all possible futures and what they would have done given a different past. So it would appear that a person born into a Christian home would have a better chance of salvation than one born into an atheistic environment, but God can see what would have been the outcome if the situation had been reversed. God looks on the heart of a person rather than judging by their outward actions or appearance. In that knowledge, we can be sure that God will judge everyone justly rather than on the basis of an accident of birth or circumstance, genetic or environmental factors.

Communication between these dimensions is very difficult, particularly for the lower levels. Conceptually we could easily interrupt the 2 dimensional flat world from our 3 dimensional world by writing or moving things in and out, although if we spoke to them they would not be able to hear as sound waves require 3 dimensions. So with all our powers of communication, it would be frustrating and limiting to converse or interact with a flat person. So you can see how frustrating it could be for God with His infinite power to interact and communicate with us 3 dimensional people. We should be amazed by His patience to continually reach out to us. That is true love. We shall discuss later how God communicates with us. The lower order dimension has no power to communicate with the higher order. So it is with man: we cannot initiate communication with the Creator. No amount of religious activity can impress or ingratiate Him. He sets the rules and the boundaries. He created us and He decides how we communicate with Him. He wrote the operations manual for us to live by – the Bible. We cannot pick and chose what to believe and what to obey without potentially dire consequences. He knows what is best for us and anything else is harmful. He knows not only the future, in the 4th dimension, but he can see all the possible outcomes in the 5th dimension. We have no option therefore but to trust him. He cannot only see, but He can change the future. How foolish we would be to trust our own instincts and senses, like an earthworm crawling blindly towards a lawnmower, when we have our Creator who loves us giving direction and guidance for our best. He can see, not only the next hour or day, not just the next 100 years, but every possible outcome throughout our existence and for all eternity and that for every individual who has ever lived. It is foolishness not to trust our lives to his keeping.

The Bible is partly a history book, although much of it was written before the events

happened. To us this is impossible, but to God, being outside time and space, the future can be seen and changed as easily as the past. Much of the Bible refers to events that are still to take place. How many have wished they had a crystal ball or some means to see into the future, to be able to back the winning horse or predict the stock market. The Bible does not deal with such trivialities, but it does tell us about staggeringly significant events, past and future. For example, it tells us that the nations of the world will gather together and unite under one government that will be headed up by a man, seemingly a man of peace, but who actually will turn out to be more evil than Hitler; that he will force everyone to receive a mark (possibly a subcutaneous bio-chip implant) in order to be able to buy or sell; or alternately live as a starving outcast. How should we prepare for or respond to this kind of prophetic information? Would the Bible give sufficient information to enable us to escape the clutches of such a corrupt government?

These events will occur because they are predicted in the Bible, but exactly when they happen may depend on certain other events. It is possible that by our actions we can delay the onset of what is called 'The Great Tribulation'.

Before we begin to look at such questions, we must first examine the credentials and authority of the Bible. Can we really trust its message or is it just a load of myths and fairy tales?

We have to recognise that whilst the history and stated facts of the Bible are reliable and trustworthy, there are also hidden messages and codes, which the casual reader will miss. Much of this encoded message is lost to us because the codification relies on knowledge of the practices and culture at the time of writing. Through research and archaeology, we have been able to understand more about the times and hence decode some of the messages.

6. Hidden Codes in the Bible

The Bible is by no means a straightforward book written by well meaning observers. It is read by most people as a series of stories and descriptions, but embedded in the text are all kinds of different hidden meanings, which the casual reader would never notice. They are there for a number of reasons. Firstly as we examine these codes, we will see that they are from a supernatural source and could not have been devised by any human, as they require knowledge not available to us. Some of the encoding is so complex that even with our sophisticated computer technology we would find it impossible to reproduce. Clearly as the codes reference the future, the author would have to be a person outside of our space and time. Secondly, they can only be found by a person searching diligently, which in doing so will cause them to better engage with the Author. Thirdly, some of the encodings ensure that transcription errors are eradicated during copying.

At one level there is the overall plan of salvation, which was revealed little by little over centuries and certainly does not become clear until the New Testament. It took a man of the intellect and spiritual discernment of Paul the Apostle to grasp the deeper significance and record his thoughts in letters to churches, which have been miraculously preserved for posterity. Indeed the very existence of The Universal Church is hidden in the Jewish Old Testament and its existence was not revealed until Jesus spelled it out to Peter. (Acts 10)

But much of the Hebrew and Greek text is complex with underlying messages and codes.

‘It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honour of kings is to search out a matter’ (Proverbs 25:2).

There is a level of encoding in the Torah and much of the Old Testament, which has really only come to light with the advent of computers, commonly known as the Bible Code. It was discovered, in relatively recent history, by Isaac Newton, a rabbi called Eli Rips and others, although it was probably known about in part by early Jewish writers. The encoding is clearly supernatural, because no human could possibly have devised it. It involves counting through equal numbers of characters to spell out a word or phrase, which can be represented in the form of an acrostic. This is known as equidistant letter sequencing or ELS.

Newton noticed in Genesis counting from the first and skipping 50 letters spelled out TVRH, which is the Hebrew spelling of the Torah, and spent much of his life trying to find other encodings. The same encoding is also found in Exodus. In Numbers and

Deuteronomy the encoding is there but in reverse, spelling HRVT. It is not in Leviticus, but in the place it would be expected to be found are the letters YHVH, which is the name of God as revealed to Moses. So the five books of the Torah point to God.

The advent of the computer has enabled us to easily and quickly search for all kinds of hidden information¹.

Some other examples: in Genesis 2:9, the Hebrew text for ‘And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil’ contains a large number of the names of trees encoded as ELS. There is still a lot of controversy over the Bible Code with people trying to show it works with other texts, like War and Peace, but without much success.

There have been many claims made about the future being predicted in the Bible Codes, also involving names of modern day events and individuals crossed by information about them like their birth dates, death dates, manner of death and so on. Perhaps one of the most famous claims is the name ‘Yitsak Rabin’ crossed with the words ‘Assassin that will assassinate’ sent to the then Israeli prime minister in 1994. Rabin was assassinated in 1995². Care has to be taken in that many of the claims about predicting dates of future world wars have come and gone without the anticipated holocaust. However, as we have discussed, whilst events are predicted in the Bible, dates are generally not given since times can be affected by other events. To some extent it comes back to faith: you will try to prove what you want to believe.

Both Hebrew and Greek letters have a numerical value. There are many examples of use of the numerical values that authenticate text, rather like the use of check digits in computer data storage. A common occurrence in the Bible is the adding up the numerical values of people’s names, which are often divisible by 7. Seven, in the scriptures is the number of perfection or completeness. Dr Ivan Panin, a Russian mathematical genius, around 1890 discovered highly complex numerical patterns in both the Hebrew and Greek texts and spent a lifetime investigating them. For example, there are 21 Old Testament writers whose names appear in the Bible (3 x 7). The numeric value of their names is divisible by seven. Of these 21, seven are named in the New Testament: Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Hosea and Joel. The numeric value of their names is 1554 (222 x 7). David's name is found 1134 times (162 x 7).

Even the first verse of the Torah in Hebrew, ‘In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth’ contains a host of ‘seven’ examples. To mention a few:

The number of Hebrew words = 7

The number of letters equals 28 ($7 \times 4 = 28$)

The first 3 words translated "In the beginning God created" have 14 letters ($7 \times 2 = 14$)

The last four Hebrew words "the heavens and the earth" have 14 letters ($7 \times 2 = 14$)

The three key words: God, heaven and earth have 14 letters ($7 \times 2 = 14$)

The shortest word in the verse is the middle word with 7 letters

The numeric value of the first, middle and last letters is 133 ($7 \times 19 = 133$)

The numeric value of first and last letters of all seven words is 1393 ($7 \times 199 = 1393$)

And there are many more examples of 7's in that short passage.

Thousands of such occurrences can be found and volumes have been written on this kind of phenomena. Investigations into these numerical structures show that the Bible is much more than a straightforward ancient story. They have resulted in the conversion of atheistic mathematicians into Bible believing Christians. Mathematicians have been challenged, even using computers, to reproduce this kind of algorithm in any language and have failed³.

There are other forms of hidden codes, such as the names of kings and places encoded, possibly to maintain secrecy. Techniques like transpositions of letters and shifting letters to the left or right are used. You can see how someone like Newton became almost obsessed with searching and wrote far more about the Bible than any of his renowned scientific discoveries.

Yet another form of secret message is found in the parables of Jesus. To understand the message requires some knowledge of the culture, but even this was usually inadequate, as most of his hearers did not get it. Jesus said to the disciples, 'Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand' (Luke 8:10). So the hearers were not even supposed to know the hidden meaning, which is a strange paradox. God said of Israel 'Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.' (Isaiah 6:9-10) It would seem that Israel was prevented from understanding the message as God had a greater purpose to fulfil which we are seeing unfold in our time, as we shall discuss later.

Jesus spoke in parables as recorded in Matthew's gospel, with the words 'Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.' (Matthew 13:9) These words are reflected again in the

Revelation, in the words of Jesus, where between Revelation 2:7 and 3:22 ‘ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches’ is quoted 7 times. This should give us a clue to a link. Careful study of the parables shows that they are properly explained by Jesus, 60 years later as He appears to John in the Revelation. There is a direct correspondence between the parables and the messages to the Churches.

There are many other examples where God speaks in riddles and veiled language that is only understood by the diligent searcher. How amazing that some of those codes could not be unveiled until the invention of the computer in our time, thousands of years after they were written. This indicates the significance of the Bible to our generation.

We do not look to ELS, coding or numbers to prove anything or to add to our theological understanding, but they do add another dimension of authenticity and show the supernatural nature of this amazing Book. We know that scribes responsible for copying the Bible text made sure that every letter was transcribed exactly and that a scroll containing an error would be discarded. Coding, such as ELS and counting up of letters would ensure the copies were exact. We shall refer to the Bible Code from time to time in this book as, in spite of the controversy, there are some convincing examples.

Why God would go to such lengths to hide such coding is a mystery, although being the person He is, in some higher dimension, such techniques would be very easy to produce. As we get to understand these deep secrets, it creates a great respect for the Bible.

It has been suggested that the Hebrew language was direct from God. When God gave the commandments and the written instructions to Moses on tablets of stone on mount Sinai, that may have been the origin of the written Hebrew language. It is even possible that the language, the commandments and indeed the entire Torah may have existed in the Heavens even before Creation and was actually the blueprint used by God for Creation and given to Moses after the event. Certainly there is a uniqueness about the Hebrew language and the Torah that is to be found in no other language or literature.

However, there is a greater power at work, who is called the Holy Spirit. He is a powerful being, part of God himself who will enter the mind of a willing person and give unique inspiration and revelation over and above the obvious. Research alone is not enough. Revelation comes to people who are willing to offer their hearts and

minds as a sacrifice to God, who will allow the Holy Spirit to teach them and enable and equip them to pass on this information to others. The Bible is indeed the Word of God, but without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit it is still just a book.

7. The Purpose of Life

It is clear from the Bible that the Creator intended from the very beginning to enter the world that he had created, as a human being. His purpose was not just to communicate with humanity, but to become a human. He also intended to provide the means by which human beings could be translated from the mere physical world into an infinitely greater spiritual world. Ordinary flesh and blood cannot exist in the spiritual realm. For a person to pass from this 3 dimensional world into the spiritual realm, sometimes called the Heavens, requires regeneration and a level of purity that is naturally unobtainable. It requires a lifestyle that is impossible to achieve; to be so pure in thought, motive, word and action that no person alive can carry it out. It is not like passing an exam and achieving distinction, because the pass-mark is 100%. Not just for a single test but every day and every hour of your life. Less than that, and you don't make it to Heaven.

As a youngster, my main love in life was rock-climbing. When you are 200 feet above the ground on a sheer rock-face, one false move would be fatal. You have two options if you don't want to die. One is to climb with perfection and never make a mistake throughout the entire climb. The other is to have a rope to catch you if you fall. The lead climber would not have a top-rope and had to climb flawlessly until he reached a place of safety and could belay or tie on to a sturdy protrusion. Sometimes he would hammer a metal spike called a piton into a crack in the rock face for extra support. He then brings up the other climbers, who are fully supported by the top-rope. In coming to earth as a human in the form of Jesus, God provided the equivalent of the lead climber. He did not make any mistakes, but His perfection allows us to make mistakes and still survive. Without Him we are doomed. No analogy is perfect, but this illustrates the point.

God's eternal plan was to come to the world He created to be a substitute for each person, to go ahead and make the way to enable us to enter Heaven without having the ability to live the perfect life. He lived the perfect life on our behalf. This is indeed good news for us mortals.

God is a spiritual being of whom the greatest attribute is Love. Love requires an object. He had previously created many beings as already mentioned, like angels, which were programmed to obey Him. But love is not satisfied with a conditioned response. It would be like developing a robot or computer programme to make all the responses to appear to love the designer. That would be most unsatisfactory. A loving relationship requires both parties to voluntarily give of themselves unselfishly, involving passion, romance and many other attributes that are difficult to put into words. So God has a problem: how to create beings to love that are not automatically

programmed to love, but who would voluntarily respond in the right way without being made to.

Marriage and sexual union were given to us to enable us to partially understand what this is all about. God is the type of the male or husband and the human race is the type of the female or wife. This great spiritual being went to enormous lengths to create for himself this 'wife'. Picture it as though he is half of a sphere and mankind is represented by the other half and one day they will come together they will make up a whole. It is hard to visualise the reality, but this may be a helpful analogy. The great plan of creation is to bring about that union at the end of time, which will then last for eternity.

The problem is that God is unbelievable pure and anything that is impure coming close to him would immediately be destroyed.

Consider an analogy. Just suppose the sun had a personality and fell in love with the Earth. The sun would want to come close and embrace the Earth, but the result would be that everything comprising the Earth would be burned up and destroyed. The Earth would just be absorbed and disappear. All that would be left would be the same elements as make up the sun.

So it is with mankind and God. If he were to embrace us in our sinfulness and rebellion we would be consumed. Natural man does not want to be embraced by God. The price is too high. It means allowing the self to be destroyed. God gave man a code to live by to attain that purity to avoid destruction, but no man has ever been able to attain that level of perfection. So, as the Bible says 'ALL have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23) and therefore all are destined for destruction. What a horrible dilemma for God. But from the beginning, God, knowing the future had made a plan. The plan was that he would trade places with each individual who was willing, and die Himself in order that they could live eternally. It was an amazing and outrageous plan to fulfil the law and pay the penalty, without actually killing the object of his love. Now this may sound simple, but we humans do not fully understand the magnitude of that transaction. Somehow God had to convey this message to the human race and then carry out the plan in person. Both were absolutely necessary. Mankind had to understand what was going to happen so that when God carried out the plan, people would be willing and able to carry out their side of the transaction. So there were 3 elements to the transaction: the Plan, communication of the Plan and execution of the Plan.

The Plan was thought up before the creation of the world, before time began.

Communication of the plan to mankind took about 4000 years. Execution of the plan took a further 2000 years. The execution is two sides of a covenant: God's side and Man's side.

Throughout the Bible there is this underlying plan that is never fully understood until you reach the end of the book. Even though it was written over a period of 1500 years, by about 40 writers, there is a consistent message that is building throughout the Bible concerning the Plan. Quite possibly none of the writers actually understood the big picture. They could only see and write about their little piece of the puzzle. Much of the truth and meaning appears to have been deliberately hidden, forcing the reader to search to find a deeper meaning. At first reading it appears to be just a history of a nation called Israel with stories about its heroes and villains, but underlying all of this, for those who are persistent and want to find it, there is a much deeper message, which permeates the whole book.

Maybe it is only in these 'last days' that we can actually begin to get the clearer picture. Even a hundred years ago, some of the things predicted in the Bible would not have seemed possible and were therefore regarded as allegory. For example, the existence of Israel as a nation in its own land would not have seemed possible and so the references to this in Biblical version of the end times would have been presumed to be allegorical.

So we are extremely privileged to be able to have this wider perception. Scientific and technological advancement, which had been thought to draw us away from God, rather are enabling us to better understand and even fulfil some of the prophecies, as well as giving us a better grasp of the true meaning of life, if we are open and willing to search for it. There has been no better and exciting time to be alive than now, to be able to see 6000 years of promise coming to fruition before our very eyes and be actually be a part of it, playing a key role in the fulfilment of God's eternal plan.

8. Outline of the Bible message.

The first man and woman on earth were given very simple instructions by God. They could do whatever they liked, but were not to eat of the fruit of one particular tree. They were told that to disobey these instructions would kill them: just like you might instruct a child not to play on the motorway. Enticed by Satan, they disobeyed God's instruction and ate the forbidden fruit. The seeds of rebellion were sown leading to death. Physical death was not immediate, but death entered the human race. At this point the first hint of God's salvation plan is introduced. God himself kills an animal and uses the skin to cover the nakedness and vulnerability of man and woman. The animal was sacrificed as a substitute for the humans. The animal died in order that they could live. They were to live physically a further few hundred years, but the relationship with God was severely and permanently damaged.

After that, over many hundreds of years humans procreated until the earth was quite heavily populated. Meanwhile, in another dimension, another rebellion was going on. Spiritual beings created by God, from another spiritual dimension, liked what they saw on earth and actually took up alien residence in humans. Human beings became possessed by the demonic. Genesis tells us, 'The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.' (Gen 6:2-4)

So instead of the pure breed of humans that God had created, they now became polluted with rebellious and gigantic half-breeds. This also defied God's creation plan that each species would multiply after its own kind. This was an engineered mutation – evolution if you like - and God was not putting up with it. So he destroyed the entire land-based living world with a gigantic flood, preserving only one man, Noah and his family.

From this family the earth was repopulated, but within several generations the world had again become corrupted and rebellious towards the Creator. Worship of other gods, promiscuity and child sacrifice were rife.

This time, God did not destroy mankind, but chose a man, Abram, to educate and teach the way he was to live in order to pass this teaching on through his family line. From Abram, whose name God changed to Abraham, came a family and subsequently a nation, which we know today as Israel, Hebrews or Jews. Abraham and his descendents were given the land east of the Mediterranean, which today would cover Israel, Jordan, parts of Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

Israel has had a stormy and ambivalent relationship with God since that time. He

dearly loves them and will keep His covenant with them forever as He promised to Abraham, but because of their disobedience and rebellion, God had to discipline them. He drove them from that land into exile and dispersion on a number of occasions. But the land still belonged to them and it always will.

A major part of the teaching that God gave to Israel was a very precise sacrificial system, a priesthood and tabernacle or temple. Over a period of about 2000 years Israel carried out the sacrifices, several times a day and more so on special feast days. The purpose was to atone for sin. Whenever a person sinned in various ways, there was a special type of sacrifice in which the slaughtered animal took the place of the sinner so that the sinner could be forgiven and live.

After 2000 years of this teaching and the preservation of at least a remnant of this nation of Israel, God was ready to carry out the final part of the Plan. He had prepared a pure ancestral line into which He would be born as a man, which culminated in a young virgin girl called Mary. Into her womb He placed a fertilised seed, which comprised the DNA of God himself – in modern parlance, a clone of the Creator.

The baby was born and grew into a man called Jeshua (Hebrew) or Jesus (in English) who lived a perfect life, fulfilling every aspect of God's law. Then he laid down his life by allowing cruel men to nail him to a wooden cross and hang there until He died. In doing so the infinite God was now the ultimate perfect substitutionary sacrifice dying in the place of anyone who was willing to allow him to stand in their place. Thus the requirements of the Law were fulfilled but mercy was shown on the sinner who deserved to die.

However, because he had fulfilled every part of the Law, Jesus was not subject to death and God raised him from the dead. After 3 days he was resurrected to live again and was seen by over 500 people. About 7 weeks later in view of hundreds of people, he was simply airlifted into the clouds. Unlikely as it sounds, this was witnessed by hundreds of people who would testify even to the point of torture and death that this was so. These witnesses became a persecuted minority who were driven out of Jerusalem by the authorities.

Largely because of persecution, but empowered by the Holy Spirit, the good news about Jesus spread across the Roman Empire. With many miraculous signs and wonders the adherents grew at an astonishing rate.

Nearly 40 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus, in AD70, the Romans finally destroyed and flattened Jerusalem, driving what remained of the Jewish nation out of Israel into slavery, captivity and across the world. To add insult, they renamed the land Philistine, which was the name of the old enemy of Israel since the days of Saul and David. The area, which became known as Palestine, reverted largely to desert and wilderness and remained that way for over 1900 years.

During that time there was nothing that could be called the Jewish nation. Jews were scattered across many countries, but even though many tried to hide and changed their names, they were never integrated or accepted as natives. Throughout history they remained a persecuted people and there were several attempts to annihilate them, such as the Inquisition and the Holocaust. Around 1900 a steady trickle of Jews began to try to get back to their homeland. The Jews were reinstated as a nation and given the land of Israel in 1948 and according to the Bible, they will play a major role in God's plan in time to come.

Over the past 2000 years, hundreds of millions of people have become disciples of Jesus Christ, together making up what is called The Church. That brings us to today: but this is not the end of the matter.

We believe from reading the Bible that, Jesus is coming back to Earth to take the Church to be his bride, as was planned from the very beginning of creation, to be with him in Heaven. The indications are that this will be quite soon. We don't pretend to understand this and it does all sound very unlikely, but remember the discussions we had previously about dimensions and perception. God is going to take his bride from this 3 dimensional world into a much higher dimensional universe. This will be a supernatural event that will make Star Trek teleportation look quite ordinary. We are able to grasp the concept of 'beam me up' in Star Trek movies. Something like that is actually going to happen, on a massive scale involving millions of people. The term used to describe this event is the Rapture.

Around the time at which the Rapture will take place, the world is going to enter a period of the most appalling suffering. There will be war, famine, worldwide cruel dictatorship and extreme persecution of people who do not fit in with society, particularly the Jews. It will be like Hitler's holocaust, but many times worse. It is called the Great Tribulation in the Bible. That is the point at which the Church will be taken out of the world to leave all the suffering behind and be with Jesus in Heaven. Opinions vary as to what point the rapture will take place. Some believe it will be before the tribulation begins, others think during and yet others afterwards. We will discuss the details later in the book.

However, that is still not the end. After this, Jesus is going to return to the Earth with an army of angels to destroy those who are still in rebellion against God and set up a Kingdom on Earth over which He will be King and many of those in the Church will help Him to govern the world. This will be a period of 1000 years known as the Millennium during which, under Jesus' rule, the earth will operate as it was supposed to before man sinned.

The headquarters of Jesus' Kingdom will be Jerusalem, which will be a Jewish city. Israel will be inhabited by Jews and Jesus will be Jewish – he is referred to as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. This fulfils the promises and covenants that God made with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David and a host of other patriarchs. Can you see now why the Jews are under such attack from the Godless world headed up by Satan? If the Jewish nation could be eliminated, then God's covenants cannot be fulfilled. God would then be shown either not to exist, or His Word, the Bible cannot be trusted or else He is not in control of the earth, let alone the universe. So God's name and reputation are on the line.

That is a potted history of the world from a Biblical perspective, from creation to the end of time. The story as explained above is not explicitly laid out, but can be found by searching the Bible and interpreting the messages. It can be pieced together only by reading the Bible from start to finish. A reason why people do not pick this up is that few actually read it right through again and again. They just pick out little stories and favourite texts, usually out of context, but without seeing it as a whole. It is deliberately hidden, to make people seek and search for answers. 'Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes'. (Matthew 11:25) The rest of this book will drill down into more detail expanding some of the major areas of interest.

The Bible is the word of God and will speak for itself: in fact God will speak through the Bible as you read, pray and meditate. Whilst certain paraphrased versions are good for devotional reading, for actual study I prefer to use as far as possible a literal translation, such as the Authorised or New King James or English Standard Version. The actual words are very important. In the Hebrew, the name of a place or person, or the exact meaning of a word can be extremely significant.

9. In the Beginning

In this chapter we will look at some of the issues surrounding creation, which are amongst the major reasons why people lose their faith. Since Darwin introduced the Theory of Evolution about 150 years ago, which seemingly made God obsolete, Christianity has struggled to defend its position of faith in the first chapters of Genesis in a scientific world.

Entropy

Before we begin to discuss creation, it is important to have an understanding of a few of fundamental principles that govern the universe.

First Law of Thermodynamics, which we have already discussed, states that energy can be changed from one form to another, but it cannot be created or destroyed. The total amount of energy and matter in the Universe remains constant, merely changing from one form to another. Energy is always conserved: it cannot be created or destroyed.

The Second Law of Thermodynamics states that, in all energy exchanges, if no energy enters or leaves the system, the potential energy of the state will always be less than that of the initial state. This is also commonly referred to as Entropy. A clock spring will run until the potential energy in the spring is converted, and not again until energy is reapplied to the spring to rewind it. Once the potential energy locked in carbohydrates is converted into kinetic energy (energy in use or motion), the organism will get no more until energy is input again in the form of food. Entropy is a measure of disorder. Entropy wins when organisms cease to take in energy and die.

In its basic form, the law of Entropy states that everything proceeds in a one way direction from order towards chaos unless there is intervention. Other examples are the way hot articles cool down until they take on the ambient temperature; the way that life gives way to death; rocks erode into sand; ordered gardens degenerate into a wilderness. None of these processes are reversible without the injection of external influence. Information cannot increase without intelligent design and input. Information can reduce, but it will not increase by chance.

These two laws show us that the universe was created at a certain point in time. It cannot have gradually come into being. Nothing could have just happened to bring it into existence by itself. Since then, energy and matter have been and are being

exchanged, but nothing is being added to the closed system of the universe. However, the exchange of energy and matter are going in the direction of entropy, towards chaos. There is nothing in the universe to move it in the opposite direction, towards order. The universe had to start with a fixed amount of energy and mass and order and eventually will die when all the matter, subject to the law of entropy has been turned into energy, as heat and light and radiation. Nothing within the universe can change that final destiny. Information from outside and intelligent intervention would be required to reverse that process.

These universal laws prove that creation in all its complexity cannot have come about by chance. Since each part of the universe is subject to these laws, the sum of all the parts cannot be subject to a different law. The universe and all of its parts were designed and fashioned by an intelligence belonging to a being who we call God. It was designed and created perfect, as perfect as it ever will be and is steadily deteriorating, getting slower, losing heat and order until eventually the universe will dissipate and die.

When did it start?

We can only observe data as we see it today or have measured and recorded in the past since records have been maintained. No human being was present during creation and therefore everything we know has to be inferred. Or the One who was there and effected creation has to be believed. The problem with inference is that it requires assumptions, which if they are incorrect invalidate the conclusions. An example, as we have discussed, is the speed of light, which was assumed to be a constant and now has proved to be variable.

