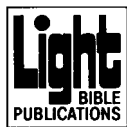


Light

A photograph of Big Ben in London at night. The clock tower is illuminated with green lights, and its two clock faces are glowing. A large, bright firework is exploding in the sky behind the tower, creating a large, fan-like shape of light. The sky is dark, and the overall scene is festive and celebratory.

...on a New World

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Chart on Page 26 reproduced by kind permission of Holly Deyo.

Cover picture: New Year Celebrations in London

Note: All Bible quotations are taken from the New King James Version except where another version is indicated after the text.



Editorial

THE results of a recent survey in America suggested that the majority of American Christians believe religions other than Christianity can lead to eternal life. Sixty five percent of all Christians say there are multiple paths to eternal life, ultimately rejecting the exclusivity of Christ's teaching, according to the survey conducted by the 'Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life'.

Surprisingly, the same survey also concluded that many Christians believe that being an atheist does not exclude a person from obtaining eternal life. Atheism is defined as 'a disbelief in the existence of God' and by implication this leads to the conclusion that the Bible is not the Word of God.

Without the Bible as our guide on such fundamental issues, we are lost and without hope. David wrote in the Psalms: *'The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God"'* [Psalm 14.1] and the Apostle Paul wrote a letter to the Christians at Ephesus in which he reminded them that prior to their conversion they *'were without Christ...having no hope and without God in the world'* [Ephesians 2.12].

We believe that God not only exists but that His inspired Word the Bible, is the only book which tells us where we have come from, why we are here and where we are going. The Bible is very clear in its assessment of the human race – in the words of Paul: *'all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God'* [Romans 3.23]. But Paul continues in that same letter to the Romans, to underline **the only way** out of our hopeless predicament as sinners: *'For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord'* [Romans 6.23]. In this passage is revealed **the only way** to eternal life – it is through association with the work of Jesus Christ as Paul wrote in

his 1st letter to Timothy: *‘This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief’ [I Timothy 1.15].* As sinners, we can each avail ourselves of God’s gracious offer of salvation, if we are prepared to accept that God’s way revealed in the Bible is **the only way**.

After Jesus had died and rose from the dead, before he ascended to heaven, he instructed his followers to go and preach this message of salvation to all who would listen. Two of those close followers of Jesus, Peter and John, were arrested by the Jewish authorities because they preached the Gospel (good news) concerning the way to eternal life through bodily resurrection from the dead. The Apostles gave this message to those same Jewish leaders who had arrested Jesus and had him crucified. Concerning Jesus they said: *‘Nor is there salvation in any other, for **there is no other name under heaven** given among men by which we must be saved’ [Acts 4.12].*

If you are persuaded by the results of the survey – the ideas of those who undermine the teaching of God’s Word by suggesting that there are other ways to eternal life – we urge you to think again. The message of Jesus is this:

‘Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.’

[Matthew 7.13,14]

Which way will you choose?

Editor

Darwin's Legacy

Has it stood the test of time?

THE year 2009 celebrates anniversaries of two events that it is claimed, have radically altered opinions and attitudes more than anything else in human history. Charles Darwin, who has been recognised as one of the world's most influential scientists, was born 200 years ago on 12th February 1809 and 24 November 2009 will be the 150th anniversary of the publication of his famous book '*The Origin of Species*'. This work, a culmination of many years of study, advanced the theory that life on earth had evolved from a simple beginning into the myriad complex forms existing today.

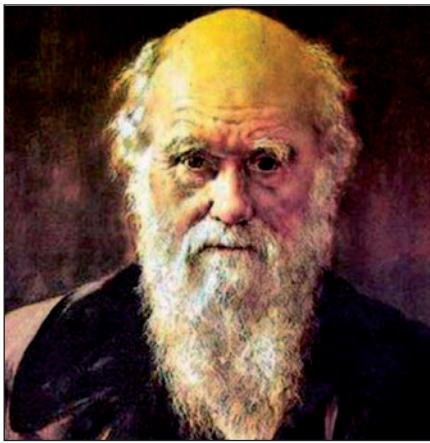
These anniversaries are being celebrated at international, national and local level by museum exhibitions, radio and television programmes and other celebrations throughout the world. In addition, a replica of the HMS Beagle is being built, the ship on which Darwin sailed to the South Atlantic, where his ideas were first born.