Science can only work with observable facts and provable laws. To go beyond that, is an act of faith. Since we cannot prove what happened at the start of the universe, as we shall discuss, it makes sense to believe the description of One who not only witnessed it, but made it happen. The alternative is to believe a story made up by people who were not there, even when observable facts actually contradict what they are speculating. We will begin by examining the Biblical account, which points to a time somewhere around 6000 years ago.

6 Days of Creation

The first chapter of Genesis describes creation in terms of days, beginning with the evening, followed by the morning. On the first day God created the universe which was formless and empty. This implies a liquid or gaseous state and in motion. He also separated light from darkness. This was not a day and night as we know it since the sun had not been created. It was a period of time known only to God who is eternal. The light does not refer to the light of the sun, but rather light and power and energy in the fullest sense of the word. In this he was creating the laws by which the universe was destined to operate for its duration. He was creating the atom, the very fabric of the universe, separating positive from negative out of nothing. If an equal positive and negative charge are brought together, they destroy each other with a release of energy and destruction of the matter. This is the basis of the atomic or nuclear bomb in which matter is converted to energy. Creation is the reverse of this process. The act of creation is to make something out of nothing and man is unable to do this. By the power of His Word, God injected energy into nothingness to create the 3 dimensional universe. In a supernatural act, all the energy in the universe was created in an instant at the Big Bang and entropy was reversed in order to create matter.

It would be as easy for God to do this from His eternal dimension as it would be for me to take a sheet of paper and draw a picture. As a 3 dimensional being I can create, change and destroy 2 or even 3 dimensional objects. So God can just create whatever He wants in our universe.

The Bible tells us that the physical universe is not eternal. It had a beginning and it has an end. Whilst evolutionists would like us to believe that the beginning was billions of years ago and it will continue for millions more years, the Bible implies that the age of the universe is much less, counted in thousands of years and the end is little more than 1000 years away. However, before the end, there is a lot yet to happen, which we will discuss later,

In trying to reconcile the Biblical account with scientific position, some Christians believe that God created the earth and its inhabitants through evolution; so called Theistic Evolution. They would argue that the 'day' may be thousands or millions of years. Scriptures that are quoted to support this state that a day to God is as a thousand years and a thousand years are but a day (2 Peter 3:8 and Psalm 90:4). Some argue that the writer of Genesis, possibly Moses, seeing the creation process in a vision as a series of snapshots, would interpret this as a series of consecutive days.

However, if you adopt the position that creation took place over millions or billions of years and try to reconcile this with the Biblical account, the Biblical order does not make sense. The sun and the moon, which are essential to life on earth as we know it, were not created until day 4. However, until day 4 we have no clock upon which to

base the time. The day would probably not be 24 hours which is the time taken for the earth to rotate once on its axis facing the sun. It could have been billions of years, since time on Earth had no meaning until the sun was created. So a possible solution to the conundrum could be that, of the 6-day creation, the first 3 days are some indeterminate period without time until the sun and moon were in place. For the remaining 3 days of creation, we can begin to measure time in terms of a day being a rotation of the earth. As we shall see later, 3 days is a significant time period to God.

Each day begins with darkness and chaos and ends in the light and order. This is reversal of entropy. Left to chance, the universe would obey the law of entropy and go from light and order into darkness and disorder. There has to be a first cause, which was God's word, speaking into darkness and bringing forth order. Correspondingly, the Jewish day uses God's definition, which begins at twilight rather than midnight. The convention we use in the west, based on the Gregorian calendar, begins at midnight and runs through to the next midnight, counting from 0 to 24 hours. The Jewish day begins at sunset. So, for example, the Jewish Sabbath day begins at say 6 pm on Friday evening and runs through to 6 pm on Saturday and so on. This is how God defined days in the beginning.

Let's look at the events of each day in more detail.

10. The 6 Days of Creation

No one knows or can prove what happened at the beginning of all things since no one was there. We can only surmise based on the evidence as we can see and interpret it. The purpose of this chapter is to give a rational basis for taking the Biblical Genesis narrative literally, without having to disengage the brain and without embarrassment.

First Day

First consider what Genesis says happened before or during the first day. We don't know when the darkness of the beginning begins, but we do know that it ended with the end of the first day in the light.

Gen 1:1 – 5. 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

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.

And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.

And the evening and the morning were the first day.'

Since there was no sun or moon at that point, we don't actually know how long that day was. The Biblical day 1 begins with evening, which was darkness and chaos, liquid or gaseous rather than solid, a high degree of entropy. Into this chaos, God brings light and order. But since He is eternal and does not dwell in time, which at that point had not been created, this cannot be measured in our terms. It could have been 24 earth type hours or billions of years, neither of which have any meaning in eternity. God describes himself later to his creation as the I AM. He exists outside of time.

The statement 'the earth WAS without form and void' is better interpreted as BECAME. The Hebrew word used is 'hayah', which is translated as 'to exist, become or come to pass'. The implication here is that the earth may have been already in existence prior to this first day in Genesis, that there may have been an indeterminate gap between verse 1 in which God created the universe and verse 2 during which the earth became formless and void.

This is a possible explanation for the apparent long age of the earth and the universe. To us it appears as millions of years, when in fact it was eternity. Because of our

limited perception in our 3D virtual reality world, eternity appears to us as a very long time, when in fact it really is timelessness.

The light referenced here is not that of the sun, but light in a broader sense of power: truth, illumination and positiveness. God himself 'is light, and in him is no darkness it all' (1 John 1:5). He is also called the Father of Lights (James 1:17). Jesus is referred to as 'the Light that lightens every man' (John 1:4). The light is extracted out of the pre-existent darkness. The positive words used in this account are light, day, morning, spirit in contrast with dark, night, evening, formless and void. The Hebrew word for night (*layel*) also has a sense of twisting or spiralling away from the light. This may align with our understanding of the structure of the atom with electrons spiralling away from protons at the microscopic level in a way that we can never understand why or how it happens. It could also be a reference to the spiralling of galaxies at the macro level. These are just the result of laws that God made in order to create the universe

So by the end of the first day, the laws of physics, chemistry and biology and the fundamentals of the universe were defined. The building blocks for life were in place.

It is also interesting to note that the idea of the Trinity of God appears in these first 3 verses. Verse 1 introduces God the Creator and ultimate Father of everything; verse 2, the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit and verse 3 the Light, which is an allusion to Jesus, the Light of the World. Was this the point at which Jesus was begotten of the Father? (John 1:14) This theme is reiterated in the Gospel of John. 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.' (John 1:1-5)

Second Day

Genesis 1:6-8. 'And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.'

The second day involved further separation, division of subterranean water from water in the sky (gases and water vapour) and sky from the heavens. As already discussed, Heavens in Hebrew has 7 different meanings, which may be analogous to the different dimensions. The firmament is the sky that we can see, the first heaven.

We cannot see the other 6 with the physical eye.

Day 2 is a period of the universe cooling, settling down and solidifying; condensation of gases into liquids and solids, the taking on of form from that which was formless. Up to this point, the earth would have been a white hot liquid ball spinning in empty space. As it cools, it develops a solid skin of rock beneath which there is liquid molten magma and trapped water, even today. Outside of this, the earth was surrounded by clouds of water vapour and other gases. So the solid crust of the earth separates liquid inside and outside. Some of the water outside would be in lakes, seas and rivers and a great deal more in the clouds. I suspect there was a lot more water actually above the earth than there is currently, giving a thick layer of protection as a greenhouse, from the harsh radiation of the sun. The temperature differences between day and night, summer and winter would have been far less than we experience giving a somewhat equitable and probably pleasant climate. As we shall see later, much of this water vapour was precipitated in a great flood raising the sea levels to what they are today.

Third day

Gen 1:9 – 13. ‘And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the third day.’

Day 3, which may have been millions of years on our timescale, involves further separation of dry land from water as the surface water settles into troughs to form the seas and lakes. The atmosphere would be heavily laden with water vapour, which is transparent and would allow the light to penetrate. At this stage there would have been no rain and hence no clouds would appear in the sky.

On this same day God prepares the ground, which would have involved erosion of the rocky crust to produce soil. He then begins to create vegetation. All of the trees and vegetation would be created fully formed with fruit and seeds. Still there is no sign of the sun. There would be no seasons or weather cycles, no tides, just a static landscape like a painting or video set to pause, waiting to burst into life.

If you want to make seeds grow, what do you do? As a child most of us have put

seeds or beans in a jar, watered them and put them into a dark cupboard for a few days. They do not require light to germinate. In fact seeds will last indefinitely if kept dry. So on day 3, God created the seeds with their DNA and everything required for growth buried in the darkness of the earth. Then next day he puts the sun in place. The heat from the sun causes growth and the light begins the photosynthesis processes. More time, like millions or billions of years adds nothing to this process. It does not help. No amount of time will turn a pond into a forest. No amount of light, electrical storms or any other natural force can turn hydrogen, oxygen and carbon into a plant. Entropy will go the other way, from life back into carbon and oxygen, but no amount of time can create something that does not already exist. That is the act only of an intelligent creator. It would have remained an inert landscape on freeze-frame until God hit the start button.

Up to this point the length of the days are indeterminate by our method of reckoning. The day begins with darkness and ends with light and we do not know exactly when during the day the creation events took place, only the order. The formation of the ground could have taken millions of years and the very last act at the end of the day could have been to create the seeds and plants ready to germinate, which then enter the period of darkness called night in preparation for the next major event. I suspect by this time God is beginning to get quite excited in anticipation of the next stages.

Fourth Day

Gen 1:14–19. ‘And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:

And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.’

On day 4 God created the sun and the moon to control the seasons, months, days and the tides. It used to be assumed that the earth and moon and other planets were part of the sun which spun off as molten bodies in some remote past. The theory was that a large body came close to the sun and through its gravity pulled a huge amount of gaseous material from the sun. This material condensed and solidified to form the solar planets, one of which was the Earth. This theory is by no means proven¹. The earth is actually spiralling in towards the sun whilst the moon is gradually moving away from the earth due to the sun's gravity². The Earth's rotation is actually slowing

down. The effect of this is to elongate the Earth through the poles, so that the circumference around the equator is slowly reducing³. As this happens the tectonic plates of the earth will begin to slide and move resulting in increased earthquakes. It would appear that this is happening very slowly at this point in time, but as we have seen, the rate of things happening is not necessarily totally predictable. Whether the sun, moon and stars were actually created on day 4 or whether the solar system was brought together on that day from existing celestial material is less important than the fact that it happened. This was then the signal for life to begin.

The precision involved in the seasons that we take for granted is astounding. The distance of the earth from the sun and the distance of the moon are so precise that even small differences would wipe out life on earth. It would be too hot or too cold or the tides would be too extreme. The tilt of the axis of the earth in relation to the sun cannot vary by much without causing extreme temperatures that would kill life on earth. The fact that the sun and moon appear to be the same size, when viewed from the earth even though the sun is 93 million miles away and the moon is just 300 thousand cannot be a coincidence.

During an eclipse of the moon, the shadow of the earth crosses the moon and appears to be about the same size. During an eclipse of the sun, the moon appears to be the same size as the sun, completely and exactly blotting out the sun. The mathematics and engineering to create such a precise model in a laboratory let alone in space is beyond our comprehension.

Of all the solar planets, the elliptical variation is least for Earth than any other planet, varying only by about 5%.

There is no explanation for these phenomena except that they were designed and created by an awesome intelligence.

From day 4 onwards, we can now begin to measure time in our terms, years, months and days. A year is the time required for the earth to circuit the sun. A month is the time for the moon to circuit the earth. A day is the time for the earth to revolve once on it's axis. The week of 7 days was defined by God, as part of the creation process.

The other time measurements we use which are the hour, minutes and seconds have no cosmic significance. These are man-made divisions of a day. The ancient Egyptians used to divide the daylight into 10 periods on their sundials, possibly relating to the number of digits on their hands for ease of counting⁴. A further two

periods of twilight morning and evening gives the twelve hours of the day. Using the same time division during the night gives the 24 hours. 60 minutes and 60 seconds is possibly just a useful number that became a convention, being multiples of 2,3,4,5,6,12,15, 20 and 30. Maybe seconds were close to the rate of a heartbeat of a healthy person.

Anyway, whilst the man-made concept of a 24 hour day came a lot later, the day, from this point onwards can be regarded as a single rotation of the earth, from sunset to sunset.

Fifth Day

Genesis 1:20–23. ‘And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moves, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.’

On day 5 the earth was populated with all kinds of living creatures to live in water and fly in the air. Fish and birds and great sea creatures were created, which may have included dinosaurs and sea monsters.

The creatures were created with their own specific DNA, with the exact number and type of chromosomes to define the species. The genetic instruction to multiply was built into the reproductive cells so that each one would reproduce an exact replica of its kind. Reproduction is a blessing from God.

There is no suggestion that one species would evolve into another. There is no fossil evidence that feathers evolved from scales as evolutionists would like us to believe. A feather is a highly complex device and no fossil structure in between scales and feathers has ever been found. It is highly speculative and fanciful to think there is a link between the two. A gradual transition from a scale of a sea creature to the feather of a flying creature makes no sense and has no intermediate purpose and no amount of time could make it happen.

Sixth Day

Gen 1:24-31. ‘And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his

kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creeps upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creeps upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day'

By this time, you can sense God getting really excited. Up to this day He had said everything was good, but at the end of day 6 He said what He had made was VERY good.

It is worth noting that God says let US make man in our image. We have seen the allusion to the Father, Spirit and Son in verses 1,2,3 of the chapter. This again confirms the composite nature of God.

On that final day of creation, land creatures were created, one by one. Each was given its own DNA, which include instructions to reproduce after its own kind. The final and climactic act of creation was to create a being in His own image, man, giving him dominion over the rest of creation. Man was originally a vegetarian eating fruit to sustain him, whilst animals were allocated herbs. All of man's organs, bones, muscles and blood were produced in a single creative act, in the same way that we might paint a picture. Man was designed and produced as an act of love. We did not evolve over millions of years by some chance accidents and brutal battle for survival.

Our minds cannot comprehend how God could simply create animals and man. But as we have discussed, God, a being who dwells in a dimension so much higher than ourselves, is capable of doing whatever he wants in our material world of 3 dimensions.

Seventh Day

On day 7 Day, the work was completed and God rested. This particular day, the day of rest is called the Sabbath. God reminds us in the 10 Commandments that He created everything in 6 days and then rested and that He expects us to do the same (Ex 20:6). If we keep going without a break, we will simply burn out. We recognise that cars and machines cannot run continually and need to be serviced. So our operations manual, the Bible, tells us to rest after working for 6 days.

So the living part of creation according to the Biblical account, took place in a few days. Creation had to happen in a very short space of time but the symbiotic interrelationships between many of the creatures force a virtually instantaneous creation. Evolution over a long period of time does not make sense even if it were by design. There is a principle called irreducible complexity, which can be applied to most mechanical devices. For instance an electric motor needs a minimum number of parts to work, an armature, a magnet, a coil, etc. If any one of these parts was missing it would not work slower or less efficiently; it simply would not work. So it is with all living creatures. A muscle or nerve or a blood cell are useless without each other. For any of these to develop by sheer chance is absurd. To develop at exactly the same time by chance for life to be sustained is a total impossibility. Each element or member of the body had to have been designed and created at the right time. Long periods of time, no matter how long will help this process. Time is a counterproductive measure. If there was a thousand years between the evolution of say the lens of the eye and the nerves of the retina, they would be useless without each other and would serve no purpose. So with every other part of the body: they need to be there at the same time. The only way life can happen is virtually instantaneously. So, if you cannot think outside of the 3 dimensional world, it is all very difficult to understand or explain, but, once you accept the additional dimensions we have been discussing, it is possible to begin to understand how God could have put the whole of creation together as a package and pressed the start button.

However, we need to address some of the apparent evidence that the earth and life appear to be extremely old. Many people regard the existence of creatures of 2 or 3 billion years old as a fact, without understanding the underlying assumptions.

11. Dating of Rocks and Fossils

Dating of rocks and other so called prehistoric remains is done by analysing the ratio of isotopes. The elements of the universe are made up of atoms. An atom comprises a central core called the nucleus with a number of tiny bundles of energy called electrons flying around the outside in orbit. Think of the sun with the planets in orbit to get the picture. The nucleus comprises roughly equal numbers of elementary particles known as protons and neutrons packed tightly together. The number of electrons flying around is the same as the number of protons. Protons are positively charged and electrons are negatively charged, so overall the charge of an atom is neutral. So, for example hydrogen consists of one proton and one electron. Carbon has 14 protons, 14 neutrons and 14 electrons. As the number of protons gets greater, the element can become unstable. Think of a bundle of footballs held together by elastic bands and how unstable that could become. In such cases, protons and neutrons occasionally come unstuck and fly out of the nucleus. So heavier elements such as Uranium can exist in different forms, called isotopes depending on the number of elementary particles present. For example, Uranium can exist with 238 particles, but it is unstable. It radiates particles and the composition gradually drops from 238 to 235 particles in the atom over a period of time. By analysing the proportion of so-called parent to daughter state, we have an indication of the time this process has been going on. The half-life is defined as the time taken for the parent to daughter ratio to be 50%. The half-life of uranium is believed to be 760 million years. So the assumption is that 760 million years ago uranium was created with 238 particles and by the time it reaches the half-life, half of the molecules would have been converted to 235. This is actually another example of entropy. Random particles are lost from the nucleus, but never replaced. Different elements have different half-life, which can be used to supposedly date a rock or fossil. The idea is that the proportion of the isotopes gives an indication of the length of time the element has been in existence. The problem is that we have only been able to observe this decay over a period of less than 100 years since we learned how to carry out such measurements. We cannot observe what the rate was say a thousand or 5000 years ago. Assumptions and extrapolations are made which may be totally invalid.

The evidence is that the entire universe is winding down heading towards heat-death which is the end point of entropy. The sun is cooling, gravity is decreasing, the speed of light is decreasing, all of life is decaying and losing information. No new matter, energy or information is being injected into the universe unless it is from a source outside of the created universe. We do not know the effect of all of these changes over a long period of thousands of years. Thus we cannot accurately assess the dates of very old material; we can only guess. To base your philosophy of life, your belief in God and your eternal destiny on such transient and inaccurate knowledge is very foolish.

Most of the arguments relating to the age of fossils are circular, beginning with an arbitrary starting point. For example, a fossilised creature is known to be 3 Billion years old because it is in rock that is 3 Billion years old. How do we know the rock is 3 Billion years old? Because it contains fossils that are 3 Billion years old.

Fossils appear to be the remains of creatures that existed millions of years ago. As they have died, the hard parts have become embedded in rock and can be extracted often as whole creatures, but frequently as partial remains. Given partial remains, assumptions have to be made about what the creature looked like originally. There can be no proof, but only artistic licence about its appearance. Given a stratum of rock, many similar if not identical creatures such as trilobites can be found at varying depths. This does not point to evolution, but rather a continuation of the same species over millions of years, assuming we are talking millions of years, as evolutionists would presume.

The deepest fossil ever found was 16,000 ft below the surface, which is about 3 miles. If we take the best case scenario for evolution, and say that fossils were at a depth of 5 miles and that the earth has been in existence for 4.5 billion years. To deposit 5 miles depth of material on top of the fossils in that timeframe would amount to 0.002 mm per year. So a creature of say 1 cm in height would have to lie without moving for at least 5000 years whilst sediment builds up around it. This is a best-case scenario for the evolution theory and seems therefore highly unlikely. For a large creature such as a dinosaur of many feet in height, for the fossil to be intact, the remains would have to lie absolutely static and dormant and without being eroded for hundreds of thousands of years whilst sediment builds around it. Yet we can see millions of examples of trilobites perfectly preserved in rocks supposedly gradually laid over millions of years.

A far more likely explanation for such remains is a catastrophic flood such as described in Genesis 6, where a huge deluge of water covered the earth, killing most land creatures instantaneously. As the water subsided, a deep layer of mud would be deposited containing the dead bodies of animals, preserving the resistant parts, which would over time become integrated with the surrounding rocks under pressure.

When we look at fossils, we see the same creatures and different depths with no intermediate 'missing links'. Evolutions search in vain for any missing links to complete the evolutionary chain, but nothing ever comes to light¹. Some of the apparent findings have usually turned out to be mistakes or deliberate frauds, such as the Piltdown man². Why on earth would anyone deliberately try to fake such a find? They have a theory that leaves out God and are desperately trying to make it work and force or manipulate the facts to fit their theory and belief.

There are so many anomalies in the whole area of dating. Examples like coins found in rocks that would appear to be 200 million years old, a human footprint literally on top of a trilobite³.

The facts appear to align with the Biblical statement that God made every creature to multiply after its own kind and there has been no evidence to prove that one creature has evolved into any other. No fish's scale has ever been shown to evolve into a feather. A feather is an amazing design, far beyond anything man can make, with intricate and elaborate hooks and hinges to enable flight. The DNA required to produce such mechanisms is so different from that which produces scales. Anyway, as we have discussed, a feather is far more complex than a scale and time does not build complexity through chance. Entropy creates simplicity and chaos rather than order and complexity. Time moves evolution in the wrong direction, which confirms a young earth and younger age of all creatures.

12. Evolution or Instantaneous Creation

The theory of evolution proposes that given sufficient time, and a suitable environment, the chances for the right combination of chemicals to come together to produce life will eventually happen and a simple cell will be formed.

When Darwin theorised that one species evolved from another, microscopes were very rudimentary and there was a very poor understanding of life. It was believed that an amoeba was a very simple single celled creature and more complex forms evolved as additional complexity was added to the cell by chance mutations.

DNA or Deoxyribonucleic acid is the complex molecule that contains the genetic instructions used in the development and functioning of all living organisms. With the advent of electron microscopes we can now examine the structure of cells in a much greater level of detail.

A so-called simple cell is far from simple. It may only contain basic elements such as hydrogen and carbon, but the DNA is highly complex, even in the case of a simple amoeba. The internal structure and machinery to move, repair and replicate is far from simple. It cannot have come about by chance. The structure of a cell of a complex being like a human is indeed more complex than an amoeba, but the amoeba still contains thousands of complex parts and elements of information. To get from simple chemicals in a primeval soup to the lowest form of life involves combining these elements into amazingly complex chains arranged in a specific order. Even with the most generous assumptions and most favourable conditions, the likelihood of any kind of life emerging by chance is astronomically improbable, like picking one particular atom from all the atoms in the universe. The faith required to believe that could happen by chance far exceeds that required to accept the existence of a designer and creator.

It has also been argued that there may have been insufficient time in the history of the earth for life to have evolved by chance. There is a related theory that supposedly gives evolution a jump start, which is that life came to earth from another galaxy. But this does not really help anything because life would have to have evolved to that level in that other galaxy, so the arguments are exactly the same.

Faith to believe in the God of Creation is expressed in the words of the writer of the book of Hebrews 'Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the

word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear' (Heb 11:1,3)

A species is defined by the architecture encoded in its DNA. Creatures develop, reproduce and repair according to the DNA information. Information in the DNA remains the same from generation to generation, or it may be lost, but no new information is ever added. So-called survival of the fittest or changes of colour to adapt to the environment are only according to existing blueprints. These types of change have been used as evidence of evolution, but they are no such thing. They are simply variations according to an existing architecture.

So on that basis, no creature can evolve into a higher order. No amount of time can make this happen. In fact according to the law of entropy, it works the other way. Time leads to decay and chaos rather than order and increased information.

The enormous variety of species we see in the world today is a result of adaptation. Let us say that God created a deer, male and female. Today we can see many different species of deer due to adaptation to different environments. The variation within the genetic code would allow for adaptation without gaining of any new DNA material.

Examples, like the peppered moth have been used to supposedly illustrate evolution¹. Light coloured moths survive in lighter areas, whereas darker moths develop in darker industrial areas. The facts are that the aptitude to take on a certain colour is present in both types, but the lighter ones get picked off by birds in dark areas and conversely. The DNA is still the same. They are still the same species. Many such examples of adaptation can be cited, but none of them show the addition of genetic material.

The DNA does not change during the life of an individual. The only opportunity to change the DNA is during reproduction. This could potentially happen due to an error during copying of DNA or random rearrangement of small elements of DNA in a chromosome pair. Evolution theory relies on the possibility that such an error is advantageous. Such errors are far more likely to be disadvantageous anyway, but how does the organism know the error is advantageous? This would not be evident until the organism has matured. The whole thing rings of improbability to the highest degree.

The definition of species is based on the ability of a group of creatures to interbreed. The loss of sufficient DNA material from many generations would gradually lead to the inability to interbreed. So, for example, the oft-quoted example of Darwin's finches can be explained by loss rather than gaining of DNA. It has been shown that types of finches can change over a period of something like 20 generations by adaptation to the point that a new species is formed. For example, the beaks get longer or shorter, depending on the environment and the need for catching food². Eventually the divergence is such that they can no longer interbreed and a new

species is formed. However, this does not require new additional genetic code, but rather is the result of the loss of it.

My proposition here is that evolution of new species is an example of entropy and disorder rather than advantageous mutation as the evolution theory maintains. Given a pure species of, say a deer, thousands of generations have led to many different varieties in the direction of entropy and chaos. So the variety of species we see in the world today is easily explained as the result of entropy due to time. God created perfect specimens of every type of creature, which were given a perfect DNA code. All that time has done is to lose some of the code due to copying errors during reproduction or cellular damage, for example due to radiation. Thus evolution does not explain the origin of life. It can only explain some of the diversity. Life was created in its perfection and has been gradually decaying ever since.

Thus a toad could evolve into a different type of toad, adapted to different environments, but it will never become a bird or a rabbit or anything other than a toad. The original toad as created by God, had all the genetic attributes to adapt to many situations, some of which may have been lost through lack of use or requirement, but it will never be anything but a toad. It may become inferior to the original blueprint, but it will never develop wings or fur.

Man is able now with modern technology to change and manipulate genes, taking the genetic material from an egg or cell and injecting it into another type of egg, but this is done by design, with intelligence, skill and very advanced processes. This is very different from something happening by blind chance. In fact, our ability to perform genetic modification supports the view that there is great intelligence behind changes to DNA rather than changes happening of their own accord.

In very recent years, new discoveries in the field of evolution appear to indicate that all of the genetic material is present in almost all species. Scientist have discovered an apparently ‘missing link’ creature which lies somewhere between fish and animals, which they named Tiktaalik. In examination of its DNA, they declared, ‘It turns out that the genetic machinery needed to make limbs was already present in the fins. It did not involve the origin of new genes and developmental processes. It involved the redeployment of old genetic recipes in new ways’³. The research would appear to indicate that DNA does not evolve, but rather genetic switches go on and off during the process of growing in order to produce a certain type of creature. So, for example a giraffe has a long neck because the neck-growing switch remains on longer than other mammals. Mice and elephants have the same basic DNA structure, with a different set of gene switches. It has been claimed by people like David Attenborough that man is related to chimpanzee because the genes are so similar, that we have clearly evolved from the same family tree. However, I would argue that the

Creator, having developed a blueprint for animals would very likely use the same method to produce one animal as another. This does not prove man evolved from the

chimpanzee, but rather that we have the same creator. 'And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind' (Genesis 1:25) In other words, the DNA is not evolving, as it was all created at the very beginning. Man has the same number (around 21,000) and similar type of genes as a mouse. No new material is being generated. If anything, there may be loss of information due to entropy, but no new information is being added. These recent discoveries if anything are even greater proof of creation. There is no way that mammals and man in particular could possibly have evolved from amoeba.⁴

Why is the creation versus evolution discussion so important?