Replica of HMS Beagle

There is no doubt that Darwin was a first-rate and meticulous scientific observer, but he did not have the investigative facilities or understanding available to later biologists. It is therefore legitimate to ask if his theory would have gained such acceptance had people had access to the modern scientific understanding of the immense complexity of living things. Nevertheless, his ideas were warmly embraced at the time and are still vigorously promulgated today.

At first, strong opposition to Darwin's views came from those whose religious beliefs taught a specific creation of all living things by a Supreme Being, but over the years the Church has gradually accommodated itself to the evolutionary theory. At the time of writing the Rev. Dr. Malcolm Brown, the Church of England's director of mission and public affairs says that Christians, in their response to Darwin's theory of natural selection, repeated the mistakes they made in doubting Galileo's astronomy in the 17th century.



Charles Darwin at the time he wrote 'The origin of Species'

He is proposing that they apologise to him in the following statement: 'Charles Darwin: 200 years from your birth, the Church of England owes you an apology for misunderstanding you and, by getting our first reaction wrong, encouraging others to misunderstand you still.'

In contrast to the official Christian view, the Moslem community adheres strongly to the concept of specific Divine creation.

This view of Darwin's theory, with later modifications, is echoed in most sections of the scientific world. Biologist Ernst Meyr contends that '*No educated person any longer questions the validity of the so-called theory of evolution, which we now know to be a simple fact*' (*E. Meyr: 'What Evolution is'*). In this he is supported by the scientist and broadcaster Richard Dawkins, who has been styled the 'leading High Priest of evolution, with '*The Origin of Species*' as his bible'.

So we ask, what has changed over the past 150 years that makes evolutionists so sure that the theory is correct? What new discoveries have been made that have converted what was once a working

hypothesis to a demonstrable fact? Have what Darwin himself termed '*the legitimate objections*' to his theory been unequivocally answered? The answer is generally 'No', and amid all the media hype and celebrations of Darwin's anniversary we need to be reminded of this. The main planks of the Darwinian theory are:

- That life appeared spontaneously on earth;
- That it gradually developed from simple to complex forms by a random selection process termed by Darwin 'natural selection';
- That evidence for this development is to be found in the fossil record.

These basic necessities were outlined by Darwin in the confident expectation that as time went by and knowledge increased all these aspects of his theory would be verified. But as we will show, he was humble enough to admit that if future research did not confirm his expectations, then his theory would be exposed to insurmountable objections.

But the facts are that, despite all the protestations of evolutionists and decades of detailed investigations, confirmation of these essential aspects of his theory has not been forthcoming. Whilst evolutionists today put on a brave face when publicly supporting the current theory, in private not a few of them confess to serious reservations, some of which have far-reaching implications.

THE ORIGIN OF LIFE

Without any outside intervention, the only way that life could have appeared on earth is by what has been termed 'spontaneous generation'. Darwin, who had little or no knowledge of the detailed structure of minute organisms, proposed that life could have been produced in a sterile earth by the action of sunlight on a '*warm little pond, with all sorts of ammonia and phosphoric salts*' (letter to Joseph Hooker).

Later it was suggested that the action of lightning on primeval atmospheric gases could have produced some of the basic chemicals found in living organisms. This gave rise to the concept of a ‘pre-life soup’ from which, given a very long time, living things developed. This suggestion was universally accepted in the scientific world and hence by the general public for many years. But doubts have now been expressed about whether this ‘soup’ ever existed. One scientist wrote:

‘Considering the way the prebiotic soup is referred to in so many discussions of the origin of life as an already established reality, it comes as something of a shock to realise that there is absolutely no positive evidence for its existence’ (*Michael Denton, Evolution: A Theory in Crisis, Adler & Adler, 1985, 261*).

Evolutionary scientists themselves have looked at the odds that a free-living, single-celled organism such as a bacterium could result from a chance combining of the chemicals needed for life. Harold Morowitz, a well known physicist from Yale University and author of *The Origin of Cellular Life* (1993), declared that the odds for any kind of spontaneous generation were one chance in $10^{100,000,000,000}$. In everyday notation 10^6 , or 1,000,000 is a large number, and a million-to-one chance is considered very, very unlikely to occur. What then of 10 with a hundred billion noughts after it!