If you consider the data and evidence as seen the whole of creation, it points to one conclusion: it was designed. If you begin with the false premise that there is not, and cannot be a Creator, then all of the evidence must be distorted and selected to prove and maintain that belief.

If it is possible to rule out the requirement for a Creator, then man has no accountability to anyone other than himself as man is viewed as the highest order of animal. In this case there is no such thing as sin. Merely what is the current view of morality or expediency is all that matters. Belief and morality become relative and convenient. Thus issues like abortion and euthanasia become matters of convenience rather than immutable laws. The Biblical 10 Commandments instead of being regarded as mandatory, to be accepted and obeyed without question, become relegated to personal opinions or at best good suggestions. Whilst avoiding the risk of being caught breaking the laws of the country, a person can do whatever they like. The Christian view, that God is watching and judging us even when we are alone, is not relevant. Obeying God's laws are a matter of the heart and motive, not just about visible and external actions. Without God, I just need to be seen to comply with society's codes, culture and ethics. What goes on in private, what is not seen or what is in the mind and heart is not relevant. Jesus challenges us to control what is in our minds, as being of greater importance than external actions. Thus He puts lust on a par with adultery (Matt 5:28) and hatred as equivalent to murder and that we are to love our enemies (Matt 5:44). If all that matters is survival of the fittest, then lust, aggression and hatred may even be seen as desirable attributes, rather than sin.

A fundamental question we all need to address is whether we believe the whole of life is series of meaningless chance chemical and physical reactions or whether there is design and purpose. If the former, then it matters not what I do in life other than to

survive and make the best of everything for myself and not get caught breaking the institutional rules. In fact, life has no meaning or purpose and the individual is an irrelevance in the cosmos.

If there is design and purpose, then I am more important and of greater value than the stars, but I am also personally accountable to God for every action, word and thought. The stars and planets will one day be subject to the law of entropy, subject to decay and death, but you and I will live eternally.

13. The Unseen World

Whilst it is important that what we believe is rational and not fabricated or a deception, ultimately we chose to believe one way or another by Faith. It is difficult to prove the existence of God, but it is also difficult to prove Evolution. We infer certain things and build a belief system with which we are comfortable. Once people have become entrenched in a way of thinking it is usually difficult to change their views radically because our beliefs create filters through which we select what to look at and how to interpret what we see. Often things that do not fit within our frame of reference are ignored or distorted. So we continue to see and value only those things that reinforce our belief systems and disregard those things that upset or conflict with our viewpoint. This is not necessarily deliberate, but just the way our minds work.

We have been looking at the creation of the physical universe, but is that all there is to life? Is there such a thing as a spiritual realm? Are there forms of life other than the physical? The Bible certainly speaks of Heaven and Hell, angels and demons. Are these realities or mythical places and beings?

One spiritual being that we cannot afford to ignore is the devil or Satan. According to the Bible he heads up principalities and demonic powers that have constantly been challenging God's authority and attempting to destroy mankind. We don't know a great deal about Satan, but at some time in the past, possibly even before creation, he and one-third of the angels were banished from Heaven (Revelation 12:9). They now roam the universe causing trouble, particularly for mankind.

Since Satan is a created being, God is infinitely more powerful than him or any demon or angel. However, like viruses and bacteria, they can be very troublesome to us. Many of the difficult questions, like 'How can a loving God allow this or that...?' are easier to answer, when we allow for the existence of this unseen malicious world. Whilst we believe that God is all-powerful, we expose ourselves to evil by not coming under His protection. For example, if you put your hand into a bucket of filthy water, you will probably not come to any harm if you wash it afterwards. But if you had a cut on your hand and you can expect to get an infection with potentially serious consequences. The normal protective covering of skin has been compromised and damaged, so that the inner layer of tissue is exposed to bacteria. So, by not living according to God's instructions, we step outside of the protection God provides and expose ourselves to spiritual attack. We cannot really prove the existence of Satan or demons, but if we assume their existence and treat them as real, the observable effects appear to confirm their existence. One of Satan's ploys is invisibility. Like bacteria, demons cannot be seen and we are therefore likely to ignore or forget they exist.

Jesus recognised and acknowledged the existence of Satan and demons and spoke to them with authority and effect (e.g. Luke 8:29). Even today, when we recognise or suspect certain physical or emotional conditions as being due to demonic or spiritual possession or influence, we can command the entity to leave the person in the Name of Jesus and it usually works. I have seen demonic manifestations occur in a number of people and subsequent deliverance at the very Name of Jesus. Thus pragmatically we can infer the existence and even the presence of the demonic by the evidence. So whilst this may not be proof, it is evidence that there is an unseen spiritual realm or dimension in parallel with our own and it is accessible although not desirable.

Claims by spiritualist mediums to have access to the world of the departed are more than likely to be encounters with the demonic. We are expressly forbidden in the Bible to commune with spirits from whatever realm (Deuteronomy 18:10-11).

However, the good news is that only one-third of the angelic beings revolted, leaving two-thirds who are ministering angels, totally subservient to God. These angels make up the armies of Heaven as well as providing protection and service to mankind, albeit normally unseen. Jesus spoke of these as guardians to children, 'Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven'. (Matthew 18:10)

There are many instances in the Bible where angels were visible to men, such as Lot (Gen 19), Balaam (Numbers 22) and Elisha (2 Kings 6:17), but also there are many modern day stories of angelic sightings and encounters¹.

Some of these stories require a lot of faith to believe and certainly those involved undoubtedly had a measure of faith.

We do not know what God is like. He is a Spirit. He represented himself in physical form as Jesus and comes to us as the Holy Spirit. We call this the Trinity or Three-in-One. A helpful analogy is to consider the Sun. The real object of the sun is 93 million miles away. Each of us can view the sun in the open or through a window, giving us our own personal instantiation of the image of the sun without being aware of the distance. We can close our eyes and bask in the sunshine, enjoying its warmth and energy. It is the same sun, revealed to us in three forms. So it is with God. The Father is transcendent and beyond our reach, but he comes to us as the man Jesus so that we can understand and receive him. His Holy Spirit comes and gives us life and healing.

The dimensions theory can also be used to describe an analogy of the Trinity.

Consider a 3 dimensional being communicating with a 2 dimensional world. The 2D people would have no concept of the 3D being, but as he enters the 2D world, they would perceive only a flat cross-section. He could move in and out be in many places simultaneously. He could get extremely close and even enter into a 2D being. His power would seem to be unlimited.

If we understand that God exists in dimensions far above our 3D world, yet he came into our world and became one of us, this may help to understand the concept of Jesus being God and yet separate from Him. Jesus is the total representation of God in our universe. He talks to God and is hence distinct from Him, yet they are one and the same person (John 17:21). As God entered into our universe in the form of Jesus He was seen by thousands of people. He was able to walk through walls and travel a hundred miles instantaneously. He was able to perform miracles and die and rise again. The Holy Spirit is yet another representation that can enter into us and be closer to us than we are to each other. We cannot really understand this, but the 3D to 2D analogy helps to understand how this could be possible. What is miraculous in our world is perfectly normal in the higher dimensions.

I am not offering these analogies as explanations of the Trinity, any more than St Patrick tried to explain it as a three-leafed shamrock, but simply as aids to understanding the concept. The point is that many people have difficulty with the Trinity because it does not make sense in our world. What I am arguing is that, if you step outside of our dimension and our way of understanding the physical universe, there is a whole new realm of possibilities.

I am not trying to introduce a new way of thinking about God and the spiritual world, but rather trying to get the reader to accept that there is so much above and beyond what we can see and understand with our rational ways of thinking. Having accepted this, I would like us then to consider that the Bible as written is a true account of what happened in the past; what was said, what was done, by credible and honest people reporting what they saw and heard, and that there is no intent to deceive. Having overcome the credibility gap, I would then like us to see what the Bible has to say, not only about the past, but also the future and actually accept it as truth.

We need to accept that this universe is not a chance situation brought about by a series of meaningless accidents, but is a deliberately planned and executed strategy brought about by a Being who is far beyond our comprehension. We humans cannot communicate with this Divine Being, who created the universe, on our terms. We cannot decide to find our own way to Him. That is impossible. He is the one who states the rules and makes the way possible. There is no way that human effort can reach or influence Him. We have heard it said that many or all roads lead to God.

That is not true. Only He can tell us how to approach and communicate with Him. That is why we have to study the Bible, as it was written by Him for that very purpose.

14. The Creation of Man

There are two Biblical accounts of the creation of man. In Genesis 1, as we looked at earlier, we read that God created humans, male and female, in his own image, giving them instructions to multiply and fill the earth.

The Hebrew word for image is can be translated shadow, phantom or illusion. God is described as a Spirit (e.g. John 4:24) but He does appear visibly at various times throughout Jewish history (e.g. Gen 12:7), often as an angel (e.g. Gen 16:7). He is described by the prophet Ezekiel as having ‘the likeness of the appearance of a man’ although emanating a brightness like fire (Ezekiel 1:26,27). He is finally represented in the human form of Jesus 4000 years later. The first people may have been primarily spiritual beings, although they had the physical capability to breathe and procreate. Undoubtedly they were far superior beings to what we are today being made in the image of God. This is exactly in opposition with the evolution theory, that would have us believe that man evolved from lower physical forms, and the soul and spirit would have come about as a step in the evolutionary process.

In Genesis chapter 2 we read about the specific creation of Adam formed from the dust of the ground, which comprises the elements, into whose nostrils God breathed life so that he became a living and breathing soul (Gen 2:7).

Eve was not a direct creation, but fashioned from a rib taken from Adam in the worlds first operation (Gen 2:21-22). This sounds strange until we put a modern perspective on it: that God took some of Adam’s cells and cloned Eve.

Together they had many children (Gen 5:4) of whom the first two were named Cain and Abel. In a fit of sibling rivalry and jealousy, Cain murdered Abel. This was not a very good start to the human race.

The only kind of human that we see living on this planet today are actually fallen and sinful, a shadow of what we were created to be, subservient to the death sentence which was put on mankind in Genesis 3. In the beginning God used to walk and talk with Adam in the Garden of Eden as a friend, prior to the rebellion of man against God.

So we can consider man as appearing in 3 forms. Firstly in the image of God, which is spirit; secondly taking on a form of physical perfection: and thirdly as a fallen being. All we see today on earth is the third form, weak and sinful, a pitiful creature

compared to what was originally created. Adam and Eve must have been magnificent specimens of man and womanhood, perfect in body, mind and spirit and beautiful to behold. Certainly not something to be covered up with clothing. God was very pleased with them. Since the fall, no one can ever recapture that state of perfection. To become even a shadow of what we should have been, we need to be reborn of the Spirit of God as a new creation. 'Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is' (1John 3:2)

We are told that God finished creation on the sixth day and completed everything. He rested on the seventh day. So nothing more was added to the universe. It was complete and subject to the first law of thermodynamics. No matter or energy is lost from the physical universe: it is only interchanged. We are born physically using recycled elements and when we die, we return to dust (Gen 3:19).

However, the spirit in man is eternal and lives forever either in Heaven with God, or in Hell without Him. So when is the spirit of man created? There is a hint given in Jeremiah 1:4 that God knew us before we were conceived. Paul the Apostle writes: 'According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love' (Eph 1:4). If the first law is applicable to the spirit world, then it is possible that everyone who has ever lived was actually created on that sixth day. Every person ever born or yet to be born is simply waiting the wings ready to come on stage. Or like a game of cricket, where each of us is waiting our turn to bat. Some score a century, whilst others are out for a duck. It's just a theory that we cannot prove, but if it is to be believed, it would have rather serious implications for abortion!

Adam and Eve

Can we really believe that God created one man in the beginning from which all future generations came? How do we know that man has not evolved from so-called lower animals, fighting his way through to survival? Did this happen by chance or is evolution the means by which God brought man into being?

The God who is described in the Bible is filled with love for his creation. Why would he choose to use such a barbaric method as survival of the fittest for the creation of man if there was an alternative?

'Survival of the fittest' is the antithesis of Biblical teaching. Fitness in terms of strength, speed or cunning relate only to the physical, denying the right of survival to those weak or spiritual. Jesus himself laid down his life and produced no physical progeny and hence could hardly be regard in this category. God has chosen the weak

things of this world to confound the mighty and the foolish things to confound the wise (1 Corinthians 1:28). Adam and Eve walked not only with each other, but they walked and talked with God. God gave them instructions not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil or else they would die. The day came when Satan disguised as a serpent enticed Eve to eat of the fruit saying 'You shall not surely die, but you shall become as God'. He was challenging Eve to commit the very same sin for which he had been cast out of Heaven: the desire to be as God, amounting to the sin of pride. God created man to be dependent upon Him, and the desire for equality and independence from God is the most sinful attitude possible.

The Bible teaches that sin entered the world as Adam and Eve listened to Satan and disobeyed God. Rather than becoming like God, they became like Satan. Instead of being raised, they fell. The theory of evolution does not recognise sin as described by God. Strength, speed and cunning are the prerequisites for survival. Forgiveness, dependence and submission would be weaknesses for survival, and individuals having those attributes would be wiped out.

As described in Genesis, Eve, after being enticed by the serpent to disobey God, then persuaded Adam to follow. The result of this rebellion according to what God had told them, should have been death, and it was. The death they experienced was an immediate separation from God followed a physical death sentence, which would be carried out over a period of several hundred years. Death was never part of the original creation plan, but came about as a result of disobedience. Up to that point man and woman were naked and unashamed and unafraid of God, but following their rebellion, they became both ashamed and fearful and hid themselves pathetically with fig leaves. They expected to be killed, but at this point we get the first hint of substitutionary atonement. One or more animals were killed for the skins to make clothes to cover their nakedness. Animals were made to experience death in order that their guilt could be covered and they were allowed to live a while longer. But their quality of life was far inferior to that which they had known previously. Never again would they know the intimate relationship that they had with God before they sinned.

Where did Cain get his wife?

This is one of the old chestnuts; a question designed to make the Biblical account look ridiculous. Either there were other people around before Adam and Eve or Cain married his sister. The first possibility negates the scripture and the second implies incest.

It should be recognised that the Bible does not give a history of every early person that ever lived – just those who are significant to the plot. Cain and Abel are critical in that a major sin was committed by the filial murder of Abel.

The reason why Cain killed Abel is not totally clear, but here is a suggestion. We are told that they brought an offering to the Lord; Abel brought a lamb; Cain brought

produce of the ground. The lamb was acceptable to God but the produce was not. We are not told how this was made clear, but, as they did not have a box of matches, it is possible that God would show his acceptance by 'fire from heaven' (e.g. 1 Kings 18:38). Anyway, however disapproval was shown, it resulted in jealousy and Abel was murdered. This is the second occasion on which we get the hint of the true meaning of sacrifice. Produce was not acceptable, but a lamb was. This is the beginning of preparing mankind for the ultimate sacrifice of the Lamb of God.

Abel was dead and Cain was banished to walk the earth as a vagabond for his sin. Adam and Eve had many other children after these (Genesis 5:4) from whom Cain took a wife and had children. However, the ancestral line of interest then transfers to Seth, from whom the lineage of Abraham and Israel comes. It is obvious that both Cain and Seth took as wives close relatives, either their sisters or cousins as did everyone else in those days. How else could they fulfil the instruction to populate the earth? The law concerning incest was not given until over 1000 years later. Given two people to start with, obeying God's commandment to fill the earth; without contraception, death or disease, which came later. Let's say for simplicity each family comprised 4 children and a generation gap of 25 years, how many people could result? In 1000 years there would be 40 generations, which would produce 2 to the power 40 , which is 377 Billion people. This is 60 times the current world population.

Adam lived well over 900 years and the generations following lived similar length of time. In those days the genetic code was pure and not subjected to any great degree of entropy. The full radiation power of the sun was shielded from mankind by the water vapour that surrounded the earth, which largely disappeared when the flood came. Hence mankind could truly have been a greater population prior to the flood than the number of people on earth today. No problem for Cain or anyone else to find a wife!

15. The Flood

According to the Biblical account of the history of mankind, the population of the world was extinguished about a thousand years after the creation of man by a worldwide flood. Up to that point, there had been no rain. The earth was watered by dew. God instructed a man named Noah to build a huge boat or ark, about 450 ft long by 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. This took about 100 years and provided much amusement to the locals, who could not understand how he would ever get it into the water. It has been calculated that a boat of this size, being over 1.5 Million cubic feet would displace more than 40,000 tons and be sufficient hold over 200,000 animals, which would be adequate to house pairs of all land animals. It is estimated that there are about 10 million species in the world today, of which only 1% are larger than a bumble bee. i.e. 100,000 species.

There is no way of estimating how many species of land-based animals were in existence in Noah's day, but it was certainly a lot fewer than today, so the above argument shows that the preservation of all life was quite feasible. The definition of a species is a grouping of creatures that can interbreed. The estimated 10 million species includes all kinds of deviations that would not have been necessary to preserve all life. For example, if we take a cat: it would not be necessary to preserve every possible variation of cat to have all the types of cat we have today. Two cats, a male and female preserved in the ark could have resulted in thousands of varieties of cat today. So whilst it is theoretically possible for the dimensions of Noah's ark to preserve all of the life we see around us today, that huge number would not have been necessary. Something like a genus, such as cat or deer or wolf would only be necessary. Other species resulting from these would merely be adaptations as we discussed earlier.

The flood could also explain the disappearance of some very large creatures like dinosaurs and woolly mammoths.

Insects and water inhabiting creatures could well survive a flood without the ark. So, unlikely as it sounds, it is certainly physically possible to preserve all of the living creatures that we see today in such an ark as described in the Bible, although it would have to be miraculous. Getting the animals in the ark, feeding them, cleaning their mess and stopping them from fighting would seem like a miracle, although the One who made all things could certainly make that happen. Man is the only creature who is in rebellion against God. Animals probably are much more aware of and obedient to Him than we think. It is hard to visualise what living in a confined space for nearly a year with thousands of animals would be like; maybe God put them into some kind of sleep or suspended animation for 6 months!

Torrential rain fell as well as subterranean fountains opening for 40 days, to deluge the earth with water to a depth that covered everything. The water would not have to be 5 miles deep to cover the earth, but turbulent flood-water rushing through mountains and valleys would make it impossible for any land animal to survive.

After a further 150 days the water subsided and was absorbed into the earth giving way to dry land. Noah and the animals were then eventually able to leave the ark and begin to repopulate the earth.

Why did God flood the earth?

In the world in which Noah lived, mankind had become physically and spiritually polluted. Angelic beings or demons had infiltrated mankind, having sex with women and producing monstrosities of man-like creatures (Genesis 6:1-5). Such supposedly mythical creatures are documented in other literature as well as the Bible, typically Greek mythology¹. This was in direct rebellion against God's command that each creature should reproduce after its own kind. As God himself planned one day to become a man, he could not permit such aberrations to perpetuate, so he wiped out mankind. He preserved only this one man and his family, who had not been so corrupted, to repopulate the earth. As history unfolds, we do see further such infiltration of mankind by the demonic, producing monsters and giants, such as the sons of Anak (Numbers 13:33), the Zamzummims (Deuteronomy 2:20), Og king of Bashan (Deuteronomy 3:11) as well as Goliath and his brothers (1 Chronicles 20:5). But clearly prior to the flood this proliferation of giants was endemic.

Where did the flood-water come from?

The Bible tells us that the earth was flooded to a great depth. But what was it like before? Where did the water come from; and where did it go afterwards? A possible scenario is that, prior to the flood there was very much less water on the earth than there is today, with the earth, comprising mostly land with land-bound seas and lakes in the hollows. This would enable creatures to roam freely across the world, without the inhibition of oceans and continents to contain them. The atmosphere above the earth for many miles was heavily laden with water vapour.

At the command of the One who created all things, most of the atmospheric water vapour condensed into water and precipitated on to the earth in a single catastrophic event. This may possibly have been caused by a sudden cooling of the earth's atmosphere. One could speculate that physically, something like a massive asteroid may have hit the earth, moving it further away from the sun and causing huge tidal waves. At the same time, water under the earth was released, the fountains of the deep, and the earth was completely covered with water moving at great speed and with devastating effect across the planet. Fortunately, Noah was ready for it and his

boat filled with animals, was able to withstand the catastrophe. After a time the water would settle into dips in the earth's crust and form seas, lakes and rivers, whilst the land dried out.

God declared that he would never flood the entire world again and sealed the covenant with the rainbow. A rainbow is caused by the refraction of light through water droplets. Until the flood, all that was in the air was water vapour, which is transparent. But since the flood, as the atmospheric water condenses, droplets are formed that act as a prism to the sunlight giving the full visible spectrum which we call the seven colours of the rainbow.

The precipitation of all of that atmospheric water was a once off event, never to be repeated and life on earth was forever changed. Previously, the effect of such a thick band of water vapour would be a greenhouse effect, far more effective than we see today. Harmful rays from a much younger sun would be absorbed, giving the earth a more equitable atmosphere and temperature. Much of the genetic damage done to our cells is caused by radiation from the sun. The purity of the world in those early days would contribute towards the biblically recorded longevity. Adam lived 930 years, his son Seth 912 years. Most of the early inhabitants appear to have lived to an extremely old age, right up until the time of Noah, who lived until he was 950 (Genesis 9:29). After the flood, the longevity drops dramatically to about 400 and then quickly to less than 200 years. 1000 years later, man was declared as living only for about 70 to 80 years (Psalm 90:10). Very few after that lived beyond 120 years.

As a result of the flood, deep deposits of silt and debris would form a layer that, over time would compress into rock, filled with the remains of creatures that perished in the flood, forming the fossils that we see today.

Noah and his family, as well as the animals housed in the ark then began to repopulate the earth, moving outwards across the planet.

We now leap forward about a further thousand years to a world that was by that time well populated and quite civilised. Unfortunately, mankind had once again become corrupted and idolatry was rife. Few worshipped the true God, but instead worshipped idols of their own making with their own rules and regulations, which included child sacrifice. God had to begin again to teach people the way back to him, but this time instead of destroying mankind, he selected one man, whose name was Abram, through whom He would work to begin to recover the fallen world.

16. Abraham

Abram lived in the Ur of the Chaldees, which is in modern day Iraq. He was a very wealthy man living in an advanced civilisation and quite old, when God spoke to him and told him to leave his home and family and start walking. Did God speak with an impression, an audible voice or did he appear in a physical body, perhaps as an angel. We are not told, but however it was done it was forceful enough to make an old man and his childless wife abandon everything and take his entire worldly possessions to go off to an unknown destination. I am not going to relate the whole story, which you can read in Genesis 12 onwards, but just pick out a few important highlights which are relevant even today.

God changed his name to Abraham, with the addition of 'ha' in the middle. This sounds like an out-breath and is one of the names of God. So God was putting His Name on Abraham. He promised that He would make him into a great nation, even though he and his wife Sarah were childless. He promised him a son, in spite of their great age. Unfortunately, they did not get it quite right and Sarah encouraged Abraham to sleep with her young Egyptian maid, named Hagar. Hagar did have a son, named Ishmael.

However, this was not what God had planned, and Sarah had to wait several more years before she had a son, who was called Isaac (which means 'Laughter!'). Ishmael however used to mock Isaac to the extent that Abraham sent Hagar and Ishmael away. (Gen 21:9)

Generations later the descendents of Ishmael gave rise to most of the Arab world as we know it today. So the Arabs are in fact descendents of Abraham.

By this time Abraham, in his travels had reached a land called Canaan, bordering on the Mediterranean Sea. On a high mountain, God said to him, 'Look around as far as you can see. I am giving you this land for you and your descendents'. No conditions, no strings, just a gift and a promise.

During this time, God also introduced Abraham to the concept of sacrifice, a theme that pervades the whole Bible, in several different ways.

In those days, a covenant between two parties was made in this way. An animal would be slaughtered and the two bloody halves separated on the ground. The two parties, reciting the terms of the covenant would then take turns walking between the

pieces in a figure of eight. The terms were that if the covenant was broken, the defaulter would become like the poor dead animal. They would then cook and eat the animal in a celebratory meal.

In order to seal the land covenant, Abraham and God performed this ritual. God tells Abraham to prepare the sacrifice, but when it is Abraham's turn to walk through, God puts him into a deep sleep during which God communicates with him. God recites the terms of the covenant, and tells him what is going to happen to his family over the next few hundred years and then a smoking furnace and a burning lamp pass between the two halves of the sacrifice. This represents God's presence, but Abraham in his condition is not able to take the walk. In other words, God takes on both sides of the covenant. He does not allow Abraham to be held responsible for his side. It is in fact an unconditional covenant. That is to say, it is impossible for Abraham to break his side of it. There is nothing to break.

During the deep sleep, God told Abraham that his family would become slaves in Egypt for 400 years after which they would be freed and subsequently possess the land of Canaan or Israel as we know it today. 'Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. The LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates' (Gen 15:13,18).

So, over 4000 years ago, that large area of land including modern Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and much of Iraq as far south as Egypt was given by an unconditional covenant by God to Abraham and his descendents.

There was a small sacrifice that God required of Abraham to seal the covenant. 'This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.' Gen 17:10,11.

Thus, the practice of circumcision was instituted by God for all of Abraham's descendents, which today includes both Jews and Arabs. We shall see later that God took this seal of circumcision very seriously and nearly killed those Israelites who did not keep it (Exodus 4:24, Joshua 5:2). It is not easy to understand why that particular cut was made, since the cutting or marking of human flesh is expressly forbidden by God. The removal of the foreskin, which of course results in the shedding of blood, is a sign that the person is permanently exposed and vulnerable to God in their most

secret place. It is the place that defines manhood and man's greatest achievement – procreation in his own image. It is also a sacrifice in the place of deepest intimacy and intercourse. Later in the New Testament, the same expression is used with reference to circumcision of the heart. (Rom 2:29 and Col 2:11) Not physically of course, but symbolically expressing vulnerability of the person to God in their innermost being.

The only other form of permissible body-marking was the piercing of the ear lobe. This was a covenant of slavery. It was a voluntary act by which a slave willingly bound himself and his family to his or her master. The slave was taken to a doorpost and an awl pushed through the ear lobe, which resulted in shedding of blood, leaving a permanent and visible mark. (Deut 15:15 – 17) In many cases, it was probably enhanced by an earring. It was a statement to the world that they belonged to this master alone and would never be slave to anyone else. In contrast with circumcision, which is a private matter, ear-piercing is very public and visible for all to see.

To summarise where we are at the moment: there are two fundamental principles that are a recurring theme throughout the Bible. When God makes covenants and promises, He keeps them. He often seals them with a sacrifice that involves the shedding of blood. Even today, when we draw up a contract or covenant, red wax is sometimes used and a seal pressed into it to seal the covenant. The red wax is a symbol of blood.

The reason for labouring these two principles is that God took 2000 years to ram these points home to and through Israel, whereas we are often quick to think we understand it in a short time. Some think faith is a simple matter, which at one level it is. We can receive God's gifts and promises with child-like trust. But there is a hidden depth, like an iceberg, that can never be fully fathomed. God made promises thousands of years ago, some of which were conditional, some of which were unconditional. They were sealed with a sacrifice. We have been considering the veracity of the Bible with a view to understanding those promises and what they might mean to us both now and in the future. Some of the promises that God made have not yet been fulfilled. As we consider the fulfilment of past promises, we begin to gain confidence that God can be trusted to complete those that have yet to be fulfilled.

As we continue with this investigation, we will see that each of the situations considered is a type or shadow of the most important event in the history of mankind, the ultimate sacrifice of God's own son, Jesus. This death, in which Jesus was nailed to a wooden cross, was God's final sacrifice to seal His covenant with mankind for all

time. We will look at the covenant and the sacrifice in greater detail later in the book, but we draw attention to it at this point, as it will constantly be referenced it as we continue with the discussion.

Back to Abraham. He certainly believed in the promise and covenant God made, but his faith failed in being able to have the child through Sarah, who was approaching her centenary. By having a child through Hagar who was an Egyptian, Abraham had introduced a lot of confusion into the promise, which God had to clarify later on. The promise was to the descendents of Sarah, not Hagar. 'And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him' (Gen 17:19)

There is a very strange incident is worth discussing in the life of Abraham. When Isaac had grown up, God instructed Abraham to take him to a certain mountain and sacrifice him. Obediently, Abraham saddles his ass and taking Isaac and a couple of servants, off they go to Mount Moriah to perform the dreadful act. It is hard to imagine how Sarah would respond to this. 'Just popping out to sacrifice our son Isaac...'. Having received the promised son at 100 years of age, he is just about to kill him. Amazingly, on the bleak mountain top, Isaac actually helps Abraham build that altar and collect the wood, casually asking, 'By the way Dad, where are we going to find a sacrifice up here?' Abraham's elusive reply 'God will provide the sacrifice' was either a deception or a statement of faith. Isaac appears to willingly allow himself to be bound and placed on the altar, but may have been traumatised for the rest of his life. As Abraham's hand is poised above Isaac to plunge in the knife, an angel suddenly appears and stops him dead in his tracks with the words 'Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son'. (Gen 22:12,13). The ram takes the place of Isaac who is symbolically raised from the dead. This again is an example of substitutionary atonement, part of the process of teaching and preparing mankind to understand and receive salvation through sacrifice.

This is a very significant incident, because it is a shadow of a sacrifice that took place, 2000 years later, on that same mountain when another son completed the transaction with his head bound with thorns. Jesus the Son of God was sacrificed in that same location, by that time called Calvary, sealing God's covenant with mankind for all time. He was nailed to a wooden cross with a crown of thorns on his head and was called the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. A male lamb is the same as a young ram.

God later re-established the covenant regarding the land to Abraham's son Isaac. 'Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swear unto Abraham thy father.' (Gen 26:3,4)

God gave the same promise again to Isaac's son Jacob, saying: 'I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of'. (Gen 28:13-15)

So the promise of the land, known as the Land Covenant, was reiterated later to Abraham's son Isaac and then to his son Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. God made it clear that it was to this particular family the promise was being made. Abraham and Isaac had other children to whom the promise did not apply.

Jacob had 12 sons who became known as the 12 tribes of Israel, who eventually inherited the land as God promised Abraham. This is the subject of the next chapter.

We have seen the central and unavoidable place that God had given to sacrifice and it is a subject that we do not like to think about. When I read about Abraham prepared to sacrifice Isaac it fills me with horror. He was spared the ultimate step and yet that is the step that God eventually took, 2000 years later to prove his commitment to mankind. There is a strange incident in my own experience that I will relate here, which I confess I do not fully understand.

My wife and I have 6 children, all now grown up, mostly married with children of their own. All of them are fully committed followers of Jesus Christ. As is quite usual, a couple of them were rebellious during their teenage years and had seemingly gone down a path of worldly ways, which for me was very grieving. However, in a miraculous way, they came through it relatively unscathed. Shortly afterwards, the family was totally together and we took a holiday in a hilly region of Yorkshire. We had planned on taking a camping holiday somewhere completely different, but the evening before we left we were with a friend who happened to have a vacancy in their holiday home in Yorkshire and offered us the keys and use of their house instead. On the first day we went exploring the area and as evening approached we decided to climb a hill from which to watch the sun set. As we climbed this random

hill and approached the summit walking along a fairly wide track, a tractor appeared out of nowhere on which was seated a man. He said 'This is not the way – that is the way', pointing to a stone wall over which we obediently climbed on to a narrow and bramble covered track. So instead of now easily rambling along a wide path, we had to pick our way with some difficulty until we reached the summit. Suddenly we were in a wide ploughed field with no further sign of the path and the only thing nearby was a haystack about 4 feet high. However, as this was as far as we planned to go, we climbed on to the straw platform to watch the sun go down. We prayed together and thanked God for our family and the joy of his beautiful creation. It was a precious, bonding and unforgettable moment as the whole family sat united in a way that we could not have done even a few weeks previously. As we carefully picked our way back down the hill to find the car in the ensuing darkness of nightfall, my son said, 'That was very special'.

Next morning I got up early to read my Bible and opened to Romans chapter 12, 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.' (Romans 12:1,2). I admit I broke down and wept as I realised what we had done. As we sat on that mountain top on a haystack it had been an altar of sacrifice. This precious family that God had given me was not mine, but His. The tears were not sadness, but joy and deep emotion that God had chosen to rescue my family and had chosen us for special purpose, enough to reveal himself to us, almost in a similar way He had to Abraham. We are not required to make the sacrifice. Jesus did that for us on Mount Calvary, but if we want to know His good and perfect will, then we submit ourselves to him as a living sacrifice. The way was not to be the broad road of the world, but a narrow and difficult path. So much of the experience had a supernatural atmosphere about it, from the man on the tractor, the narrow path, the random single haystack and even the kind offer of the holiday home. Since then my family has increased further by marriage and grandchildren and they are all loving and serving the Lord.

17. Israel

The story of the birth of the nation of Israel is a long and complicated history, which we will not cover here, but you can read about in the books of Genesis and Exodus. Suffice to say here that the nation comprised 12 tribes approximately corresponding to the sons of Jacob.

The prophecy of what would happen to the Israelites happened exactly as God had predicted to Abraham, and they became slaves in Egypt. It is an interesting observation that the sons of Isaac and Israel became slaves to the very nation from which Abraham's eldest son, who used to mock Isaac, came. Ishmael's mother, Sarah's maid Hagar was Egyptian. As God had said, after 400 years, they were a humiliated and oppressed nation and could have been forgiven for thinking they had been abandoned by God. But as is the theme of this book, God is faithful. He had not forgotten them, but was about to show them by miraculous signs and wonders that his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was for real and forever.

Life in Egypt had become intolerable to the Israelites, to the point that the ruler Pharaoh made a pronouncement that any male babies should be drowned at birth in case the nation of slaves became too powerful and a potential threat to their masters. One particular baby, whose family managed to save him, became a prince in Egypt, but never forgot his roots. His name was Moses. As a result of killing a cruel slave driver in protection of one of his countrymen, he was forced to flee to the land of Midian, where he became a shepherd. Many years later in the desert, his attention was drawn to a bush that was burning, but not consumed. As he approached it he heard a voice telling him that he was on holy ground. The voice introduced itself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob whose name was I AM. In Hebrew this is JHVH we sometimes spell and pronounce as Yahweh. No one knows how to pronounce JHVH, as it was such a feared name to the Israelites, but I like one possible pronunciation: an in-breath followed by an out-breath. Yahweh sent Moses to bring the people of Israel out of captivity by threatening the Egyptians with a series of plagues. The plagues involved, frogs, flies, hail, darkness, etc, but culminated in the threat to kill their firstborn sons. Pharaoh did not submit to any of the threats or plagues and refused to release the Israelites.

The Israelites were told by God to prepare themselves to leave Egypt, but first to have a special meal. They were to bake bread without yeast. Then to take a 1 year old lamb and kill it. They had to take a branch of hyssop, dip it in the blood of the lamb and smear blood over the doorposts and lintels of their homes. Then sit down and eat the bread and the lamb and wait for instructions to leave. At midnight, the Angel of

Death crossed the land and the eldest son in any home without the blood in evidence, was slain. As the cry of anguish went up from the Egyptians, the Israelites picked up their belongings and marched out to the Promised Land.

This event was known as the Passover, as the Angel of Death passed over those homes that had been covered by the blood of the lamb. Again we have the recurring theme of the substitution of the lamb for the death of a person, the firstborn. The Passover is still celebrated even today by Jews all over the world.

God brought the people of Israel out of bondage and eventually into the land that he had promised to their ancestors. On the way He gave them precise regulations and instructions on how they should live: to be a people set apart from all others: a chosen people. Not because they were anything special or had great attributes, but simply because He had made a promise on oath to their ancestors. These regulations were written down and known as the Torah or The Law. The Torah comprises the first 5 books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy).

The Torah describes how a person was supposed to live to a great level of detail. To break the Law in one point was to break the whole Law. It was an all-or-nothing package. But to break the law meant death. God then introduced them to the concept of substitution. A person who broke the law in any point could receive forgiveness through sacrifice. This was called atonement, which is defined in the dictionary as: to make satisfaction or reparation for a wrong or injury; to make amends.

A number of different types of sin were identified and a corresponding sacrifice was required to make atonement. Sacrifices consisted typically of a lamb or a goat or a bull and the ritual could be carried out only by designated priests. Some sacrifices were to be completely burned up; others were roasted and the priests had to eat the meat; still others were a shared meal, like a barbeque, as a festivity or celebration.

The sacrificial system was based around the Tabernacle which was a mobile temple constructed very precisely to the design given to Moses by God. Erected within a larger enclosure was a tent-like structure with two main rooms. Outside of the first room was a huge basin of water used for ritual cleansing. Before entering, the priest had to bathe and don ceremonial dress. Alongside this was the Altar of Sacrifice, which was a table about 8 feet square on which a fire burned continually, which was used for the cooking or consummation of the sacrifices. This altar was made with a wooden frame and covered with bronze.

The first room was called the Holy Place in which there were several objects associated with worship. To the left side was a large lampstand comprising seven lights. You may be familiar with the Jewish Menorah which is a miniature copy of this. To the right side was a table on which loaves of bread and cups of wine were kept for sacramental use by the priests. In front was a small altar of incense which was kept continually burning. It was the duty of the priests to ensure the lampstand had a continuous supply of oil, the altar was replenished regularly with fuel and incense and that the bread and wine were continually refreshed once a week. Behind the altar of incense was a large and very heavy curtain about 30 feet across. Behind the curtain was the Holy of Holies, into which the high priest would enter only once a year on the Day of Atonement, also known as Yom Kippur.

Inside the Holy of Holies was the Ark of the Covenant, which was a golden box about 4 feet long inside which were two stone tablets on which were carved the 10 Commandments. On top of the Ark was a golden seat called the Mercy Seat over which there were 2 golden angels with outspread wings. Above the Mercy Seat was a supernatural light, called the Shekinah or the Glory of God. As the whole of the Tabernacle was covered with 4 layers of fabric, including badgers skins, and porpoise skins this would naturally have been a very dark and totally silent place. However, the Shekinah reflecting from the golden altar, mercy seat and angels must have made it an awesome, if not terrifying place to be. Added to this, if the priest had not followed precise instructions before entry on the Day of Atonement, the punishment was death.

The Holy Place was a model of Heaven, which we see described in the book of Revelation and the Holiest was a model of the very throne room of God. This was indeed an awesome place since it is the entry point at which the Infinite enters our time and space. This was the very gateway from our 3 dimensional universe into the Heavenlies.

The curtain dividing these two rooms is significant, in that it was similar to the one in the temple that was torn from top to bottom when Jesus died on the cross 1500 years later. The symbolism of that was that the presence of God was no longer confined to the Holy of Holies, to be entered once a year, but there was to be a new way to meet with Him.

The High Priest was selected annually from amongst the priests whose entire life was spent working in and around the temple. All priests came from a particular ancestral line. They were from one particular tribe who were the descendents of one of Jacob's son's called Levi. By the time the Israelites had settled in the land of Israel, the tribe of Levi had grown to several hundred thousand people.

The function of the priest was to carry out the sacrifices and only a priest was permitted to sacrifice. The purpose of sacrifice was to substitute an animal in place of the death of one who had sinned.

The priesthood, the vestments, the cleansing rituals, the food, the lighting, the incense, the sacrificial rituals: all were very precisely described and had to be obeyed absolutely. Failure to comply with attention to the smallest detail could result in death or at least a further sacrifice to make amends for that failure.

The animals were ritually killed by cutting the throat and then butchered. The body parts were washed with water and the animal was then usually roasted on an altar.

There were all kinds of regulations about what parts of the sacrifice could be eaten and by whom. The fat was not to be eaten, but had to be burned off. We now know that fat is not good to eat as it contains the animal's toxins as well as causing high blood pressure. Some animals were deemed as unclean, like pigs and rabbits. We now know that such animals, being carnivorous carry diseases. Blood was not to be consumed. Again we know that blood also can carry diseases. However, none of this modern knowledge was available to the Jews 3000 years ago. They were simply following God's instructions.

The blood of the sacrifice had special significance, as they were told that the life is in the blood (Deuteronomy 12:23). The blood was always poured out. In some situations it was poured around the altar and on the ground; in other cases it was sprinkled on the priests or the people present. In yet another situation the priest would dip his finger in the blood and apply it to the right ear lobe, right thumb and right toe. This was symbolic of obedience in terms of hearing from God, obeying in action and walking on the right path. This may also be a significant symbolism in that Jesus was executed with nails driven through his hands and feet and a crown of thorns cutting into his head.

You can imagine the stench there would have been around the tabernacle with blood and meat everywhere, every day and in the heat of the Middle East. The whole system seems very strange to our culture and fortunately is no longer required, but neither the Jews in those days, nor us with our enlightened knowledge really understand the significance of the effects of sin and the requirement for atonement. To God, the sin of man is the ugliest and foulest thing possible and by comparison, the stench of slaughter and the odour of burnt sacrifice was a sweet-smelling savour (Leviticus 1:13).

In particular there was a daily sacrifice at 9 am and again at 3 pm. These were carried out on an altar made of wood and covered with bronze. There were more sacrifices on the Sabbath Day as well as additional special sacrifices on appointed feast days. Jesus was nailed to the cross at 9 am and died at 3 pm. He was nailed to a wooden cross using bronze spikes through his hands and feet. There are many other aspects of the priesthood and the sacrifice, which are shadows or types of Jesus.

There were 7 appointed annual feast days when the Jews were required to be in Jerusalem. They were grouped together to reduce the travel to 3 times a year, during the Spring and Autumn. As Jerusalem is roughly central, no one would have had to travel more than about 80 miles.

The Feast of Passover marked the anniversary of the salvation from the angel of death when they left Egypt. It is an elaborate meal involving roast lamb and herbs.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread also marked the preparation of the slaves by baking bread without yeast as they made ready to leave Egypt. Leaven or yeast is symbolic in the Bible of sin. In bread-making, it takes time to rise and they had no time to lose as they had their last meal before leaving Egypt. During this feast the Jews go right through their homes eradicating all leaven.

The Feast of Firstfruits was the bringing of the first incoming of the harvest and a time of celebration.

The Feast of Pentecost was 50 days later when the harvest was all gathered and was another time of celebration.

The Feast of Trumpets was the sounding of a trumpet as a call to sacrifice and worship.

The Feast of Atonement was a time for repentance from sin and associated with fasting.

The Feast of Tabernacles involved building of booths made of twigs in which the Jews would spend several days reminding themselves of the years in the wilderness.

All of these feast days have been celebrated by Jews for thousands of years, although as a nation they do not even now understand the full significance. All of the sacrifices

and feast days pointed towards the sacrifice of Jesus, which was still over 1500 years in the future from when they were instituted by God. As we shall see, He was crucified and buried on the day of the Feast of the Passover, he lay in the tomb during the Feast of Unleavened bread and rose again from the dead on the Feast of Firstfruits. The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost, 50 days after the resurrection.

The remaining three feasts are associated with the second coming of Jesus Christ and we will discuss these later in the book.

It is interesting to note that God himself instituted the tabernacle, the sacrificial system and the 7 feasts for Israel. However both the Israelites and subsequently the Church have embellished these institutions far beyond what God originally intended, which has led to all kinds of confusion.

The Tabernacle was originally a tent, for which the design was given to Moses. As Israel became more sophisticated and conquered the nations around them, they thought that their God deserved a much better dwelling place. So King Solomon built a magnificent new Temple in 960 BC. Even though this was not part of the original plan, God came to dwell in it. This is an example of where God sometimes goes along with our plans, even though they are not His plans.

Solomon's Temple was destroyed and rebuilt several times over the next thousand years, being refurbished by the evil King Herod around 20 BC. The temple was more of a tribute to Herod himself. So it is with many of our wonderful buildings and churches, allegedly built for the glory of God, that are actually more about the glory of man than of God.

God never intended that Israel should have a king. God himself was to be their King (Hosea 13:10,11), but they wanted a human king, like all the other nations. So God gave them their own way, but the kings, after a fairly good start became increasingly corrupt and evil until God eventually put an end to the monarchy. It is still God's intention that He will be the King of Israel and indeed the whole world. That is yet to happen.

Another example of where we think we know better than God is the subject of financial interest or usury as it is called in the Torah. The current financial crisis is caused by greed, high risk and high interest rates, which are expressly forbidden by God (Leviticus 25:36).

It would seem that some human beings take delight in opposing God. He has given us laws, but we disobey them. We seem unable to do just what God requires, but rather ignore it or replace it with something else. Israel demonstrates this throughout its history and western Christianity continues this trend. We think we know best and want to bend and fashion God into our image rather than us being in His image.

18. God's Timing

We have seen then how much of the early part of the Bible is guiding us towards one person, and a particular event in his life. We can see that the death of Jesus was not because he happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, or that some jealous politicians had him executed. It was a deliberately engineered sacrifice that was planned from the very beginning, even before time began. Throughout the Torah and the whole of the Old Testament clues are laid down to prove this. It is only after the event of Jesus' crucifixion that this became clear. Up to that point, much of the scriptures would have been a complete mystery, but suddenly all of the pieces fall into place. Jesus said to the Jewish leaders, 'Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me' (John 5:39). After His death, walking along the road to Emmaus, Jesus expounded the Law and the Prophets to two of his friends showing that they were all about Him (Luke 24:27). As we look more deeply into the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, we can see that these are described in great detail in the scriptures, hundred of years before he was born.

There are some who would challenge the very existence of Jesus. There are some who would challenge his authenticity. There are some who would challenge His right to be called the Son of God. As we now begin to look into the life and death of Jesus, we shall see that the predictions made about him, the locations, the timing were so precise that He truly is the Son of God, that we can absolutely believe what he said and what was written about Him. We can have confidence that he made certain promises, even to us in the 21st Century and He sealed them with the greatest sacrifice of all: His own death.

We have seen some examples of the precision of God's timing. I believe He sometimes uses memorials to bring things to our attention very forcibly. For example, year after year for hundreds of years, the Jews were celebrating Passover as a past event, unaware that it was predicting a much greater event on the same day and exactly the same time many years in the future. Many Jews today continue to celebrate Passover, without realising that it was fulfilled in the sacrifice of Jesus.

I have seen in my own life how of God can use events and timing to engage my attention.

At the age of eighteen, I was full of selfish ambition and determined to make a name for myself, to be popular and be a leader. I had just started college and anxious to begin by being selected for the rugby team. The trials were to take place on a

Wednesday and I was very fit and raring to go. On the day before, the Tuesday 22nd of October, a day forever etched into my memory, I needed to get some washing powder and hopped on my motorcycle during the lunch hour to go to the local shops. As I rounded a sharp bend, with wet leaves on the ground, I had a head on collision with a 5 ton lorry. A couple of friends happened to be walking along and heard the crash, ran to see what had happened and, finding me smashed up in the road. One of them ran as fast as he could to a phone box to call for an ambulance. Apparently, I was literally broken in half. Both thighbones were broken and my body was folded over as the thigh muscles contracted. An ambulance came and I was rushed to hospital, where I later found out that I was within a couple of minutes of death.

When I was released from hospital 4 months later on crutches, I was a completely changed person. I was 4 stone lighter and very weak. My left knee was so badly damaged that it would hardly bend and any sport looked unlikely, particularly contact sport. Gone forever was rugby and motorcycling. However, now instead of pursuing my 'worldly' ambitions, I became much more focused on God and seeking his plan for my life. I was so far behind in my studies, I had to begin the 3 year course again from the start, so that I was always a year behind my colleagues.

Now this appears to be just an unfortunate accident, but as time went on, I began to see that there was actually a purpose to this. During my final year I started dating the girl who was later to become my wife. Had I not had the accident, we would never have married.

Years later I was standing by her bedside after she had delivered our eldest son and the midwife, filling in the birth form said, 'Your son was born at 1:45 pm on the 22nd October'. That date and time had a familiar ring to it! It was 10 years previously to the day, the hour and even probably the minute, I had nearly lost my own life and now here was a new life, my own firstborn son coming into the world. I knew then that this was no accident. I believe God had shown me that my life was planned and under his control. We now have 6 children, all of whom are following the Lord and fulfilling His purpose for their lives.

Many years later, I used to regularly walk during my lunch hour along paths near Heathrow that were part of the London Loop. The London Loop, one of the Mayor of London's routes, that almost completely encircles Greater London, covering a total distance of around 150 miles. One day a sign was erected just at the start of my usual walk with a rather strange direction 'Trent Park 38¼ m'. Why anyone would have chosen to select that particular location and that particular direction and distance was beyond me. I then realised to my utter amazement, that it had been exactly 38¼ years

since that life-changing accident which had happened to me at Trent Park. I do not believe this could be a coincidence. Once again God was showing me that He had planned the whole thing and had a purpose for my life.

The point of relating this story in my life is to illustrate the way God uses timing to make a point; to show us that everything is planned. Maybe there are no accidents! Certainly, in the life of Jesus, there were no accidents. His life was prophesied in great detail hundreds of years before and his fulfilment of those prophecies are indeed proof to us that God's word is true. We shall now take a look at some of these prophecies and types concerning Jesus. We cannot cover all of them since there are thousands, but just some of the more significant ones.

19. The Life of Jesus

The Old Testament has a multitude of references to Jesus, hundreds of years before his birth. The gospels continually refer back to descriptions of Jesus in the Torah and the Prophets. Jesus himself said 'Read the Law and the Prophets; They speak of me' (John 5:39). As we piece together the parts of this jigsaw, we can see that Jesus alone fulfils the requirements to be the Messiah. No other human being, past present or future can fulfil those requirements. Mashiach or Messiah in Hebrew which is Christos or Christ in Greek, means Anointed One: the person that would be the embodiment of God himself, who would one day come to Earth to be the ultimate atonement for the sins of mankind. This was God's plan from before creation. The Messiah was described in great detail and only one person has or ever could fulfil those criteria in terms of the timing in history, the places and the events. That person was Jesus of Nazareth.

There is some confusion over the exact date of the birth of Jesus. The calendar as we know it today is called the Gregorian calendar. This was devised by Dionysius Exiguus in AD 525, and was based on the year in which he believed Jesus was born. It is now understood from archaeological evidence that Jesus was born several years earlier than 1 AD. It is also certain that he was not born on 25th December.

The story of Jesus' birth as told in the gospel of Luke begins with old Zechariah, the High Priest ministering in the Holy of Holies, when the angel Gabriel appears and tells him that he will have a son, who is to be called John. For his natural disbelief, Zechariah is struck dumb until the baby is born.

With a bit of research, it can be shown that Zechariah was the High Priest in the course of Abijah (Luke 1:5). The 24 priestly courses were instituted by King David (1 Chronicles 24:10), starting in the first month of the Jewish sacred year (roughly corresponding to April in Western parlance). The course of Abijah was the eighth, which would have been around July. Immediately after this encounter, John (the Baptist) was conceived. Zechariah's wife Elizabeth was 6 months pregnant when the virgin Mary was told by the angel Gabriel that she would conceive (Luke 1:26). So Mary probably conceived in January. Hence Jesus would be born around the end of September or early October, which is the time of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Also shepherds would not normally be in the fields looking after sheep in December. Thirdly, there was no festival for which a census would be taken in December requiring everyone to travel to their place of birth.

Looking at the interpretation of Biblical types, the most appropriate time would have been the Feast of Tabernacles, which would also align with the meaning of

Tabernacle, which is the idea of God dwelling in human flesh: ‘The tabernacle of God is with men’ (Revelation 21:3). There is some indication that both the first and second coming of Jesus Christ both take place at the Feast of Tabernacles and it will be a fulfilment of the full meaning of that festival: God coming to dwell with mankind.

However, whilst the exact date of His birth is uncertain, there is no doubt about His existence. Increasingly archaeology is confirming the truth of the scriptures. Names of characters, which hitherto were only mentioned in the Bible are being found in archaeological remains. Even as I write, there has been a newsworthy discovery of the tomb of Herod. Non-Biblical writers, such as Josephus only confirm the facts as recorded in the Gospels. The following chapter uses Old Testament texts to show not only that Jesus existed, but that He was a supernatural being about whom there are thousands of prophecies concerning His life, ministry and death. These were all written in Hebrew and completed at least 400 years before Jesus was born. The writings are the property of the Jews, who as a nation do not accept that Jesus is the Messiah even though the proof is there in their own scriptures. This is a mystery and explained by the Apostle Paul, who himself was a Jewish rabbi, as deliberately engineered by God Himself in order that non-Jews may have a window of opportunity to accept Jesus as their Messiah. He writes, ‘God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear; unto this day.’ (Rom 11:8) ‘Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall, salvation is come unto the Gentiles’ (Romans 11:11).