These doubts have been raised because of the huge strides made since Darwin’s day in the field of cell biology. It is now known that what he envisaged as a little speck of jelly is in fact a microscopic powerhouse full of extremely intricate and interdependent components, each of which needs to be there for a cell to be alive.



A simple diagram of a greatly enlarged single cell showing its very intricate structure

As one writer has said of the cell:

'It is astonishing to think that this remarkable piece of machinery, which possesses the ultimate capacity to construct every living thing that ever existed on Earth, from the giant redwood to the human brain, can construct all its own components in a matter of minutes. It is of the order of several thousand million million times smaller than the smallest piece of functional machinery ever constructed by man'

(*Michael Denton, opus cited p.338*).

In fact there is no evolutionist today who can offer a rational explanation of how life began. Even Richard Dawkins has been known to be silent on the question, because he realises there is no answer. But the concept of spontaneous generation is still assumed in almost all scientific circles and foisted on an unsuspecting public. For evolutionists it is an article of belief, not of proof; as the Harvard University biochemist and Nobel Prize winner George Wald declared:

'One has to only contemplate the magnitude of this task to concede that the spontaneous generation of a living organism is impossible. Yet we are here – as a result, I believe, of spontaneous generation' (*George Wald, 'The Origin of Life', Scientific American, 191: 48, May 1954*).

And they accuse creationists of irrational faith!

So, as we listen to or read about the wonderful contribution that Darwin has made to modern thinking we need to bear in mind that the fundamental concept of his theory is still a non-starter. Without spontaneous generation of life the theory of evolution is dead.

A perusal of the chapter headings in '*The Origin of Species*', will show that Darwin did not directly address the problem of the origin of life. It seems that, in his understandable ignorance of life's complexity, he had just assumed that life could spontaneously appear. Or, to do him justice, it seems that he, as a practising Christian, believed that the

original spark of life was from God. In the concluding words of '*The Origin of Species*' he wrote of '*life, with its several powers, having been **originally breathed by the Creator** into a few forms...*' (bold type ours).

NATURAL SELECTION

The main thrust of *The Origin of Species* was that, by naturally occurring accidental variations, some living things became more successful in their fight for survival. Thus the unaltered ones died out under the competition. This random process, described by Darwin as '*successive, small, transitional gradations*', repeated time and again over countless years, resulted in the emergence of a new species. This process he termed '*natural selection*'.

It is true that variation, either random or induced by local conditions, can occur, but these cannot explain the development of life as we know it. There is such a wide range of living things – trees, plants, animals, birds, not to speak of the infinite range of micro-organisms – that it is difficult to believe that these arose purely randomly from a common ancestor. As Darwin himself wrote of natural selection: '*Undoubtedly serious cases of difficulty occur*'.

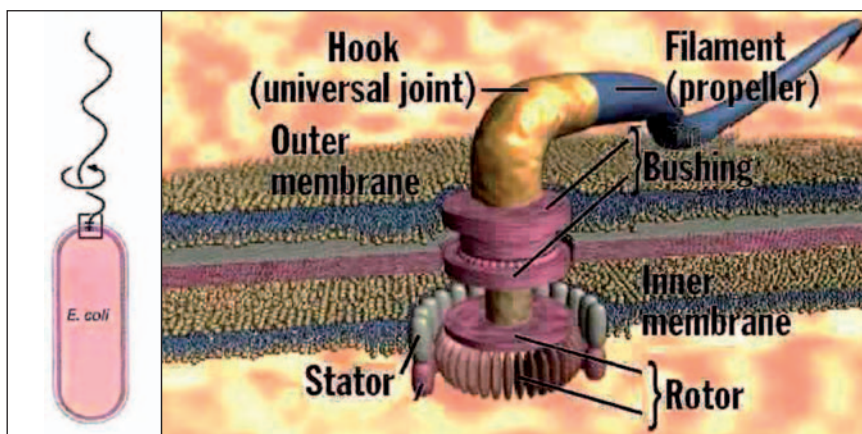
A BACTERIAL 'MOTOR'

Take one example of such a difficulty, out of thousands that could be mentioned. Even within single-celled living organisms there is such complexity of structure and function that rules out an accidental development. Imagine an electric motor so small that a million side by side would measure about two centimetres. This microscopic engine and drive mechanism is composed of forty parts, including a rotor, stator, drive shaft, bearings, universal joint and flexible propeller. It is a motor that can rotate at up to 20,000 rpm (twice as fast as a racing car engine) and can reverse direction in a quarter of a rotation.