As we shall discuss later, a period of time has been allocated by God, during which the covenants and promises of God have been extended to include Gentiles. No one knows how long this window will remain open, but it is not indefinite. At a time known only to God, the Church will be removed and the eyes of the Jews opened to recognise their Messiah. Then they will understand their scriptures and the true meaning of rituals that have been hidden from them for millennia. With the assistance of the New Testament, we are in the privileged position of being able to interpret God’s plan right now.

King Jesus

Jesus was proclaimed King before He was born or even conceived. The words spoken by the Angel Gabriel to Mary; ‘He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.’ (Luke 1:32-33)

A king requires a kingdom or territory, and a people over which to reign.

The Angel here declares that Jesus will reign over the house of Jacob, which is Israel; but the Kingdom over which Jesus will ultimately reign is not just Israel, or just a part of earth; it includes the whole universe as well as Heaven and every possible dimension. 'Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool.' (Isaiah 66:1). Of Jesus, Paul writes, 'Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.' (Hebrews 2:8)

'Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' (Philippians 2:9-11)

We have been taught to pray to Our Father 'Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven' and the time is coming when everyone alive will be subject to the reign of Jesus Christ as King, either willingly or by force.

God is not going to let Satan or anyone else in rebellion against Him have any part of the universe. Satan's rule on earth is short-lived (Rev 12:12).

God created everything and He will have everything under His dominion. In fact nothing can exist without Him anyway as He upholds all of creation by His power, without which it would all come to nothing. That is why it is so foolish to resist God.

People sometime use the following passage to argue that Jesus' kingdom is only a Heavenly one, that He will not reign physically on the earth: 'Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.' (John 18:36)

By this I believe Jesus was saying that His kingdom was not of this world right at that time, or there would have been physical fighting, and His arrest, which was an essential part of God's plan, would not have taken place. Fighting and death will however occur on a massive scale, prior to the inauguration of His earthly kingdom. 'And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. And out of his mouth went a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.' (Rev 19:11-21). The time is coming when a bloody and decisive battle is going to take place in the Valley of Armageddon and Jesus Christ Himself will head up the conquering army.

The duration of His kingdom will be eternal. 'The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.' (Rev 11:15)

After the battle of Armageddon, the reign of Jesus Christ will begin on Earth, where it will last for 1000 years. After that, He will reign for eternity in Heaven.

His Lineage

Throughout the history of mankind and Israel in particular, God showed that he was preparing an ancestral line of kings through which the Messiah would come. In Jewish custom, the succession line was passed from father to the eldest son. However, if a man had no sons, then the line of succession could be passed to his daughter. When she married, within the tribe, the succession would pass to her husband and subsequently his sons. (Read about the daughters of Zelophehad in Numbers 36). This may seem to us like male chauvinism, but female emancipation is a relatively modern concept. Way back in the days of the patriarchs, as he was conferring his dying blessing on his 12 sons, Jacob prophetically announces that the kingly line will come from Judah: 'The sceptre shall not depart from Judah', (Gen 49:10). A sceptre is an ornamental staff belonging to a king, symbolising authority.

Hundreds of years later, unlike the nations around them, Israel had no king. God intended Israel to be a Theocracy over which God himself was to be their King. But they wanted to be like the other nations around them, to have an earthly king. Israel wanted to be able to function as a Monarchy, with all the pomp and ceremony that entails, with palaces and fine buildings. They asked the prophet Samuel to give them a king. God acceded to their wishes and seemingly reluctantly, but perhaps to teach them a lesson, allowed them to have a king. The first king was an impressive man named Saul, powerfully built and a great warrior; a perfect choice by any human standard. Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin, which was the least of the tribes, rather than from Judah, and his reign turned out to be a disaster. From very humble beginnings Saul rose to become an extremely proud and arrogant king. His lowest point was when he went to engage the services of a witch to bring the deceased prophet Samuel back from the dead for advice. Eventually, injured on the battlefield he fell on his own sword to avoid being captured and tortured by the Philistines. (1 Samuel 31:4) Not a good start for the monarchy, but God was allowing them to see what an earthly king would be like.

God Himself appointed the next king, named David, who was from the tribe of Judah, who took Israel to its peak. As a fine warrior, as well as poet and musician, David made an excellent king, conquering and subduing all the nations around them. However, even he sinned very badly committing adultery, murder and becoming proud of his military achievements. But David was also known as a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22), who was willing to acknowledge his sin and repent.

David's son Solomon reigned next, during whose time the wealth and power of Israel was fabulous. King Solomon's gold mines are legendary. Yet in spite of great wisdom and achievements Solomon turned aside from following God and began to align himself with the foreign gods of his 700 wives and 300 concubines!

God had promised that David and Solomon would have a kingdom that would last forever and that they would never cease to have a descendent on the throne of Israel. 'King Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the LORD for ever' (1Kings 2:45).

However, Solomon's successor, his son, Rehoboam was a weak king and the kingdom of Israel was torn by civil war. 10 tribes broke away following a self-acclaimed king named Jeroboam. Only 2 tribes remained faithful to Rehoboam and the kingdom of Judah.

Thus two lines of kings continued for several hundred years but they were mostly very bad and idolatrous leaders. It is amazing that God allowed the monarchies to continue as long as He did, but He had made a promise to David that his throne would last forever. 'The LORD would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that he had made with David, and as he promised to give a light to him and to his sons forever'. (2 Chronicles 21:7)

More than 200 years after David, the prophet Isaiah, speaking of the Messiah says 'Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this' (Isaiah 9:7).

After many generations, the situation continued to deteriorate with the kings becoming increasingly wicked and leading Israel deeper into idolatry, even to sacrificing their own children to the pagan god Molech. Finally, exasperated with the monarchy, God made a pronouncement that the kingly line would be cut off. Of King Jeconiah, 'Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah' (Jeremiah 22:30).

King Jeconiah (Also known as Coniah) was the final king of Judah around 600 BC as God pronounced that no more of his descendents would reign. His son Zedekiah took the throne, but the neighbouring Babylonians invaded the land, killing his sons before

his eyes, and then they blinded him before taking him into captivity. He did have another son whilst in captivity who carried on the royal lineage although it was cursed from ever having a reigning king.

Now God has a problem. He has promised that a king from David's descendents would be forever on the throne and yet he has now cursed the lineage. Over 500 years later, there was a man called Joseph, one of the descendents of the kingly line of David, of the tribe of Judah. He got engaged to a young virgin girl, named Mary who was also from the kingly line, but descended from one of David's other sons, named Nathan. As Mary may have been an only child, Joseph appears to have been adopted as heir by her father. So as we read the accounts of the lineage of Jesus, Joseph is shown as having two different fathers, Jacob from the line of Jeconiah or Jehoiakim (Matt 1:16) and Heli from the line of Nathan (Luke 3:23). (Note that the names, originally in Hebrew were translated into Greek and then English in the New Testament, can get a bit changed.) The story is well known, how the virgin Mary becomes pregnant before the marriage is consummated, but an angel tells Joseph to go ahead with the marriage as the conception is from God. Thus whilst Jesus is legally from the kingly lineage of Judah, via Solomon and Joseph, he is genetically only from the line of Mary. His actual Father is none other than God himself, as no human man was involved in the conception. The Holy Spirit planted the seed in Mary's womb.

The virgin birth is also alluded to by Isaiah, 250 years earlier; '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) Immanuel means 'God is with us'.

So the Messiah had to fulfil the criteria of being of the kingly lineage of Judah, but could not be from the cursed lineage of Jeconiah. Most people never understand the significance of the Virgin Birth and see it as a cute story, perhaps to explain away the anomalous pregnancy of the young Mary. Some have even suggested that another man was secretly involved. But understanding the significance of the royal lineage, we can see that this was God's supernatural answer to a conundrum created by the weakness of human kings. Knowing in advance that this would happen, God made provision from before the world began, to ensure that His anointed one would be a perfect human specimen of manhood so that the sacrificial Lamb would be pure bred, go on to live a sin free life in order to die for the sins of mankind. No human could have ever devised such a plan. It had to be planned and executed by One outside of our 3 dimensional space and time.

The Messiah had to be born of a virgin and He will live forever. No one, past, present or future could meet those requirements, other than Jesus of Nazareth.

Place of birth

The Old Testament prophecies indicate that the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem. 'But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting'. (Micah 5:2).

Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem, fulfilling the ancient prophecies.

Bethlehem means House of Bread and, during His ministry, Jesus stated that he was the Bread of Life.

Triumphant entry

During the early parts of the gospels, Jesus continually seems to be hiding the fact that he is the Messiah. 'And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man.' (Matthew 8:4). 'Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.' (Matthew 16:20)

Finally a day arrives when He rides into Jerusalem on a donkey and is acclaimed King by the crowds. This event is exactly predicted in the Old Testament, the timing and the precise details. 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass'. (Zechariah 9:9)

The exact day of his unveiling as Messiah and King, was prophesied by Daniel. 'Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.' (Daniel 9:25)

The Hebrew word for 'week' in this context is "shabua" which means a week of years. The angel speaks of two events; the first would be the restoration of the walls of Jerusalem, which would be within 49 years (seven sevens). The second would be the coming of Messiah 434 years after that (62 sevens).

Seven plus two plus threescore (60) is 69. In those days, a year was measured as 12 months of 30 days, which is 360 days. We know from historical and archaeological information the exact day on which the Babylonian King Artaxerxes gave the edict to begin building the walls of Jerusalem in 445 BC. If you multiply 7 x 69 x 360 the result is 173,880 days. Divide this by 365.25 to correct for the real number of days in a year and the result is 476 years. Subtract from this 445 (BC) and the result is 32

years. Allowing for leap years and corrections for calendar differences, scholars have calculated that this comes to the exact day on which Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the donkey at the age of 33. Could Jesus have actually calculated that day by human reasoning? I don't think so. He was waiting for God to tell Him the right time at which he was to be revealed as King.

This incident again is an indicator that Jesus is the Messiah, and that Someone outside of time, God himself, set up the programme and made it happen exactly on cue.

20. The Death of Jesus

The death of Jesus was also described hundreds of years before He was born in great detail. Most of the events and incidents described below could not have been arranged in order to fulfil the prophecies as they were outside of His control. Since the Jews had been expecting the Messiah, the Anointed One, for centuries, the leaders clearly did not think Jeshua of Nazareth was the Messiah. He did not conform to their expectations and they had Him executed on a charge of blasphemy for claiming to be God, for which the penalty under the Torah was death by stoning (Lev 24:16).

His Betrayal

Jesus was betrayed by one of his friends for 30 pieces of silver. After eating a meal together, Judas left the room and later that night, came into the garden where Jesus and his friends were resting and identified him with a kiss, after which Jesus was arrested and taken for trial. 1000 years before this, David the Psalmist writes; ‘Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me’ (Psalm 41:9) and ‘So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.’ (Zechariah 11:12)

It is finished

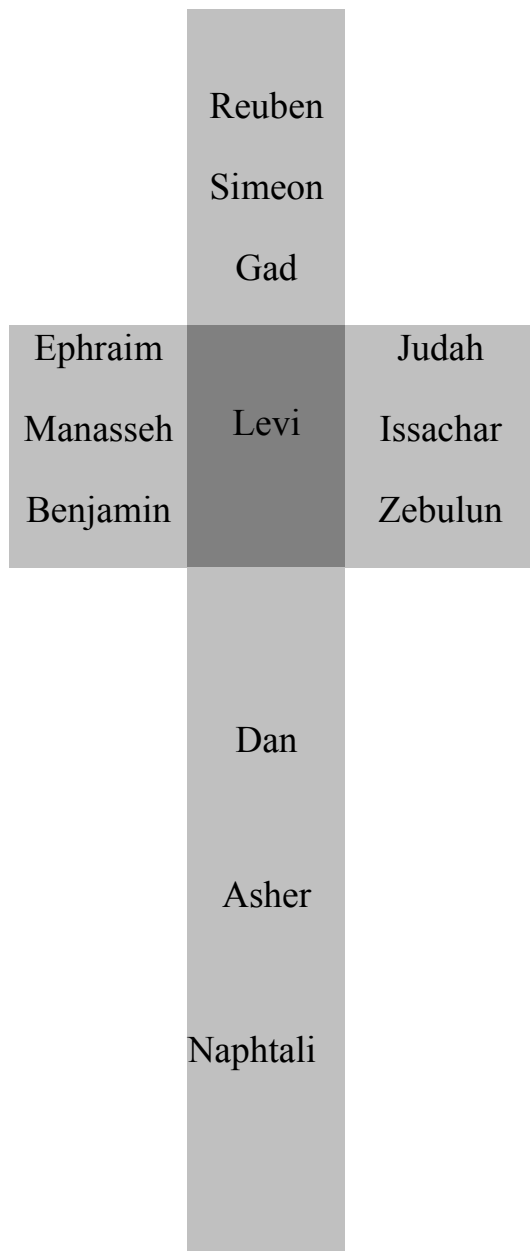
The sacrificial system in Israel required the killing of a lamb at 9 am and another a 3 pm. This was carried out in a very precise way and had to be administered and approved by the priest. When the second daily sacrifice was complete, the priest would raise his hands and cry ‘It is finished!’”

Jesus was nailed to the cross at 9 am, with His hands raised above His head. The last words he uttered before dying at precisely 3 pm, were the words ‘It is finished’. (Matt 27:46-50, John 19:30). He had completed to the letter the requirements for His own sacrifice, in the exact manner and even the prescribed time. Humanly speaking these details were outside of His control although His Father God was overseeing and engineering the entire event.

The Israelite Wilderness Encampment

Here is another amazing prediction about Jesus’ death, which we can see from the history of Israel. When the 12 tribes were camped in the wilderness, after leaving Egypt, God gave them many instructions including exactly where to camp. A pillar of cloud by day a pillar of fire by night showed the place where they were to set up the tabernacle, which was the mobile temple of God (Exodus 13). The priestly tribe, the Levites were to camp around the tabernacle (Numbers 2). Three tribes, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun were to camp in a line to the east of the Levites, numbering

186,400 men. To the south, Reuben Simeon and Gad, numbering 151,450. To the north, Dan, Asher and Naphtali, numbering 157,600. Finally, to the west Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin, numbering 108,100. If you could look down on this encampment from a great height you would see the shape of a cross, with 2 roughly equal arms to the north and south, the longer lower part to the east and the short top part to the west.



This is exactly the shape of the cross on which Jesus was to die 1500 years later. How could any human know that the pagan Romans would develop a method of execution as barbaric as crucifixion? Had the Jews executed Jesus, they would have used the traditional Jewish method as prescribed in the Torah, of stoning, but the leaders lied to the Roman governor Pontius Pilate. ‘Pilate unto them, “Take ye him, and judge

him according to your law”. The Jews therefore said unto him, “It is not lawful for us to put any man to death” (John 18:31). Yet at their insistence, Jesus was put to death by the Roman method. This is yet another example of the hidden clues that are in the Bible that prove its authenticity; that show that it was written by Someone outside of our space and time.

Psalm 22

This Psalm is filled with details about the death of Jesus written 1000 years before it happened. The following represents a few of those details.

Verse 1. The words spoken by Jesus on the cross ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ (Matthew 27:46)

Verse 8. The enemies of Jesus, the priests and scribes fulfilled the words as they called out in ridicule, ‘He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.’ (Matthew 27:43)

Verse 14 ‘All my bones are out of joint’. As the cross was dropped into place and after hanging by the arms for hours or even days, most of the joints of the crucified one would be disjointed causing extreme agony.

Verse 16 ‘The assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.’ Crucifixion involved driving nails through the hands and feet of the crucified one.

Verse 18 ‘They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.’ Exactly as prophesied, the Roman soldiers divided up his clothes and cast lots (possibly drew straws) for his tunic. (Matt 27:35) There is no way Jesus could have arranged for this to happen. It is clearly a fulfilment of the prophecy.

Isaiah Chapter 52 and 53

This chapter in the book of Isaiah is so precise in its description of the death of Jesus. ‘See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. Just as there were many who were appalled at him - his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness...He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him

stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed....the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth..... He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors'. (Isaiah 52:13-53:12)

Written 250 years before the event, this describes in gruesome and graphic detail the events around the crucifixion, which are depicted in the gospels. He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter speaks of His identification with the sacrificial Passover lamb. He was disfigured by the cruel treatment of the Roman soldiers, with a crown of thorns rammed on His head and His head beaten with sticks to the degree that He was appalling to look at. He was raised up on a cross to die. He died surrounded by wicked men, with a thief on either side whilst Barabbas, the murderer was set free. He was buried in a tomb provided by a rich man called Joseph of Arimathea. But after all that suffering, death and burial, He will see the light of life and be resurrected. No other person who has ever lived can fit that description.

The climax of the passage is verse 5: 'He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities: the punishment that brought us peace was upon him; and with his wounds or stripes we are healed.' This verse leads us to receive forgiveness for our transgressions or sins and experience undeserved peace. We can literally claim healing of our bodies because Jesus took the pain and suffering in His body.

Linen clothes and head covering

As we study the Old Testament priesthood and the sacrificial system, we will see that it is all fulfilled by Jesus. Yet another example of this is the way in which the resurrection details exactly map the priestly actions. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, the High Priest, after performing a sacrifice in the Holy Place would enter the Holy of Holies, which was at the very heart of the Tabernacle or the Temple. In the Holy of Holies was the Ark of the Covenant, covered by the Mercy Seat, over which were two golden angels with outstretched wings. This was an

annual meeting with God, at which the priest, representing the people of Israel, sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice on the mercy seat and received mercy and forgiveness for sin on behalf of the nation. After the priest had completed the transaction, he would remove the outer linen garments and lay them out before leaving the Holy Place (Leviticus 16:23)

Jesus fulfilled exactly the pattern set thousands of years before. Having offered himself as the sacrifice on the cross, He entered the Holy of Holies of the tomb both as priest and sacrifice carrying the sins of all mankind, once and for all. When the disciples came to the tomb in which Jesus had been laid, they were met by two men dressed in white, inside the tomb. These unarmed men had rendered powerless the four Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb, and rolled away the stone. They were clearly angels as depicted on the the Ark of the Covenant. The disciples found the linen garments neatly folded just as a priest would fold them. These final acts completed the priesthood and put an end to the sacrificial system.

Further Confirmation

If anyone is inclined to dismiss any of the above as pertaining to someone or something else, a further seal was set by God to confirm to whom this refers. We have mentioned the Bible Code earlier in the book. In both of the major passages referenced above, Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 there is a great deal of additional encoded information. To check this out requires knowledge of Hebrew language and lettering, but for those so interested, it is possible to research easily using the Internet¹. The most significant encoding in both of these chapters are the letters spaced equidistantly YESHUA MASHIACH, which means Jesus Christ. There are many other encodings in these chapters referring to the cross and Jesus' ministry, the names of all of the disciples and other key players. Consider that these were written hundreds of years before Jesus by a nation that even today still denies that He is the Messiah. There can be no doubt that Jesus, his life and death were supernatural and preordained. We can be assured that He is the Son of God and His words can be trusted.

We have so far concluded that God created the universe, the Earth and mankind in particular, for relationship with Himself. He came to Earth personified as Jesus of Nazareth 2000 years ago.

When Jesus was on Earth He brought a foretaste of the Kingdom of Heaven. Through healings and miraculous signs, He showed that sickness, disease and death were not something we have to live with. These come about because we live in a fallen world that is currently under the rule of Satan, and mankind's sinful nature has exposed us to his influence.

Jesus' death was according to precise plan preordained and predicted in scripture hundreds of years in advance.

But why did He come to earth and why was it necessary that He should have to die in such an extraordinary way? We will discuss this in the next chapter.

21. Sin, Restitution and Substitution

On his way home from work, John has to quickly pop in to the store to buy a litre of milk. As he is in a hurry, he parks on the double yellow line outside the store. There is a slight delay in the queue whilst a pensioner fumbles with change. By the time John gets to his car, there is a penalty notice and a fine to pay.

Jean is a perfectly proportioned model who stands on the scale every day and examines herself regularly for any signs of aging or going to seed. Occasionally she goes out with friends for a nice meal or is invited to a dinner party. After each of such occasions, she takes corrective action with a cleansing diet for 2 or 3 days until she regains her perfect weight.

Jim is an athlete who trains every day, never drinks or smokes and eats a perfectly balanced diet. He goes away on a fully paid 2-week package holiday, during which his iron will gives way. The sight of beautifully prepared food and an endless supply of alcohol, indulgent friends and his resolve gives way. The thought 'I have paid for this, might as well enjoy it' wins the day over discipline. As he stands on the scale 2 weeks later, he is horrified to discover he has gained 16 pounds of fat, his muscle definition is gone, his endurance and strength have diminished. He spends the next month on a punishing regime of strict diet and doubly hard exercise to recover his pristine level of fitness.

Jasper is a business man travelling mainly in Europe. On one occasion, he had too much to drink. Sitting opposite in the bar is a beautiful woman who is clearly attracted to him. 20 years of faithful marriage is forgotten as he gives in to temptation. Several weeks later, racked with guilt he confesses to his wife. She goes ballistic and threatens divorce. He spends the next 20 years trying hard to make amends, but the marriage is never the same again and the trust between has been lost forever.

Jake is a driver with perfect records and no convictions. Driving through a busy street, he is distracted as he is expecting an important call that is overdue. His mobile phone rings and against his normally sound judgement he leans over to answer it. At that moment a small child steps out in front, but he does not see her. He is convicted of driving without due care and attention and receives a hefty prison sentence. However, the regret and remorse can never be expiated by any amount of prison or punishment. He bears the guilt internally for the rest of his life.

Julian has been a rock-climber since the age of 10 and, aged 20, he is fearless and skilful on the rock-face. His confidence takes him to a new level of extremity when he decides to climb a sheer 200 foot cliff face without a rope. As he nears the top, the tiny ledge on which his weight is resting gives way and he plunges to his death.

All of the above scenarios are examples of sin. Sin is not necessarily doing something evil as much as failing to reach the required mark. Failure has consequences and in these little stories there is an increasing level of seriousness and consequence. At the lowest level a fine is easily paid, but as we go through the scenarios, the price gets increasingly more difficult to pay until in the final example above, the result of the error is death, for which no amount of payment, penance or punishment can make restitution. Every sin, no matter how small carries a penalty, which someone has to pay. The penalty may be as small as temporarily hurt feelings or as serious as divorce; from a minor injury or as serious as the death of someone. In some cases, it may be possible to make some form of payment or gesture to make restitution, but often the result is permanent and irreversible.

Restitution can be anything on a spectrum from merely having to say 'Sorry' through to paying the ultimate sacrifice of a life.

Over a lifetime we spend much of our energies in correcting errors and mistakes, but there are some actions that cannot be corrected or expiated as we have seen in the above examples. Our very nature seems to be to take risks, chances and make mistakes, some of which we will admit to; others we will try to excuse, deny or put the blame on someone else. We know in our heart that every one of these failures has to be counterbalanced by some kind of restitution. Somehow that which is wrong must be put right.

There is no way that a human being can atone for all the wrongs during a lifetime. Even if it were possible to counterbalance the wrongful actions with some form of restitution, the overall balance sheet for anyone would be heavily on the side of wrong. Some actions can never be corrected. There are some breakages that no amount of glue can repair. God has provided the means whereby all sin, failures and errors can be expiated through sacrifice. The sacrifice of animals was merely a teaching aid by which the Almighty Creator of the Universe would communicate the Law of Atonement. The true means by which all sin is expiated is by death of a perfect human being, who had no personal sin for which to atone. That person was God Himself in the person of Jesus Christ. His death was the final and perfect sacrifice to atone for all sin, no matter how small or great.

The outworking of natural laws still stands. If you drop something and it breaks, it remains broken. If your sin results in a broken relationship, it may remain broken. However, as far as God is concerned, the atonement of His death pays the debt and wipes out the penalty for all sin. Although there may be natural consequences, which could even be death, God does not hold the sinner accountable for whatever is covered by the blood of Jesus. Thus on judgement day, the person who has acknowledged Jesus as his atoning sacrifice stands perfect in the eyes of God.

This is the good news, the gospel. It is FANTASTIC news. It has to be the best deal ever.

This is what the life and death of Jesus is all about. All that we have been considering, the Law, the sacrificial system, the prophecies and elaborate plans executed over thousands of years were all heading towards this one purpose – to save mankind from the penalty of sin.

In all of the above examples of ‘sin’, the consequences were evident and more or less immediate. However, there is a far greater penalty, which we cannot prove and cannot observe, but it is clearly stated in the Bible. So, if we have got this far and are accepting the Bible as truth, then what it says about this subject has to be taken seriously. The Bible is very clear that, if we die without our sins being atoned for, then we face the most awful fate imaginable, which is called Hell. This has to be one of the most unpopular subjects, and yet Jesus speaks about it far more than He speaks about Heaven. He describes it as a place of torment, of wailing and gnashing of teeth, of being burned as with fire and extreme anguish (e.g. Matthew 13:42). It is likened to the place of Gehenna, which was the rubbish tip outside the city of Jerusalem in which fires continually burned, where refuse and executed criminals were tossed to be consumed in the flames. Whether the descriptions of fire are to be taken literally or whether it refers to a state of mind is debatable. People are said to ‘burn’ with anger or shame.

The main punishment about hell is that it is banishment from the presence of God. Now this may seem to some as a minor inconvenience, but in fact, we have no idea what this is actually like. As God created and sustains everything, even the ground on which we walk and the air we breathe is a gift from Him. Our digestive systems and the very cells of our body are subject to laws that He created. So, if we were to continue a spiritual existence without His grace and gifts, we have no knowledge of what this would be like. It is certainly not a 3 dimensional state, but one in which we can exist and live without a physical body. It may be a state of sensory deprivation for eternity, but with remorse and the knowledge of what might have been. It may be the

awareness that all our loved ones are enjoying the presence of God and each other in a perfect world, whilst we are excluded forever to an eternity of aloneness, and knowing that we deliberately chose to reject this eternal Heaven in favour of transient and temporal pleasure in this life. That is a fate that is unbearable and unthinkable. Yet, that is what many people are choosing, knowingly or unconsciously. Maybe that is a worse place and a more unbearable situation than being subjected to endless fire and torture.

Perhaps this is the most serious message in this book, although it is a very unpopular theme. It offends and upsets people. Some say, 'I cannot believe in a God who would send someone to Hell'. Actually, it does not matter what you believe. What is important is what is true and the Bible is very clear on this subject.

The point is that God has given and is still giving us every opportunity to choose Heaven instead of Hell. He has gone to the most extreme lengths to ensure that every person on the planet can be with Him in Heaven. He could not have made it easier. He paid the penalty and there is nothing more we need to do than humbly accept his offer and turn to Him. There is nothing we can do to improve on that.

When Jesus died, He went into the place of Hell and experienced separation from His Father, in our place. He took our punishment in order that we can go free.

So if you have never repented of your sin and asked God to forgive you on the basis of the sacrifice of Jesus, then I suggest you do it right now. He is just a prayer away, waiting and longing to hear from you and forgive you.

22. 'The Time of the Gentiles'

The Bible teaches that Jesus is destined to be King, not just of the Jews, not just of the Earth, but of the entire Universe. Whilst He is King in the lives of many individuals, as we look around, read our newspaper or watch the news, He is clearly not King over the Earth right now? The next question we will address is: When will His reign begin?

Currently about a third of the population of the world (2.1 Billion) nominally are classified as Christian¹, although less than 20% of these could be regarded as committed. At this point, the world is largely ruled and controlled by Satan the prince of darkness. The majority of people are disobedient to God and have rejected His offer of salvation, allowing themselves to come under Satan's dominion. 'Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience' (Ephesians 2:2)

2000 years ago, after living about 30 years on Earth as a relatively ordinary human being, Jesus was about to begin a ministry that would demonstrate the Kingdom of God. He gave a foretaste of what things will be like when He reigns. People were delivered from demonic oppression, sickness and death were subservient to His command. But He was not at that time about to become King of an Earthly kingdom. At His inaugural sermon in a synagogue Jesus made a declaration: 'And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, *'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord'*. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears'. (Luke 4:17-21)

Jesus was reading from Isaiah 61 and He stopped right in mid sentence. Isaiah continues, 'and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified. And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.' (Isaiah 61:3-4)

Jesus declares to his Jewish audience that the Spirit has anointed Him for the ministries for which He is so well known, but He stops between the words 'the acceptable year of the Lord', which can also be translated as the 'year of the Lord's favour' and 'the day of vengeance of our God'. Jesus breaks off at that point because there is to be a pause in the entire flow of history. It is very important that we recognise that that which was supposed to occur after that point has not yet happened. The mourning have not been comforted, ashes have not been replaced by beauty, a garment of praise has not taken the spirit of heaviness. Desolate places and cities are yet to be rebuilt. As far as the Jews are concerned they have never had it easy. Throughout history, their very right to exist has been challenged by many leaders from the Roman Emperor Nero to Adolph Hitler and modern day Arab leaders. The Day of Vengeance of our God speaks of a time when God will exact retribution on the enemies of Israel, but He is holding it back for some reason. God is merciful and wants men everywhere to repent and turn to Him. The last thing he wants is to punish and destroy.

We see this demonstrated in the flood in Noah's day, when one of his ancestors was still alive, whose name was Methuselah. Hebrew names have a meaning and this name translates 'It will come'. Prophetically his father named him in preparation for the flood that would destroy the Earth. Methuselah lived for nearly a thousand years (969), demonstrating God's patience with mankind before He was forced to destroy the world.

Here in Jesus ministry we see the year of the Lord's favour beginning and being extended and extended as God waits for as many as possible to repent before the Day of Vengeance. That 'year' has now been extended to nearly 2000 years! In the meantime Jewish history has been put on hold.

We have discussed previously the text in Daniel 9 which says 'Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined' (Daniel 9:24-26)

In the prophecy given to Daniel by the Angel Gabriel, from the edict to rebuild Jerusalem, it would be 69 weeks of years until Messiah is cut off.

So we have the following scenario. At the appointed time, Jesus begins His ministry of healing and deliverance from Satan's kingdom. As prophesied 483 years after the decree to rebuild Jerusalem, He is hailed as King, riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. A few days later He is cut off, by being nailed to a cross and dying. In AD 70 Jerusalem and the temple were totally destroyed and the Jews dispersed across the world. The land was renamed Philistine or Palestine as the Roman general Titus made it impossible for any Jew to ever live there again. The land remained derelict for nearly 2000 years, but now it is being reclaimed and repopulated in preparation for something.

So what has happened to the seventieth week of seven years? According to the prophecy, Israel will have to get to the end of the final week to complete reconciliation for their sin after which everlasting righteousness will be established.

So at the moment we are in the period of time between week 69 and 70, which has been frozen for nearly 2000 years!

At week 69 a mystery was unveiled that is only hinted at throughout the entire Old Testament. It is that the good news of God's mercy is to be extended to the entire world of non-Jews, the so-called Gentiles. As Messiah was cut off God opened a door of opportunity to include everyone. The Jews as a nation, were unable to see or understand this. God deliberately closed the eyes and minds of the Jewish nation to this possibility and has held open the offer of repentance and salvation to everyone. At this juncture, there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile. Any individual who believes can be saved, but the time is limited.

Paul expresses it thus: 'For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance'. Romans 11:25-29

Paul is saying that Israel is partially and temporarily blinded to God's grace until the fullness of Gentiles is come in, after which their eyes will be opened to the truth.

Only God knows what the fullness means. Is it a certain number of people or a specific time? We do not know, but it is clear that it will not go on indefinitely. The Jews have appeared all along to be enemies of the gospel of Jesus, but we now see it is a deliberate part of God's plan for universal salvation. The Jews have been chosen to bring salvation to the world, which is what is meant by election. When God makes a promise, a calling or a gift, He does not renege on it. His 4000 year-old promises still stand and will be fulfilled.

Jesus came from God to bring a taster of the Kingdom of God into this world. His life and the miracles he did showed us what the Earth should be like if we had followed God's instructions.

We have world-wide famine and hunger, but Jesus fed 5000 people with five loaves and two fish.

We have increasingly wild weather patterns, but Jesus stilled the storm with mere verbal command, like talking to a dog. 'Be still'

We are battling with increasingly virulent and incurable diseases, but Jesus healed all who came to Him to ask for healing.

We are seeing increases in all kinds of satanic activity, like high school massacres, child abuse, violent crime and so on, but Jesus came to destroy the work of the devil.

If we all were to follow the example and teaching of Jesus, demonstrating compassion, love, forgiveness, generosity and honesty; that would be like Heaven on Earth.

We still have the opportunity to change. If we did, not only would the world be a wonderful place to live in, but also the door of opportunity for the Gentiles or non-Christian world would remain open for a longer period, allowing more and more to hear the Gospel message and enter into new life with Jesus. However, at present there seems little sign of that taking place.

So what happens when the fullness of the Gentiles is complete? At that point, the pause button that has been on for nearly 2000 years, will be pressed and Jewish history will recommence. The 70th week, a seven year period, is still to happen at which time there will be a dramatic turn of events.

23. 'Replacement Theology'

Before we look in detail at these future events, we need to discuss the interpretation of the scriptures. One of the problems we face is that many people, including Christians do not accept the literal interpretation of the Bible. They maintain that much of it is allegorical or analogy and cannot be taken literally. As a result, they reject much of the Bible. For example, there is a belief widely accepted that the Jews have been rejected by God and replaced by the Church – so called Replacement Theology¹.

The Church is defined as the body of people who accept Jesus Christ as the Son of God, who have repented of their former sinful life, whose sins are forgiven under the New Covenant sealed by the shed blood of Jesus on the cross.

The Church is under the New Covenant but this has not replaced the Old Covenant that God has with the Jews. Both covenants are valid today.

The Replacement Theology view was expressed way back in the second century by a heretic named Marcion and adopted by some of the early Church fathers. It is based on some shaky translations, mainly of Hebrews 8:13, 'In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away', they believe the old covenant is made obsolete by the new covenant. However, the full counsel of the scriptures does not support obsolescence, but rather a development or overlay of the Old Covenant to form the New Covenant. The covenants that God made with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses were never rescinded. They remain in force even today.

When I was a young boy, we had a strange practice called 'Penny for the Guy'. Children used to make a life size model of Guy Fawkes, who tried to blow up the Houses of Parliament back in 1604, and sit in the street begging for pennies. A quaint English custom, fortunately no longer practiced. However, in that tradition I made the body of the guy out of old clothes and shoes, stuffed with straw. Along came some older children from the next street, took a fancy to my creation and commandeered it for themselves. They fashioned a head out of a pumpkin and stuck it on my body. I struggled to hold back the tears when I saw them next day, begging in the street, collecting all the benefits that should have come my way.

The point of the story is to illustrate the way in which many have taken the 'body' of Jewish teaching and rejected the Jew, and fashioned a theology of their own making. They take for themselves the promises and blessings from the Jewish Bible, leaving the curses for the Jews. They truly believe that God has replaced Israel with the

Church. To adopt this teaching you have to reject huge portions of scripture.

Replacement Theology is not a minority view; in fact it has been estimated that as many as 65% of the Christian Church tend towards it. Many notable scholars and theologians have supported the view, including Martin Luther². Supersessionism, as it is also called, can come in various flavours. Soft-supersessionism regards Israel and the Jews as no longer relevant to God's plan; they are just another nation like any other. Hard-supersessionism, in its extreme form can result in to persecution of Jews and largely led leading to the pogroms and the holocaust in the last century.

Parts of the Church have virtually cut themselves off from the Jewish roots of the faith and believe that the nation of Israel is no longer relevant.

The Church has largely invalidated all of the Jewish feasts as instituted by God Himself, which we discussed in chapter 17, and replaced them with its own versions of festivals often taken from pagan or native religions.

The Passover was displaced by a pagan feast dedicated to the goddess of love and fertility called Ashtaroth or Eshtar, which became known as Easter. Thus we have Easter bunnies and eggs, which have nothing to do either with the resurrection of Jesus or the Passover celebrations. A deliberate position was taken by the Roman Emperor Constantine in AD 325 to nullify the Jewish Passover celebration; to dissociate it from Easter and cut off all connection with Judaism. Efforts are even made to ensure they do not occur on the same day. Indeed, the resurrection of Jesus should be celebrated by the Church, but it should not be called Easter Sunday; rather Resurrection Sunday, Feast of Firstfruits or something similar.

Christmas was invented to commemorate Jesus' birth at totally the wrong time of year. Jesus was most likely born during the Feast of Tabernacles. Christmas, as one of the most significant annual events of the Church and the world replaces the Jewish Hanukkah or Festival of Lights. The historic Church also took on board the pagan Yuletide, which celebrates the birth of the sun and light. Its origins are believed to predate Christ and in fact may be associated with Nimrod, the founder of the city of Babylon. Apparently, legend has it that, after Nimrod died, his mother commanded that everyone should decorate an evergreen tree to commemorate her son. Trees and logs were also worshipped as the bringers of light when they were used as fuel in the middle of the dark winter. Thus we have yule logs, Christmas trees and decorations as part of the celebrations. Santa Claus appears to be a concoction of various legendary characters, including the Turkish St Nicholas, as well as legendary or actual Scandinavian characters who gave presents to people at that time of the year,

originally dressed in green. Santa was later dressed in red and promoted strongly by Coca Cola around 1906. Although that company enhanced the image, they did not create it.

The Feast of Day of Pentecost was retained by the Church, but more recently became the Spring bank Holiday.

So we can see that the Church has taken active steps to cut itself off from the Jewish roots of our faith.

The prophets, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea and several of the others, write very graphically about Israel in terms of a wife who has been unfaithful to her husband, the Lord God. But God speaking through these prophets makes it clear that he will never give her up. Although the Prophets comprise about one third of the Bible, many Christians have never read them or given them more than a cursory glance. Many people will quote their favourite verses from the prophets without putting them into context. The prophets are all speaking about Israel and it is hard to understand how anyone could interpret them as referring to the Church. I don't want to labour the point overly by quoting lengthy passages, since about 300 pages of a typical Bible are devoted to the prophets, but a couple of examples suffice as illustrations which clearly show the reference is to Israel.

Often quoted is the passage: 'Fear not: for I have redeemed you, I have called you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned'. Usually ignored is the fact that this is preceded by 'Thus says the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel' and followed by 'For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour' (Isaiah 43:1-3)

People love to quote 'Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love' (Jeremiah 31:3), ignoring the preceding two verses "'I will be the God of all the clans of Israel, and they will be my people... I will come to give rest to Israel'.

The following passage is in reference to the return of Israel in the last days, from all of the nations into which they have been dispersed. 'Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; After that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid. When I have brought them

again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, says the Lord God' (Ezekiel 39:25-29)

God is saying that He dispersed them as punishment for their disobedience, and He is then gathering them back into their own land. Then He will pour out His Spirit on them and never again turn His face away from them.

Some have tried to argue that these passages about Israel returning from exile and dispersion were fulfilled in the return from Babylon, around 500 BC in the days of Nehemiah and Ezra, but only about 50,000 Jews returned to Israel. The vast majority of Jews never did return and have continued to live in exile for 2500 years.

These scriptures clearly show that God has not abandoned Israel and He never will. Even in the last war when it must have looked as though God had forsaken them, He was with them. Even though the Arab nations and indeed the whole world seems to be bent on extinguishing the nation of Israel, that will never happen. The promises that God made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and David will be fulfilled and their descendents will again be gathered and remain in the land of Israel. God's word cannot be broken.

There is a passage in Jeremiah that describes the history and the future of the Jews and Gentiles very clearly and succinctly.

'Then shalt thou say unto them, Because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the LORD, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped them, and have forsaken me, and have not kept my law; And ye have done worse than your fathers; for, behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me: Therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not, neither ye nor your fathers; and there shall ye serve other gods day and night; where I will not shew you favour. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be said, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers. Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the LORD, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from

every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks. For mine eyes are upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes. And first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double; because they have defiled my land, they have filled mine inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable and abominable things. O LORD, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit. Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they are no gods? Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know mine hand and my might; and they shall know that my name is The LORD'. (Jeremiah 16:11-21).

This passage, written in about 600BC, states that:

1. Israel has forsaken God and served idols and not kept the Law; they had filled the land with abominable things
2. God will cast Israel out of their land into distant unknown lands.
3. In exile they will serve other gods and not be favoured by the God of Israel
4. There they will have to repay God and recompense for their sin
5. God will send hunters and fishermen to seek them out of hiding and bring them back to the Land of Israel
6. God will again become their fortress and deliverer from affliction
7. They will no longer refer back to the miracle of the Passover and deliverance from Egypt, but God will be known as the one that brought Israel out of the land of the north and from other lands where they have been exiled.
8. The Gentile nations from all over the Earth will acknowledge and worship God.
9. The Gentiles will realise that they have been taught lies, deception and things of no value, by their ancestors (such as replacement theology!).
10. Both Jew and Gentile will accept the God of Israel as the LORD

The same sentiment is repeated in Jeremiah 23, showing that this worldwide dispersal and re-gathering of Israel is not an afterthought, but a very critical part of God's agenda. 'Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land' (Jeremiah 23:7-8)

This has not yet happened, but Jews are steadily returning to their own land and everything is in place for fulfilment of this promise.

The Jews or the Nation of Israel have always been a special people to God even though they have suffered so much rejection by the nations of the world. Their success and evident blessing of God is seen in what they have achieved as a nation in terms of Nobel prize winners, eminence in research, film industry, computing and technology and many other areas of business as well as farming and agriculture.

Jews make up approximately 0.25% of the world's population, yet at least 23% of all recipients of Nobel Prizes during the 20th Century were Jews³. (i.e. nearly 100 times the average per capita.)

They have survived many attempts to eliminate them from the face of the earth and still bounced back time and again. They are formidable in warfare. They are undoubtedly a gifted nation. However, this is not the reason they are special to God.

Deuteronomy Chapters 7, 8 and 9 express that this people is chosen by God, not because of all their achievements or their greatness, but because He made a covenant with their forefathers and God does not renege on his promises.

‘For thou (Israel) art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.’ (Deuteronomy 7:7-9)

This was written about 3500 years ago, but the promises stand for at least 25,000 years!

Even so, Moses had to remind God of this, as He was about to destroy the Israelites because of their rebellion. ‘I prayed therefore unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, destroy not thy people and thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed through thy greatness, which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin: Lest the land

whence thou broughtest us out say, Because the LORD was not able to bring them into the land which he promised them, and because he hated them, he hath brought them out to slay them in the wilderness'. (Deuteronomy 9:26-28)

So, in spite of their unfaithfulness, stubbornness and rebellion, God has made an unconditional covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and it will be fulfilled. The time is coming when they will finally live in peace in the land that God defined all that time ago. 'In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:'(Genesis 15:18) and 'Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.'

(Joshua 1:3-4).

This territory goes from Lebanon and Syria in the north to Egypt in the south, from the Mediterranean in the west to the River Euphrates in the east.

This is at least 10 times the land currently occupied by Israel. So it seems like a big undertaking, but that is the unconditional promise God made to the descendents of Jacob.

When Israel moved in to conquer this land, according to the Bible, they were doing exactly as God told them. He gave precise instructions of the territory they were to occupy, specifying exact boundaries and the names of the cities in great detail (Joshua Chapters 14–19). This signed, sealed and witnessed document, written over 3000 years ago, held by millions of people must constitute the oldest and most authentic title deeds to any property on Earth. Yet people, including many so-called Bible believing Christians constantly challenge the right of the Jews to occupy this land, carving it up and giving it away in direct defiance against God the Creator. Nowhere in the Bible is there any indication that this covenant is no longer in force. The word of God stands forever.

Of course there are humanitarian issues regarding the Palestinian families that took up occupation during the time of Israel's exile, which must be dealt with by fair negotiation, but the millions that have poured into that land since it was given to the Jews in 1948 have no special right to live there. Using sheer weight of numbers of Arabs moving into the only democratic nation in the Middle East would soon ensure that the politics of that country would become Muslim within a few years and Judaism would effectively be wiped out. However, that is God's problem and He will deal with it in His way, not necessarily by military might and warfare; just as He did thousands of years ago.

It may come as a shock to the majority of Christians, that when they stand before the one they know as Jesus, the Son of God, that he is not actually a tall blond, blue-eyed Anglo-Saxon; because He was, is and always will be a Jew. His name is Yeshua and he is a member of the most despised and hated race on Earth, a Jew of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5).

As, during the pogroms of the last century, the time will come when, once again Jews will be hated and hunted across the world. As worldwide fear and tension grows fuelled by terrorism, Muslims will claim that the problem is with the Jews. As a result, the Jews will again become castigated as the root problem of the troubles in the world. In the Bible it is known as 'The time of Jacobs trouble' (Jeremiah 30). When we stand before Jesus He will ask what we did for His brothers during their time of misery. When they are rejected and reviled, cast into prison and starving, did we help, clothe and feed them or did we turn away? On that basis, we will be labelled as sheep or goats, for Jesus said, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me' (Matthew 25:40). He will be asking how you treated his brothers, the most despised people on Earth.

In the parable of the Prodigal Son, (Luke 15:11-32) Jesus tells how the younger son takes his inheritance from his father and squanders it in a foreign land. Living amongst the pigs, having lost everything, he realises his mistake and determines to return to his father. Rather than rejecting him, the father welcomes him back and restores his position in the household with celebrations. Meanwhile the elder brother angrily rejects his repentant brother and refuses to join the party. The prodigal son is a type of the Jewish race, which has been, and is currently, living apart from God the Father. The elder brother represents the Gentile nations and in particular the Church. The basis for this statement is that, whilst the Jews are under the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenant, the Gentile nations are covered by an even older covenant: that of God and Noah. God said, 'And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.' (Gen 9:9,13). Every time we see a rainbow, it is a reminder of God's covenant, not to flood the world again. On man's side, the requirement was to repopulate the earth, not to shed the life of another and not to eat or drink blood. Noah's three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth became the fathers of all the nations that are in the world today. So the Gentile covenant is much older than the Jewish covenant, on which basis Gentiles can claim to be the elder brother.

Paul also argues in Romans 4 that Abraham was the father of those of faith before he was circumcised, when he became the father of what would later be known as Jews. In other words, those non-Jews who live by faith can be considered as the elder brother.

In the not-too-distant future, like the prodigal, the Jews as a nation will return to their Father and home, who said ‘And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart’ (Jeremiah 24:7). The Church, as the elder brother may well be resentful when the wayward son realises his mistake and returns to the Father. Many will turn their backs and refuse to join the welcome home party, to whom the Father says ‘Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found’ (Luke 15:31,32). The story as told by Jesus is left hanging with those words, but you can feel the anguish of the Father as the elder brother turns away from the repentant younger son and refuses to accept him back into the family.

The question of how we as individuals, treat those brothers of Jesus, may well be the test as to whether we are to be treated by Jesus as sheep or goats!

24. The Destiny of Israel

We have seen that the promises of God to Israel are forever: that they will live at peace in the land God promised Abraham, and that they would bless those nations who bless them. So how can we explain the situation as we see it today, with Jews scattered all across the Earth and the land of Israel a hotbed of hostility and turmoil, under continuous attack from their Arab neighbours?

Israel was always destined to be the channel through which God would bring salvation to the entire world. Beginning with one man, Abraham, God taught his descendants how to live by means of the Torah, culminating in the Incarnation, which paved the way for forgiveness and restoration through Jesus the Messiah. This message would have remained within that nation and their land unless there was a way to disperse it across the nations.

So we can see that the dispersal of the Jews was a deliberate plan to create, as it were, the arteries, through which the message of God could reach the entire world. As the Jews were scattered across the earth, they became the conduit through which the message could travel. Roman roads, and the protection afforded by the Roman Empire, made travel far easier than at any previous time in history. With Jerusalem at the heart, the Jewish relationships and family connections enabled the spread of the Gospel to every nation on the planet. As Jews made the annual pilgrimage back to Jerusalem for the feasts, they became influenced by the Gospel and took it back to the nations where they had been exiled. We see this notably on the Day of Pentecost in AD33, when the Holy Spirit came on the 120 followers of Jesus and 3000 were added to the Church in a single day. They were from far and wide, Mesopotamia and Persia to the north and east, Rome and Europe to the west, Egypt and Libya to the south (Acts 2:9-11). As they returned to their countries of residence, so the gospel went with them although for several decades, the message of Jesus remained largely a Jewish faith.

In order for the Gospel to reach the Gentile world, God allowed the nation of Israel to be virtually destroyed and dispersed in AD70 as the Roman occupiers renamed the land Philistine or Palestine in order to humiliate the Jews. So, here we are nearly 2000 years later, still waiting, but seeing the beginnings of the fulfilment of the promises made to Abraham. The prophets predicted the day when God would restore the land and bring back Jews to Israel from every nation in the world. But if man or Satan can prevent this, then God would be proven to be a liar, lacking in the power to honour his promises, or non-existent. So this fulfilment is very critical to our belief and theology. The realisation of the promises made to Abraham, are among the few proofs we have of God's faithfulness, credibility and reliability.

The purpose in Israel being dispersed amongst the nations in order to take the message to the entire world, has only partially been fulfilled to date. Jesus said to go to every nation and make disciples (Acts 1:8). Those early followers could never have thought this would take at least 2000 years to accomplish.

In Romans 11 Paul describes the nation of Israel as a vine. The Gentiles or non-Jewish believers in Jesus have been grafted in to that vine, but the root still remains Jewish. Some of the natural branches have been broken off, but all for a good reason. Paul says, 'I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written; The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.' (Romans 11:25-27) But he adds that Gentiles should not be arrogant, since if God would break off the natural branches, how much more readily could the engrafted branches be removed. (Romans 11:20). We often lay claim to the Old Testament promises without recognising that they were actually made to Israel and it is only as we are engrafted to that same vine that we can appropriate those promises to ourselves. In Paul's analogy, it would appear that some have attempted to cut themselves off from Israel, and become as a vine without a root. The Christian Church cannot divorce itself from Israel and reject her, saying 'We are the new Israel' any more than can a vine exist without being rooted in the ground. There are no grounds or foundation for making such a claim. This may be what Jesus is referring to, in the book of Revelation: 'I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not.' (Revelation 2:9)

Admittedly, at this point in time the nation of Israel is not in fellowship with God; it's government and policies are almost entirely atheistic and humanistic. But, according to the Bible, this is for a reason and only for a season. We are rapidly approaching the end of that season.

It is true that, as a nation, Israel rejected Jesus as the promised Messiah. In his day, many of the political leaders actually recognised he was the Messiah, but they did not like what they saw. They expected some magnificent warrior king who would lead them to freedom, out of bondage to Rome who at that time occupied Israel. Instead, they saw a penniless, humble rabbi teacher, whose trade was carpentry, going around breaking all their traditions. He made them angry and so they rejected him and arranged his execution. Since that time, as a nation, Israel has been blinded to their true Messiah, although individual Jews have recognised Him and call themselves Messianic Jews. However, once again we can see the strange and amazing ways in which God works. If Israel had accepted Jesus at that time, Christianity, as it became later called, would have become just a Jewish religion and anyone wanting to follow

Jesus would have had to become a Jew. Instead, the followers of Jesus became a persecuted sect, who were driven out of the Temple, out of Jerusalem, out of Israel and across the world. Over 400 million people have accepted Jesus as the Messiah even living in the world today. It was His rejection by the Jews that enabled the rest of us, so called Gentiles to hear, accept and believe, and that was God's doing. It was all part of the plan. (Romans 11: 28-36)

The Apostle Paul writes about this at great length in his letters. He shows that this 'blindness' of the Jews is only for a period, which has turned out to be about 2000 years, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.' (Romans 11:25)

The writer to the Hebrews expressed how God will be faithful to the covenant He made with Abraham. 'For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us' (Hebrews 6:13-18)

The writer is expressing that God does not break his promises. The fact that God was faithful to Abraham and Israel is proof that He will be faithful to us. Conversely, if God broke His promise to Abraham, how can He be trusted to keep His promises to us? That is our hope.

A person reading the Old Testament 100 or more years ago would have found much of it hard to believe or even understand. This is what may have fuelled replacement theology. References to the restoration of Israel, such as the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37, must have been hard to take seriously.

In a vision, Ezekiel saw a valley filled with dried bones. 'The Lord said to me, "Prophesy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'" So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but

there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.' So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army. Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.' Therefore prophecy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel.' (Ezekiel 37:4-12)

For over 2500 years, Jews have existed only in small pockets all over the world and could hardly be called a nation. Around the end of the 19th Century, there were a number of politicians, believers in the Bible who wanted to see the Jews repatriated to the land of Israel. One of these people, Lord Balfour drew up a declaration in 1917 to propose their restoration, allocating a portion of land in the Middle East for this purpose¹. At that time, the land was derelict and virtually uninhabited. In 1867 Mark Twain described Lebanon, Syria, and the Holy Land as 'A desolate country whose soil is rich enough, but is given over wholly to weeds... a silent mournful expanse.... a desolation.... we never saw a human being on the whole route.... hardly a tree or shrub anywhere. Even the olive tree and the cactus, those fast friends of a worthless soil, had almost deserted the country.'²

Great Britain was given the mandate to take care of the people and the land until the Jews were able to set up their own government. Over the next few decades, Jews started immigrating to this area and the land began to blossom (Isaiah 35:1). During World War Two, Hitler organised the mass extermination of Jews in Germany, which would have increased the rate of immigration to Israel, had that been possible. However, there was much opposition, in particular by Great Britain by means of the Navy, and of course some of the Arab countries. For a start, to appease the surrounding nations, Winston Churchill took a decision to divide the land either side of the Jordan River, giving the Jews the portion to the west, which was only about 23% of the land allocated by the Balfour Declaration³. The British gave the eastern 77% of the territory to the Arab Emir Abdullah and entitled it Transjordan, which eventually became known as Jordan as it is today. The British also severely limited the number of Jews that were allowed to enter the land, resulting in untold numbers being driven back to Germany and their original lands. Some were even drowned in the Mediterranean Sea as their flimsy ships sank. As we know 6 million Jews perished in Hitler's 'Final Solution'. It appears that all the hordes of hell were opposed to the Jews becoming a nation in their own land, determined to prove that God did not keep His promises.

In spite of all this opposition, the nation began to form, and in 1948 the British mandate was handed over to an Israeli government and the nation of Israel was born in one day. This is exactly as prophesied by Isaiah ‘Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.’ (Isaiah 66:8). Since that time Jews from all over the world have been coming into the land of Israel, often with the help of Christian organisations.⁴

Even more amazing is this: Ezekiel the prophet was instructed by God to lie on his left side for 390 days to atone for the sins of Israel and then on his right side for a further 40 days for the sins of Judah (Ezekiel 4:1-6). A day was assigned for each year. This makes a total of 430 years. Israel was exiled and taken into captivity in Babylon for 70 years. So that leaves 360 years to go. Now back in Exodus 23, there is a promise and a curse: if Israel repents after being banished from the land, they will return, but if they are still in rebellion, their punishment will be multiplied 7 times. Israel as a nation has never repented of her rejection of God’s authority. So this left $360 \times 7 = 2520$ years of exile to run. Apparently if you multiply all this out from the date of the decree of King Cyrus that they should return to the land of Israel, allowing for leap years and other date adjustments, it actually comes to the date of 14 May 1948, which is the day the land of Israel was reborn! This can only have been effected by One who is outside our time and space!

So we can expect a revival of the Jews and recognition of Jesus as their Messiah. ‘And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.’ (Zechariah 12:10). According to this passage and many others, there is a time yet to come at which the nation of Israel will recognise the One who they pierced by crucifixion, which is Jesus, as their Messiah. They will repent and return to God and He will graciously receive them. The house of David refers back to the messianic and kingly line that as we have seen is fulfilled only by Jesus. So Jesus will be truly acknowledged as the King of Israel and indeed the whole world.

Many forget that Jesus was and still is, a Jew. In the book of Revelation He is called the Lion of the Tribe of Judah as He is called upon to open the book that will usher in the end of the age. ‘And one of the elders said unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.’ (Revelation 5:5)

The seven seals in the Revelation, as they are opened one by one, pronounce the beginning of the end of the age, which is the long awaited 70th week. At that time of writing, books were actually rolled up scrolls. Each section of the book was sealed with a wax seal. In John's vision, as the Lamb opens each of the seals in God's book a new catastrophe is unleashed on the Earth.

We all would like to think that the history of the world has a happy ending, that ultimately good will triumph and mankind will learn to live in peace and prosperity, free of disease and pain. However, this is not the picture the Revelation shows. As the seals are opened, the so-called four horsemen of the Apocalypse are loosed, they bring world-wide devastation, beginning with war, famine, death and persecution. There is no indication that mankind will gradually improve, that the Church will be triumphant, that we will fill the Earth with truth and love. The opposite in fact is the destiny of man.

Due to the failures and ineffectiveness of the messengers, as well as resistance and opposition from Satan and the forces of darkness, the gospel has been corrupted and stalled and prevented from reaching the final goal. Natural man does not want God's intervention and interference. Man has tried every possible way to eliminate God from the equation. Through education, politics and conquest, man has sought to make a god of himself and replace the Creator. Up to now, man has failed to bring peace to the world. Every attempt has ultimately failed, and it is perceived that only a world government can achieve world peace. God's plan is that Jesus will be the one who establishes and heads up such a worldwide government; but Satan has other plans and will fight right up until the end to thwart God.

The human desire for peace is highly laudable. The main reason for the economic crisis we are now facing is largely due to war. Nothing uses up resources like war. The underlying cause of the American debt is the vast expenses incurred by two world wars, followed by Vietnam and Iraq. The debt has been further exacerbated of course by greed and risky investment on a huge scale. If it were possible to have world peace, then the resources available to man to sort out the ills of the planet would more than suffice. The problem is that man wants to achieve this without God's help and that is not possible.

Using mere men who have power complexes, from Alexander, Napoleon, Hitler, through to modern day rulers and presidents, Satan has tried to conquer the world. In modern times, attempts have and are being made to set up world governments. Perhaps the closest the world came to that was Communism, which was the brainchild of Karl Marx. Marx, who incidentally was a Jew, was attempting to bring

about a human Utopia without God and it failed abysmally. The problem is that man, without God becomes self-centred and self-seeking and that any government will ultimately have a single individual presiding over it and hence over the entire world. Can you imagine the power such an individual would have!

25. The Price of Peace

World peace is a desirable and yet elusive goal. If you leave God out of the equation, either by ignoring Him or declaring independence from Him, that goal looks very difficult, if not impossible to achieve. Even during times of relative peace, when there is no actual conflict, countries build up defensive weaponry in order to maintain, so-called peace. Wars use up resources like nothing else. Whether it be civil or international war or even terrorism, the resultant loss of life and liberty, widespread devastation, the cost of armaments, troops and the weapons of war is astronomic and usually ends up with both sides having huge debt. Yet the outcome of war is something like a stalemate. It is hard to find something good coming out of a war, and 10 or 20 years afterwards it might be difficult for an outsider to know who was the victor. In fact any kind of fighting results only in losers. If a dispute could be resolved without conflict, the result would be far better for everyone. Yet whilst any two people cannot agree on something, there is the potential for conflict. Wars are fought primarily over territories and possession of natural resources. As well as resources found above and underground, such as minerals and oil, there are disputes over what is contained in the sea and territorial limits, including marine life and drilling rights.

Given the world as it is today, how could we achieve world peace?

Countries that are mutually dependent tend not to go to war, although a country lacking in something may go to war in order to take what it needs from another country. A good solution to reduce this risk is to ensure that countries cooperate for the common good. So for example, if one country produces coal, another fruit, another clothing and so on, everyone wins. The problem is that to achieve such a state requires high-level cooperation of governments. It also requires that everyone involved must subscribe to the common good.

The ultimate solution is therefore a single world government that dictates what every member country must contribute, controls the trade and currency and ensures that there is no dissension. Every individual would be required to subscribe to the world laws and common good. There must be no crime, no quarrelling and no fighting. Is this achievable? I think it is.

The requirement is that every individual must adhere to the laws and rules or suffer extreme sanction. A simple way of achieving this in our modern world could be to issue everyone with an electronic identity card on which is biometric information, such as fingerprints, retina patterns, DNA and so on which can be read by a scanner.

This card would then be used for all transactions: financial, electronic communication, log-on to systems, membership of institutions and clubs, entry to buildings, houses, cars, etc. The card would also have built-in GPS positioning to be able to locate the card at any time. There would be no paper or coin currency as all transactions would be carried out using the card. In this way, if a person got out of line, committed a crime or refused to comply with regulations, the privileges could be reduced or simply withdrawn. The ultimate sanction would be to totally block all privileges so that the individual would be unable to buy or sell or go through any locked door or transact with any system.

The problem is that cards can be lost or stolen. All that matters on the card is the chip, which can now be reduced to smaller than a grain of rice. Such a small device could easily be implanted under the skin, invisible and undetectable physically.

Given GPS sensing and computerised tracking, the authorities would know everywhere a person has been, who they were with at any point in time. Every transaction would be tracked and every communication recorded. With such a system, crime would immediately drop dramatically. There would be no such thing as a missing person. You would never need to worry where your child is or with whom, as simply going on line would enable them to be pin-pointed in seconds to the nearest square metre.

With such technology it is possible to control the individual, companies and businesses and countries. There would be no need for international boundaries, passports or visas.

This is obviously possible even with today's technology, which is continually advancing. Physically, there are few objections. Tattoos are culturally accepted, especially amongst the young. Injections for all kinds of inoculations are standard for anyone travelling abroad. Subcutaneous transplants could be much less painful or intrusive than these. The main issues are acceptability. It would be an infringement of human rights to impose such a system and would take some time to become ethically viable.

Following a number of kidnappings and disappearance of small children, most parents would welcome a simple system that would enable their child to be located. In the aftermath of rapes or murders, the introduction of such chips for known criminals would be easy to implement. A number of terrorist incidents involving aeroplanes would soften up many people to the idea of biometric identification of every person boarding the plane on which you are about to travel. So we can see that

insidiously, the prevention of crime is leading us towards being prepared to accept whatever it takes. Over a period of time, the major proportion of the population would be willing to accept the chip. Once that has happened, the remainder would be forced to follow as increasing pressure is brought to bear. Discounts for shopping using the chip, increased privileges, increased convenience would all encourage compliance. Finally, the remainder would become treated as outcasts of society for refusing to accept the majority rule.

Under such pressure it would take very strong and highly motivated people to resist. Any why would they? So what is wrong with this scenario? It meets all of the criteria to enable society to function virtually without crime or sin, easily, efficiently and pleasantly.

The main objection would be the loss of freedom. People often level the criticism ‘If God exists, why does he not put an end to suffering in the world?’ Putting an end to suffering is relatively easy, but doing it without curtailing all freedom is something else. In the above scenario, the world would have to be populated by people who behaved like automatons.

There is also a more sinister problem. The government required to run a world-wide system would have incredible powers, which ultimately would lie with the president, premier or whatever you would call him. He would be like God. What man could hold such a position and it not go to his head? That is what happened to Adam in the Garden of Eden, when he became supreme earthly ruler of the world and tried to become independent of God. That is also what happened to Satan or Lucifer, when he tried to become equal with God. Only God can hold that position as He created all things and hence is far above all things.

Many rulers have tried to ascribe to that position and many have partly succeeded for a short time: Nebuchadnezzar, the Caesars, Hannibal, Napoleon, Hitler and so on. But they are only human and if they don’t get killed, they die anyway. Even if a man is strong enough to attain such a strong position, history shows that his successors usually do not have the power and authority to continue in his steps. For example, when Alexander the Great died at age 33, his six generals took control and carved up the empire, which gradually deteriorated. Every empire has risen for a time, and then fallen.

However, the Bible is clear that as we approach the end of this age, such a ruler will emerge. He will rule the entire world as the head of a one-world government and everyone on earth will have to become subject to him or face dire consequences.

26. The Anti-Christ

We have seen, according to the Bible, that, as the end of the age approaches, Jesus will be recognised as King of the Jews and of the whole world. But immediately prior to this, there will be a number of deceivers, claiming to be the Messiah.

‘And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.’ (Matthew 24:3-5)

Among these false messiahs will emerge one who is an amazing and very effective world leader, who is called the Anti-Christ. He will deceive the whole world, including the Jews, for a period of 7 years. He will be a bringer of peace to the Jew and the Arab; something that today looks impossible. He will be hailed as the Messiah and worshipped as such. The Bible tells us that from the signing of the peace treaty there will be peace, but right in the middle of his reign after 3½ years something dreadful will happen, called the abomination of desolation.

‘And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate’ (Daniel 9:27). This is the period of the missing 70th week in Daniel’s prophecy, which represents 7 years. Jesus also speaks of this ‘When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains.’ (Matthew 24:15-16)

We don’t know the nature of the abomination, but it will be something totally abhorrent to Jews, like sacrificing a pig in the Temple, for example or some form of idol worship prohibited by the Torah.

One of the main features of the reign of the Anti-Christ is the so-called Mark of the Beast. ‘He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name. This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.’ (Revelation 13:16-18). This passage has been the source of many fictional works involving the number 666 and there has been much speculation as to what it means.

In the Bible, numbers have meaning. 5 is the number of Grace, 7 is the number of completion or perfection and 6 is the number of man; one below perfection. 666 could be referencing a 'unholy trinity' of Satan, the false prophet and the dragon. Some have interpreted it as the sum of the numerical values of certain names, from the Roman Emperor Nero through to modern day politicians and business tycoons, although this has an unlikely ring about it. Some have interpreted the mark as a function of a credit card or a social security number or even a microchip and or barcode implanted in the right hand or forehead as we discussed in the previous chapter.

A further interpretation. for which we are indebted to Walid Shoebat is that the characters which were interpreted by translators as 666 were in fact Arabic rather than Greek symbols. The text as it appears in early transcripts, like Codex Sinaiticus, can be interpreted as meaning a badge or sign on the forehead or right arm which symbolises 'Allah is great' with crossed swords. Islam began more than 500 years after John received the Revelation and these symbols would mean a lot more today than they would have then. In a world coming increasingly under the domination of Islam, it is easy to see how wearing such a badge as an act of allegiance would bring benefits.

Whatever it refers to or whatever form the mark takes, its purpose is to ensure that trade is only possible between parties having the mark. Without it, a person would not be able to buy even food and hence would become an outcast from society. The idea of the embedded chip that can be recognised by satellite certainly has some attraction. If children were given the chip as a simple injection soon after birth, the same as can currently be done to pets ¹, it would potentially improve safety, reducing crime and fraud. The idea of knowing where your child is and who with by looking at your computer screen has a lot of attraction in this age of fear and uncertainty.

Once the idea of the chip was established, you can see how anyone resisting could be considered as a potential insurgent. The advantages would be significant once the ethical considerations have been dealt with. The chip could then be used for all kinds of purposes including personal and account identification, virtual money, unlocking doors, satellite tracking. In a society where Godly and Biblical values have been eradicated and superseded by human reason, such methods may be needed to maintain law and order. The technology is certainly available and with increasing terrorism and crime, the acceptability may not be as far away as we think.

The anti-Christ will govern the world through ten kings or kingdoms (Daniel 7:24 and Revelation 17:12).

In recent years the nations have been discussing the Law of the Sea Treaty (LOST)². This international agreement would extend the sovereignty of countries from the existing 3 miles to 200 miles into the sea. The battle over the Law of the Sea Treaty first began 25 years ago, being halted at the time by President Reagan, but re-emerged in 2004 and is still an on-going debate. The problem is that as most countries overlap by much less than 200 miles, countries would have to be grouped and give up their individual sovereignty for the greater good of the group. A probable example would be Mexico, USA and Canada being grouped as a single legislative entity. Thus, USA law would also be governed by the other two. In this way the entire world would be broken into sovereignty groups, like Europe, Australias, etc, and the way it is going, there would appear to be 10 regions or kingdoms!

It is estimated that the SALT would place 70 percent of the Earth's surface under the control of the United Nations even requiring companies mining in the world's oceans to have to pay the UN directly.

Once such controls are established, a single world government would be in control and a single individual would be its head, exactly as prophesied in the Bible.

So the Anti-Christ will establish a world government that will control every individual person and every business. He will be the ultimate Big Brother. During the first 3½ years he will bring peace and prosperity on a hitherto unimaginable scale. He will be heralded as the messiah and God incarnate, without equal or rival.

But during the second half of his 7-year reign, for a further 3½ years there will be a time of terrible persecution, the so-called Great Tribulation. All those that refuse to bow down to and worship the Anti-Christ will become outcasts and they will have to flee to the mountains to avoid being killed. A worldwide war will develop centred on Israel in the plain of Megiddo or Armageddon. Then when it appears that things could not get any worse and little Israel is about to be annihilated, Jesus will return to take control and destroy the Anti-Christ.

If this all seems unlikely as there is currently no Temple in Jerusalem, it should be recognised that the plans, the artefacts, the training of the priesthood is all almost complete and the issues holding up the building of the temple relate only to the ownership of the land. What was previously thought to be the original temple site is currently in Arab territory, although very recent excavation appears to be pointing to another site actually inside the Jewish quarter as the original site. Investigation and negotiation is going on even right now. Once the temple is complete the scene will be set for the end-times events to begin to unfold³.

One of the main questions everyone will ask, is: When is all of this going to happen? It would appear that God has given us hints, but not with precision. If we knew exactly when, we would either become complacent or possibly terrified. I believe God wants each generation and each individual to be ready and prepared for whenever and whatever He plans to do.

There is another passage in the book of Daniel that gives a slightly different slant on these future events. Daniel chapter 11 describes a time of great upheaval and warfare in the Middle East during the period from about 400BC onwards. It is believed by scholars to refer to people like Alexander the Great, Ptolemy, Antiochus and the Maccabees and involve countries like Greece, Rome, Egypt and Persia. All of the events were fulfilled as prophesied.

Daniel Chapter 12 then jumps forward in time thousands of years to a time of deliverance of Israel. The angel tells him, ‘But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.’ (Dan 12:4)

So clearly this is referencing a period that is at the end of time, and when people will run around like never before. This could surely be describing a time like ours when cars and planes enable a great deal of running around. It is also referring to a time when knowledge shall increase. With the advent of the Internet, knowledge has increased exponentially beyond any time previously.

He goes on ‘And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand. And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days. But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.’ (Daniel 12:8-13)

Daniel writes down what he is told, but clearly hasn't a clue what it's all about. The angel says that the words are not for then, but for a far off future time, the time of the end.

With our western mindset, when we hear of a forecast or a prophecy, we think in terms of *statement – fulfilment*. However, Biblical prophecy is often about patterns of

events, rather than specific once and for all fulfilments. Thus, the fulfilment of the coming of the Holy Spirit took place on the day of Pentecost, but it has not stopped there. It has happened again and again and will reach its conclusion when Jesus returns.

The abomination of desolation of which the angel spoke to Daniel is usually is thought to reference the Anti-Christ in the end times. Jesus spoke of this as a future event (Matthew 24:15). However, we know that Antiochus Epiphanes also profaned the Temple in 168BC. Here is my suggestion of a possible interpretation of this passage in Daniel 12.

Daniel lived from 620BC until 540BC (80 years). During his lifetime Jerusalem was destroyed and the temple ransacked around the year 586 BC. In other words, the daily sacrifice was taken away sometime during or before 586. Often in prophecy, a day can signify a year (e.g. Ezekiel 4:6). If you now count forward 1290 years you get to about the year 700AD. What happened around that time? The building of the Dome of the Rock started in 685AD and it was completed around 691AD, right on the site where the Temple of God had previously existed. Is it possible that the abomination that causes desolation could also be referring to the Dome of the Rock? It certainly upsets the Jews.

The angel then says to wait a further 1335 days until the end. Taking these as years, if you add 1335 to 685 and 691, you get to the years 2020 and 2026. Incidentally, this is a 7-year period, the same as the tribulation period. Coincidence? Maybe.

Now I am not trying to push this argument, but, with the state of the world today and the coincidence of all of these prophecies, it could suggest these last time events could all be about to happen in the next 20 years.

I think these passages are deliberately obscure and not meant to be understood until the right time, which is at the end. Had the angel told Daniel that these events would be in 2500 years, he would not have been very excited. How thrilled could you get about something that is going to happen in the year 4507?

It's not exactly clear what is going to happen and when. We are not supposed to know the details, but just be ready for events to start unfolding. However, I believe it is sooner than we think.

27. The Rapture

There is what some would regard as a very strange event alluded to in the Bible which is called The Rapture. It is specifically mentioned by Paul 'For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.' (1 Thessalonians 4:16:17). This says that all those who have died belonging to Christ will rise from the dead and ascend into the clouds. Clearly these will not be skeletons and ashes, but some form of resurrected body. Then the Church is going to rise up bodily and meet them in the clouds, rather like the ascension of Jesus. Then both the living and the dead will be with the Lord for ever. This is not an on going situation, as people die and go to heaven, but it is a specific event in response to a trumpet call and the voice of God. The implication is that those who have already died are awaiting this call. Of course, once we leave the 3 dimensional universe, time no longer has any meaning, so it is not as if the deceased are lying there waiting in eternity, but to us, still prisoners of time, it is still a future event.

As with most theological concepts there are heated and even emotional debates over interpretation. Many people do not even believe in the Rapture as a physical event and somehow regard it as figurative. Even amongst those who do believe, there is divided opinion about when it will take place.

There are other questions like what it actually might look like. Would the entire Church suddenly disappear from the planet, leaving empty houses, planes with no pilots and cars with no drivers? Such ideas have been encapsulated in novels, such as 'Left Behind'. Could it be that every member of the Church will bodily float up from the earth? A scary thought for those with fear of heights. Could it be that we will all suddenly drop dead and spiritually be with the Lord? It is entirely speculative as to what will take place and afterwards we might not even know what happened. Those left behind might notice something strange!

We have seen that the Bible teaches that there will be a great falling away in the last days culminating in the Great Tribulation that will occur during the last 7 years of the age, Daniel's 70th week.

There is a school of thought that believes that the Church will be needed on Earth to give some hope and light during this time of the great tribulation and therefore will remain on Earth. This is called the Post-Trib view. This is a nice theory and sentiment

but there is nothing in scripture to back it up. The world right now has every opportunity to receive the light and hope of the gospel. If people refuse it now, why should tribulation make any difference? 'Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.' (2 Corinthians 6:2)

There is another view that the Church will be present during the first 3½ years of the reign of the Anti-Christ as things get worst, but just before they get really bad, with the abomination of desolation about to happen, the Church will get whisked away from it all. This is the Mid-Trib view.

There are yet others who believe that the Church will be removed or raptured before any of these terrible events take place just as the 7 years is about to begin. This is the Pre-Trib view.

Jesus said that no one will know the time or the hour of His return and we are to live in constant expectation of His coming (Matthew 24:36). He will come secretly, like a thief in the night (1 Thessalonians 5:2). The parable of the 10 virgins (Matt 25) illustrates the unexpectedness of Jesus' return. In that story, the 5 foolish virgins do not keep their lamps filled with oil and the bridegroom coming takes them by surprise. The 5 wise virgins keep the oil topped up and are ready, constantly waiting for the groom.

Now if we believe that Jesus is to return for the Church after the Tribulation (Post-Trib), we can calculate exactly when He will come – 7 years after the Anti-Christ has arranged the signing of the peace treaty of the Jews and the Arabs. Therefore this would not be a surprise. Everyone would be expecting him to come on that day. So, in order to maintain consistency of the Bible, we can conclude Jesus will come for the Church before the signing of the treaty, in a secret manner. The Thessalonians were concerned that they may have missed the Rapture, but Paul tells them that the coming of Christ will not occur until the Man of Lawlessness or the Anti-Christ is revealed. (2 Thessalonians 2:5) This man is held in check by some ONE, until the time is right to reveal him. It is not clearly stated who the ONE is, but the most likely person is the Holy Spirit who is in the Church in each believer. Thus we can conclude that these two events occur simultaneously. The Church and the Holy Spirit are lifted out of the Earth, ushering in the final 70th week, clearing the way for the lawless one to take control. After this, all those who are left on the earth will be destined to be subject to the Great Tribulation.

Many will undoubtedly struggle with the concept of the Rapture in terms of millions of people flying through the atmosphere, but if we think of it in terms of the Dimensions Theory, it becomes more plausible.

Think of a building being drawn up as a 2 dimensional blueprint. Every detail carefully drawn to scale and very impressive, even with little people drawn in, but it is still just a representation. The 3 dimensional reality far outshines the drawings. We are now existing in a 3 dimensional representation of the eternal reality. One way or another, those who have faith in Jesus are going to step from this dimension into the real thing. It will happen either through the individual death process or, at a time appointed by God, the door will open and we who trust in God will enter eternity en mass.

As far as those left behind are concerned, we will have disappeared, but as far as those of us who have been transported, we will have entered into the multi-dimensional reality, where what we are leaving is but a pale shadow. Who knows, what it will be like? Maybe we could be sitting at table with unbelievers and suddenly they become like shadows to us. As far as they are concerned, we have disappeared, but as far as we can perceive, we are still there, but they have become like cardboard cut-outs. We can communicate with each other, and so can they, but communication between the dimensions will be extremely limited and only in one direction.

We can deduce this from observation of the characteristics of Jesus after His resurrection. He was able to come and go as He pleased, instantly travel 90 miles across Israel, walk through walls and appear in a room with a locked door and float up into the sky. Yet He could eat fish and break bread. But the disciples had no idea where He was when they could not see Him. They could not control Him or even see Him unless He decided to show up.

Imagine the excitement and joy of stepping from this universe into God's dimension with everyone you love in an instant. Where the old earth is a pale grey, cold and distant shadow and the new environment is cleaner, purer and brighter than anything you have previously encountered.

Also imagine the horror and disappointment of being left behind, realising what has happened, but too late. I could be wrong about this, but it's not a chance I would want to take.

You may think that this seems a very unlikely and fanciful way for the world as we know it to come to an end. But think of the alternatives. Could the world continue as it is indefinitely? Many Sci-Fi writers have had a very morbid outlook on the future. The prospect does not look good in terms of natural phenomena. Will the sea levels rise and destroy life? Will climate change to the point that it cannot sustain life? Will there be another ice-age? Will asteroids destroy the earth? But then, what about what

man will do intentionally? Could nuclear war or extreme acts of terrorism bring mankind to an end? Will we eventually run out of fuel and be unable to sustain life as we know it? Will our rubbish and pollution eventually overtake us to poison our planet? Will radical Islam take over the world and turn it back into the dark ages? Nobody knows, but it does seem rather unlikely that things will carry on as they are now forever. Realistically, how much longer do you think it can last? The prospect of Jesus returning to the planet is as likely a way for it to conclude and far preferable to any of these other.

The Jewish Wedding

As we have seen, there are often theological concepts hidden in Jewish practices. The rituals and ceremony surrounding marriage as practiced by the Jews in the time of Jesus, beautifully illustrates the relationship of Jesus with His Bride, the Church.

The young man would make an offer of marriage to his beloved and if she accepted, they would seal the covenant with a meal of bread and wine.

He would then go back to the home of his father where he prepared a place for her. The bride to be would prepare herself with great anticipation and excitement, waiting for the groom to return for her. Meanwhile he prepares a room or apartment, which he builds over a period of time, maybe a year or more. When the father considers the place is ready for the bride he tells the son he can now go to bring the bride back. Only the father can approve and set the time.

The lover then goes to fetch his bride at a time when she least expects it, usually in the middle of the night, and the long wait is over.

He then takes his beloved to his father's house where a wedding feast takes place over 7 days, during which the marriage is consummated with great rejoicing.

What a beautiful type this is of that spiritual relationship between Jesus and the Church.

Jesus told his followers 'Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.' (John 14:1-3). He also says, 'But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only' (Matthew 24:36)

Jesus is preparing a place right now in His Father's house, whilst we await His return with eager anticipation. Meanwhile we can remind ourselves of the promise and show our acceptance of His covenant by means of the Communion Service of bread and wine. One day the Father will let the son come and get us, when the Father decides.

For seven earthly years we will rejoice with him at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

‘Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready’ (Revelation 19:7).

Whilst, of itself, the type of the wedding ceremony does not constitute proof of the way in which the rapture and the second coming will take place, it would seem fairly typical of the way God has hidden clues about future events in precept and practice which He reveals to those who seek and search diligently. Certainly the whole subject is surrounded by a sense of mystery and excitement, but the bottom line is the requirement for resolute and rugged faith to keep believing at a time when so many are giving up. This is reflected in the words of Jesus ‘Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?’ (Luke 18:8).

In the Jewish wedding, the ceremony goes on for 7 days after which the bride and groom live together, but also have a life outside of their home. There appears to be a parallel teaching that after the 7 years, Jesus will return with His bride to rule together over the earth for a thousand years. We will expand this more fully in the next chapter.

28. The Future

In the prologue of this book we considered some of the disasters that have befallen our world and some of which are hanging over our head like the sword of Damocles. I made the statement that they were the result of rejection of the Creator, rejection of His offer of Salvation and disobedience to Him and his written word. Many of these disasters are directly stated in the Bible and others are implied. We can regard certain aspects of moral decay as sin, but in fact they are the result of a greater sin. The greater sin is rejection of God the Creator and salvation through Jesus, from which the inevitable outcome are the kinds of effect we are witnessing. They are evidence that God has rejected those who have rejected Him.

As with the analogy of the car that is never serviced, we have got away with this for thousands of years, but the indications are that this time is drawing to a close. I make this statement based on two observations. Firstly, the state of the world today as we read about it in newspapers and see on the television. However, most of the truth of what is really going on never appears in the main line media, which is heavily sanitised and biased. You need to search the Internet to find true and unbiased reporting and even then it is hard to know what is the actual truth, what is perception and opinion and what is filtered. Secondly, the prophetic statements made in the Bible concerning the End Times, that are being fulfilled right before our eyes. The media is simply confirming that the Word of God is true.

Romans Chapter 1 states ‘The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God *gave them over* in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.... Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, *he gave them over* to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.’ (Romans 1:18-24, 28-32. NIV)

This shows us that rejection of God leads to immorality and depravity, deserving of death. It would also seem that approval is just as bad as practicing such acts. We are seeing increasingly the approval and even legislation by governments permitting all kinds of dubious lifestyles, which are major contributors to the breakdown of society. When sin entered the world, not only the sinner, man, was affected, but all of creation suffered. And as the sin of man increases it has an increasing disastrous effect on the whole creation. 'We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time' (Romans 8:22)

Some of the outcomes are the direct result of man's foolishness or lack of knowledge. Had we known about the effects of liberating certain gases into the atmosphere decades ago, we would have taken action, but now it is too late.

Deuteronomy 28:16-68 gives a terrible catalogue of misfortunes that will come upon the nation that turns away from God. It includes stillbirths, scorching by the sun, famines, oppression, confusion, robbery, madness, blindness, defeat, boils, tumours, every kind of disease and disaster.

It is not so much that God sends these disasters as that, in turning away from Him a nation exposes itself to all kinds of attack. When we refuse to come under His protection, we open the door to malicious forces bent on our destruction.

Our planet is protected from asteroids and other space debris by the huge gravitational forces of Mars and Jupiter. These large planets act as vacuum cleaners, sweeping up most of the particles flying through space before they get into our gravitational field. God designed the solar system for our protection and yet we take it for granted.

People often ask the question 'Why can a God of love allow so much suffering? In fact the question should be the other way around 'How can it be that there is so little suffering in such a hostile universe? With the number of forces that are at work to destroy us, from asteroids to viruses, it is amazing that Man has survived as long as he has. The reason is that God is constantly protecting us, but if we consistently and deliberately refuse His love and protection, we expose ourselves to danger. Unfortunately, when disaster strikes, the innocent as well as the guilty also suffer.

So without the covering of God's protection, the future does look very bleak. Take a look at these examples of what we can expect to happen as described in the Bible:

‘The LORD will strike you with wasting disease, with fever and inflammation, with scorching heat and drought, with blight and mildew, which will plague you until you perish. The sky over your head will be bronze, the ground beneath you iron. The LORD will turn the rain of your country into dust and powder; it will come down from the skies until you are destroyed’. (Deuteronomy 28:22-24)

‘The earth trembled and quaked, and the foundations of the mountains shook; they trembled because he was angry.’ (Psalm 18:7)

‘There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven.’ (Luke 21:11).

‘All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved and the sky rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shrivelled figs from the fig tree.’ (Isaiah 34:4)

‘Immediately after the distress of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’ (Matthew 24:29)

As we discussed in the introduction to this book, we are experiencing these disturbances in nature already and they can only get worse: ozone layer depletion and greenhouse effect leading to global warming, extreme weather patterns with flooding and sea levels rising; asteroids colliding with Earth; earthquakes and famine.

‘Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.’ (Mark 13:8)

‘There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’ (Luke 21:25-26)

We can expect an increase in wars, ethnic cleansing, terrorism and fear.

‘And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed. And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.’ (Revelation 8:9-11)

So pollution of land, sea, rivers and air as well as a scarcity of fresh clean water is something to expect. Incidentally, the Russian word for wormwood is Chernobyl, which is the name of the town in which a nuclear reactor exploded in 1986 rendering the surrounding area uninhabitable for years.

‘The LORD will plague you with diseases until he has destroyed you from the land you are entering to possess. The LORD will strike you with wasting disease, with fever and inflammation, with scorching heat and drought, with blight and mildew, which will plague you until you perish. The LORD will afflict you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors, festering sores and the itch, from which you cannot be cured. The LORD will afflict you with madness, blindness and confusion of mind.’ (Deuteronomy 18:21,22,27,28)

By disobeying God we can expect an increase in incurable diseases and hostile organisms that do not respond to antibiotics as well as epidemics of infections like bird flu.

‘This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.’ (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

‘Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.’ (2 Peter 3:3-10)

We are already seeing the results of moral decay leading to breakdown of marriage and family. This leads to lack of discipline, increasing violent crime and lack of respect for life.

These things are happening right now and the deterioration is for all to see, but they will come to an end as the Lord will have to step in to take control.

The question is when will this happen?

Nobody knows that answer to that except God Himself. Why did it not happen a thousand years ago, and how do we know it will not be a thousand years in the future? As we have discussed, a thousand years is as a day to God.

However, many of the circumstances which are predicted in the end-times scenario could not have taken place a thousand or even a hundred years ago. For example the placement of the Jews in the land of Israel is key to the unfolding events and this did not occur until 1948. Some of the prophecies indicate sophisticated technology in warfare, communications and travel which only came about in the last century. So the elements are all in place and the stage is set for the end to begin.

Let us now attempt to summarise the key points of the future events as we have discussed them.

Despite all of us hoping and even praying to the contrary, the state of the world is going to continue to deteriorate over the coming years. Godlessness, immorality and lawlessness will increase and prevail. Famine, disease, warfare, terrorism and delinquency will be rife and out of spiral out of control.

Many will become disillusioned. The love and faith even of many believers will grow cold. Islam will increase in its scope and effectiveness to the point of taking over governments. Christians and Jews will become persecuted minorities. Pressure to eliminate the state of Israel will increase.

Nations will begin to unite against common enemies like global warming, world-wide environmental catastrophes, famine and terrorism. The world will become ripe and prepared for a global government and dictatorship.

At some time in the imminent future, the existing population of genuine followers of Jesus will be transported from Earth into Heaven in an event called The Rapture. At this point there will be no true believers left on Earth.

After this a great politician will emerge who will negotiate a peace treaty between the Jews and the Arabs. This man, called the Anti-Christ will become more and more dominant, to the degree that he will be worshipped as if he were God himself. He will head up a single government that will rule the entire world, having total global control of all trade and commerce. People will be forced to receive a mark, possibly a computer chip or a badge of allegiance, on their forehead or right hand or arm, in order to trade. Anyone refusing the mark will suffer intolerable persecution. In particular, Jews for whom marking of the body is desecration and against their law, will be among those refusing the mark. Jews will become very unpopular and be herded into Israel. As persecution intensifies, the Jews will cry out to God and He will respond to their plight. He will open their eyes to recognise that the Messiah is Yeshua, the one they rejected. As a result of this, 12,000 Jews from each of the tribes will become evangelists and begin to convert the world; 144,000 of them, with great effect. (Revelation 7:4) There will be a revival of faith in Jesus such as never seen before.

A great division will take place between those who align themselves with God and the Jews, and those who are aligned with the Anti-Christ. The nations will gather together against Israel with the purpose of finally eradicating the Jews and a great war will develop, centred on Israel in the plain of Megiddo – the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:16). As the nations converge in warfare, Israel will be in danger of annihilation and they will have nowhere to turn for help. They will have been abandoned by all other nations. They will cry out to God, who will respond to them with support from the armies of Heaven. Jesus Christ heading up a vast spiritual army will come to Earth and conquer and subdue Israel's enemies. There will be a terrible slaughter. It will take the Jews 7 months to clear up the dead after the war. (Ezekiel 39:12)

During the conflict the Anti-Christ will be killed. Afterwards Satan and his demonic hordes will be bound and thrown into an abyss for 1000 years. (Revelation 20:3)

Then Jesus will set up a Kingdom on Earth over which He will be King. He will choose people to reign with Him to form a worldwide government that will rule with total justice and goodness. There will be no sickness and people will live a very long time. Vicious enemies, even in the animal world will live at peace. The world will become the place God originally intended it to be for a full 1000 years, which we call the Millennium.

This was seen in a vision by John as expressed in the Revelation in which he says, 'And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and

I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.' (Revelation 20:4-6)

It is a mystery as to the identity of the people who will reign with Him. A possibility is that they will be people of His choosing from those who have already died or been raptured, but now returning to earth in 'heavenly bodies', just like Jesus did after the resurrection. John also saw resurrected souls of those that had been beheaded for their testimony. It is significant that Islam still uses this method of execution, which may be perpetrated during the Great Tribulation.

During the millennium there will be peace and harmony. Satan and the demonic forces will be bound up in the abyss, so that mankind will have the opportunity to live without satanic interference. The environment will be cleaned up overnight. Natural enemies of the animal world will lie down together without fear (Isaiah 11:6). People will live for hundreds of years in good health (Isaiah 65:20).

At the end of the millennium, the demonic hordes will be released from the abyss for a short period. It is not clear why this should be. It could be a final unleashing of judgement on the world as man, even without the influence of Satan will still have a tendency towards evil. At the same time it would allow those who have previously opted out of making a decision to have to choose between God and Satan right at the end of time. John continues, 'And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.' (Revelation 20: 7-10)

Satan will gather together many nations, including Gog and Magog, which many believe to refer to the nations to the north of Israel. Together they will attack Israel and Jerusalem, which is the seat of the Messianic government. At this point, God himself intervenes, and finally puts an end to Satan and all of his followers casting

them into the lake of fire forever. This battle is often confused with Armageddon, but my understanding is that Armageddon is a human war, whereas this final battle will be largely spiritual, with fire from heaven destroying the demonic hordes and their allies.

After this, the earth and indeed the physical universe will have completed their function. The Earth and everything in it will be burned up (2 Peter 3:10). The universe will be rolled up like a scroll (Isaiah 34:4). Then all of mankind will be judged: the living and the dead will stand before the judgement seat of Christ. Those that are still in rebellion will be consigned to hell and those that belong to Christ will be received into Heaven for all eternity.

Now some of this seems very unlikely and hard to take seriously. Many if not most people will regard this last set of events we have been discussing as figurative and symbolic. Conversely some may try to put physical interpretations on the spiritual: fire from heaven could refer to nuclear warheads. The total destruction of the earth and the universe is the ultimate end point of the law of entropy anyway. But is the heat death of the universe something that is millions of years away or are there just about 1000 years to go? The idea of the universe being rolled up like a scroll aligns with the idea of the 4 dimensions being rolled or folded into the 5th dimension. So whilst some of these events are expressed supernaturally, there is a sense in which they are destined to happen and the question is when rather than if.

However, when we consider the foundations of our beliefs, the creation, virgin birth, resurrection and the ascension, there is much that is beyond our normal experience. As we become aware of these other dimensions, beyond our own 3 dimensions, our imagination and belief are stretched to accept the miraculous and the supernatural by faith. Instead of scepticism and wariness, we become filled with excitement and anticipation, waiting by faith for the impossible to happen, like children open mouthed and wide-eyed at a pantomime.

These other dimensions are not millions of miles away; they are simply a warp or twist in the fabric of space and time right on our doorstep. God, Heaven and Angels are not light years away; God is right next to us when we reach out to Him. Also the spiritual kingdom with its principalities and demonic powers is right there in parallel to our earth. If God decides the time has come to put an end to our scepticism and unbelief by collapsing time and space and crossing the dimensional boundaries, that is His prerogative.

He has gone to extreme lengths to make it easy for us to engage with Him to show

our true nature and where we stand regarding His covenants. Whether we will side with God Himself, with goodness and justice and love or whether we turn against him and align ourselves with the powers of darkness, is a decision we will all have to make in this lifetime. Once we pass that threshold of what we call death, there is no way back.

God has made a lot of promises in the Bible that were sealed by the shedding of blood. The cost of that covenantal relationship was the very lifeblood of Jesus, who is God manifested in human form, shed on mount Calvary. It does not come cheap. All of these covenants have been or are in the process of being fulfilled. Whilst there are a lot of scriptural foundations and arguments for the future events we have been discussing, it is not possible to prove them until after the events take place, so we either believe them by faith or not.

29. Why is it so obscure?

I have often been involved in lengthy discussions with the Bible open, commentaries and concordances stacked high, checking out the precise meanings of Hebrew and Greek words. Translation from the original languages can sometimes obscure the meaning and sometimes the translators get it wrong or emphasize an inappropriate meaning of the word. At least that is my opinion. Like in English, the same word can have several different meanings, which is the basis of the 'pun'. Reading a passage in different versions can throw a completely different light on its meaning. Also, over time the meaning of words have changed, so the King James Version may need some cultural awareness to make the meaning clear. Some of the paraphrased versions take liberties with the language in their efforts to clarify the meaning. Translators can also be guilty of seeing the text through their own emotional filters.

Even after recognising and making allowances for this, there are still some questions people often ask:

Why is it so difficult to understand the Bible?

Why are so many passages open to different interpretation?

Why did God not make it clearer?

Even the Jews who understand the Hebrew language and the culture don't fully understand the Bible, so what hope do we have?

Jesus prayed a prayer that his followers would be united: 'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word. That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me' (John 17:20-21). That prayer has not yet been answered and the Church has never been so divided.

It has been estimated that there are over 20,000 Christian denominations, most of which started up over some controversial and often fairly obscure interpretation of Scripture.

Yet if you consider the controversy and misunderstanding amongst the disciples of Jesus (Luke 22:24) and later followers (Acts 15:1), it may not be surprising that these have been amplified throughout the centuries. Peter even tried to rebuke and correct Jesus (Matthew 16:22)

There are many complex issues, some of which we have been discussing, but God

Himself is complex beyond our wildest imagination and his ways are beyond finding out. The fact that He chose Israel to get the message into the human race and then made it so difficult for them to understand seems strange. God said to Isaiah, ‘Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed’ (Isaiah 6:9-10). Jesus makes reference to this passage as the reason for speaking in parables (Mark 4:12)

But is it possible that the reason we find the messages so hard to understand partially because we make them so complicated instead of taking them at face value? I can imagine Jesus chuckling as He talks to His Father, ‘Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight’ (Luke 10:21).

It is not necessarily the clever and wise who have the greatest understanding. ‘But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence’. (1Corinthians 1:27-29)

We read in Romans that this plan of God is beyond our understanding. ‘O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?’ (Romans 11:33-34)

As I have laid out my thoughts in the chapters of this book, I am very conscious that there will be opposition and perhaps even anger at my beliefs. I grieve me to think that some will be reading it, and then come across something with which they disagree and dismiss the rest of the book and me as a crank. Some will read it carefully looking for errors and heresies and be very keen to put me straight. That’s OK. They may be right, but they could be wrong. Doctrinal differences, over the centuries, have caused people to take up swords and cudgels to defend their position. Even between Peter and Paul there was controversy (Galatians 2:11). But as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:1-2, I can be doctrinally correct, if I have not love I am nothing. You can be the greatest theologian and win every argument, but without love it is nothing. It is fine, even healthy for us to disagree, but we still should remain friends, bonded together by the love of God. This is how the world will be drawn to Jesus.

‘By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another’
(John 13:35)

God made humans and knows and understands how we work. If He had made it easy to understand the future, then we would not have had to trust him. If things are too clear cut, we develop a kind of arrogance of knowing it all and being very certain. We have just sufficient uncertainty to keep us trusting and walking by faith, never actually knowing that we have got it right.

We would love to have a programme that says exactly when everything is going to happen, but that is not God’s way. Even Jesus did not know when He would return the second time. ‘Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.’ (Mark 13:30-33)

Only God the Father knows when these end time events will occur.

Undoubtedly technology has played a major part in the unfolding of God’s plan. Consider the impact of the Roman roads, shipping, the universal use of the Greek language as necessary for the propagation of the Gospel. Consider the effect of the printing press on giving the message of the Bible to the ordinary person without the interference of the priesthood, and the number of books that have been published over the last few hundred years. In more modern time, communication through radio, television and the Internet have enabled the gospel to reach every nation as commanded by Jesus (Matthew 28:19)

If Jesus had said to His followers, ‘‘Right guys, I am going back to Heaven now. Keep the faith and tell everyone about me. And I’ll see you in about 2000 years!’ How long do you think they would have hung around? The Church would never have got started. Nobody is prepared to be martyred for something that might happen in 2000 years. Every generation has believed Christ’s return was imminent and that has helped to keep the hope alive. God know what He was doing by making it obscure.

Yet throughout history there has been a gradual unfolding of understanding of who God is, a gradual revelation of doctrine and theology. Each century and each successive generation has argued and thrashed out the issues, from the Trinity, salvation by grace, through to the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the 20th Century. Maybe

this is the period in which we are to get the understanding of the Second Coming and associated events, and maybe the one in which it all happens. No one person or even one denomination has got it totally right, even though we would like to think so. We are all dependent on one another – like members of the body. Different denominations major in certain areas, but make up the complete whole.

The most important thing is that we have our eyes fixed on Jesus. If we had a programme we would be looking to the next event rather than looking to Jesus. He does not want us looking for the appearance of the Anti-Christ or persecution. He does not want us to be watching out for a great deception or falling away. He wants us to seek relationship with Him.

Whether the Church flourishes and grows and victoriously fills the Earth with the whole population expectantly waiting for His return or whether the Church is persecuted and diminished until only a remnant is left to hold the fort is not the issue. Great scholars and men of God have believed both extremes and everything in between and probably changed position several times during their lifetime. The important thing is a passion for God, to know Him better. As the song goes:

Oh Dear Lord

Three things I pray

To see thee more clearly

Love thee more dearly

Follow thee more nearly

Day by day

30. My response

I am not trying to say I have all the answers or that everything I am saying is right. Much greater minds than mine have argued for centuries and remain inconclusive and unresolved about many of the issues we have been discussing. But I am trying to give a rational basis for what we believe. It is too easy to discard truth because we cannot understand it or it is outside our framework of reference or experience. Hopefully some of the arguments I have provided will help some to take far more seriously the claims of the Bible and the promises of God.

The big question is: What are we going to do about it?

Some will outright reject everything I have written. Others will accept some or all of it.

Amongst those that do believe, there are those who will sit back in complacency and expect God to sort out all the problems of the world: the environment, the wickedness, famine, poverty, etc. He will, but the Bible tells us that this is not the way we should live.

Jesus has made it clear that He expects His followers to do the works that He did on earth by example. ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.’ (John 14:12)

Doing good deeds does not save us from the wrath to come or grant us a place in Heaven, but those who are saved must do the works of Jesus as evidence of their commitment to Him.

Jesus expects His followers to behave responsibly towards all of His creation and to act with justice and mercy. He also expects us to perform the miraculous deeds that He did whilst on earth, healing the sick, releasing the oppressed using the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit that is available to all believers.

This is not about doing right things or good things to earn some kind of reward or place in Heaven. The starting point is a relationship with Jesus. As we have seen, God has made many promises and sealed them with the shedding of blood. The most important promise He has made to us is that we can be forgiven and accepted and given a place in Heaven because of the sacrifice of Jesus. Just as the shedding of the

blood of a lamb or goat made atonement for the sinner, the shed blood of Jesus once and for all has made atonement for all sin. If the blood of an animal had any meaning, what power is there in the blood of the Creator Himself to atone for sin: His life for yours. A simple prayer of acceptance of His sacrifice for you is all that is necessary to seal the covenant. He has done all the hard stuff. We just need to accept it by faith. It's that simple.

Having accepted that covenant, you can begin an intimate relationship with Jesus; the most intimate relationship of all. He actually comes to dwell in your heart, your innermost being. It is mystical and beyond our understanding, but it is real.

There is nothing we can do to earn our salvation. In fact Jesus clearly shows that even doing works like He did, healing, casting out demons, even in His name does not suffice.

'Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never **knew** you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.' (Matthew 7:22-23)

The key word in that text is 'knew'. It is the same word used in the Bible as in intimate marital relationships. What He requires is that we open our hearts and let Him in, like a lover. We will then want to read His book, spend time in prayer, do the miraculous works in the same way that we want to please someone we love.

We have seen previously how you get from one dimension into the next highest dimension. A 1 dimensional line can be bent which takes it into 2 dimensions. A flat sheet can be folded or lifted or bent and it becomes 3 dimensional. A 3 dimensional object as it moves through time becomes 4 dimensional, and so on.

For us to enter into the higher dimensions of relationship with God can be helped in the same way. Clearly a person can pray silently and meet with God without moving a muscle, but there is a special power in movement towards God. Examples are:

Bowing the head in an act of adoration.

Bending the knee in prayer and submission.

Lifting our hands in praise and worship.

Raising our eyes towards the heavens.

Falling forward or backwards under the power of the Holy Spirit

There is a tremendous power released when a person dances to God, whether to music or words or in silence. Moving the whole body in worship takes us into another dimension. We are used to moving only the mouth or maybe the hands in prayer and worship, but when the whole body engages something special happens and the very presence of God is tangible and evident.

It is not as though these 'folding' acts in themselves literally take us into another dimension, but I believe the physical acts show the omnipotent God that we want to engage with Him. When we are in relationship with Him and because He is all-powerful; He responds to our reaching out. Like a father responding to a small child who reaches up a hand to grasp his hand, so God responds with great power from a heart filled with love. The essence of God is Love and he constantly shows it. Sometimes He may appear wrathful and harsh, but only in the way a father would, seeing his child reaching out towards a fire or about to run into a busy road.

You may not agree with this intellectually, but I can only suggest you try reaching out to God yourself and see what happens. I was with a friend who struggled to come to terms with belief in God. I said, 'Take yourself off into a quiet place like the woods, raise your eyes to the heavens and say 'God if you are really there please reveal yourself to me'. An hour or so later he came back and said 'It works. He came to me'. That was 20 years ago and this guy still has a close relationship with God. It is that simple.

God does also expect us to live right lives: to feed the poor, visit the sick and show kindness as shown in the parable of the sheep and goats. 'Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was hungry, and you gave me meat: I was thirsty, and you gave me drink: I was a stranger, and you took me in: Naked, and you clothed me: I was sick, and you visited me: I was in prison, and you came unto me'. (Matthew 25:34-36)

We should live in expectation of Jesus' return; 'Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure.' (1 John 3:2-3). We live our lives trying to be like Him, but we are human and never quite make it; but when we see Him, we are promised that we shall be like Him.

In the meantime, our lives should constantly reflect His beauty and glory through doing the good things Jesus did whilst he was on earth.

We will fail from time to time, but God knows we will sin and has made provision for that. 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' (1John 1:8-9). We simply have to confess our sins and receive cleansing. The sacrifice of Jesus atones for all sin.

However, we do not live this life in our own strength. The third part of the Godhead Trinity, the Holy Spirit will come to dwell in us if we sincerely ask Him. He enables and empowers us to live the life of Jesus here on Earth.

The key to being filled with the Holy Spirit is total surrender. For many years I was a believer, but in addition to God, there were many other things in my life, some of which would not have been pleasing to Him. It was not until I came to the point of submission to Him that something dramatic happened to me. I realised that nothing was hidden from Him. My innermost thoughts and secrets were totally visible to Him. Like Adam in the Garden of Eden, I had been trying to hide behind a fig leaf, when God had a robe he wanted to put over me. When I came out from hiding and surrendered to Him, I was filled with a joy and laughter that went on for many days. My emotions and personality changed overnight and I became a different person as my wife and children will testify.

The Holy Spirit has been active throughout history and still has a lot of work to do, but He does it through us humans. We can now put together the whole of the Isaiah 61 text we discussed earlier. Jesus stopped reading at the point of 'the acceptable year of the Lord', but we can now look forward beyond that to what is right on our doorstep. The culmination of the prophecy is about to begin at any time and it is the Spirit of the Lord who will bring it to pass.

'The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound: To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.' (Isaiah 61:1-3)

We live in a constant state of expectancy, but there is much to be done whilst we await the call of Jesus Christ.

If you are not in fellowship with Jesus, then the time to engage with Him is right now with a simple prayer of repentance and acknowledgement of His great offer of salvation. Then as a follower of Jesus it is or will be our desire and compulsion to draw others into relationship with Him.

It is our duty to tell everyone who does not know of the love of the Creator who came to live on Earth and gave His life as a sacrifice for them. This is much more important than a cure for cancer. If we had such a thing we would shout it from the rooftops, but this is far greater and much better news, as it is about enabling people to choose eternal life over eternal death.

We can tell others of the special place God has prepared for them in Heaven. He wants them to be there and has provided the way and paid the full price.

We can encourage people to acknowledge and confess that they are sinners and lead them to repent of their sin. We cannot enter heaven as sinners, but God has provided the way to get rid of all sin and the penalties it carries. No sin is too great for God's forgiveness.

We also must inform people of the horrors to come on Earth in the near future from which they can escape. I do not know anyone who I would want to be on Earth during the great tribulation. So, if you have people you love who do not yet know Jesus, make them aware of what the future holds and let them know that there is a way out of this appalling tribulation.

Finally, unpleasant as it is, we need to warn people of the fate of eternal damnation that awaits those who continue to reject God's offer of salvation. God has gone to extreme lengths to provide for us and give us eternal life, and rejection of His grace will result in separation from Him for ever. The choice is there before each one of us, Heaven or Hell.

Conclusion

I wrote this book to encourage those who are struggling in their faith and finding it hard to believe the Bible and commit themselves to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. I hope that I have been able to show that the Bible is the word of God, totally trustworthy and can be accepted as a manual for living.

**If you found this book helpful, please pass the LINK on to others.
If you have problems with the material, please feel free to email me.**

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