These astonishingly complex, tiny and efficient engines actually exist in a common bacterium, driving its 'flagellum'. This is a whip-

like propulsion device for bacteria such as the well-known *E.coli* that lives in our digestive system. This is a rod-shaped single cell of less than one thousandth of a millimetre wide.

This little micro-organism is propelled so fast by its whirling 'flagellum' that it can move ten times its length in one second – equivalent to a human being doing a 100 metre sprint in five seconds! The diagram shows the complex design of this incredibly small motor that is built into the double membrane that surrounds the bacterium. The sausage-shaped components are special proteins that react to cause the inner ring to rotate within its bearing. The driving force is a flow of protons (positively charged particles) between the inner and outer parts of the cell membrane. All this is mediated by a series of about thirty other biochemical processes, each of which is essential for movement to occur.



Even more amazing is that this motor can respond to things in its environment, making the bacterium change direction to move towards substances it can use or, conversely, away from harmful ones.

Clearly all these interlocking features had to come into being all at once, not by a series of chance variations – and this is a grave problem for natural selection. As one scientist, Dr. Macnab of Yale University, has had the honesty to say:

‘One can only marvel at the intricacy in a simple bacterium, of the total motor and sensory system...and remark that our concept of evolution by selective advantage must surely be an oversimplification’. [Mcnab,R.(1978)’*Bacterial mobility and Chemotaxis: The Molecular Biology of a Behavioral System*’. *CRC Critical Reviews in Biochemistry*, vol.5, issue 4, Dec., pp.291-341].

Another writer says:

‘As biochemists have begun to examine apparently simple structures like cilia and flagella, they have discovered staggering complexity, with dozens or even hundreds of precisely tailored parts. As the number of required parts increases, the difficulty of *gradually* putting the system together skyrockets, and ... Darwin looks more and more forlorn’ [Michael Behe ‘*Darwin’s Black Box*’ p.73].

This is only one example. In fact wherever one looks in the living world this concept of functional design is apparent. So many features, each useless on their own, combine to make something that works. This must have come from design, not by chance.

THE FOSSIL RECORD

In Darwin’s day there was a huge interest in the science of geology and the fossils contained in sedimentary rocks. These rocks were believed to have been laid down gradually in some primeval seas and in so doing entrapped the animals living at that time. Simply put, it was believed that the lowest and thus the oldest rocks contained the remains of more simple organisms and the more recent ones those of more developed creatures. This alleged succession of increasing complexity was one of the main arguments in Darwin’s theory outlined in ‘*The Origin of Species*’. But is it true?

THE ‘CAMBRIAN EXPLOSION’

Not all rocks contain fossils. In fact the majority do not, and in the geological record there is a sudden appearance of fossils in the rocks

that form what is called the 'Cambrian' strata. Beneath these layers, in the 'pre-Cambrian' strata, Darwin noted that there were no fossil remains. In fact in more recent times it has been shown that some very small life forms did exist in the pre-Cambrian strata, but the immediate transition from virtually no fossils to a huge variety of them in the strata immediately above is still extremely marked.

This puzzled Darwin and he saw it as a major problem – as indeed it remains to this day. In a chapter headed '*Imperfections of the geological record*' he refers to this repeatedly, and willingly admits that it undermined the theory he was propounding:

'There is another and allied difficulty, which is much more serious. I allude to the manner in which species belonging to several of the main divisions of the animal kingdom suddenly appear in the lowest known fossiliferous rocks.

To the question why we do not find rich fossiliferous deposits belonging to these assumed earliest periods prior to the Cambrian system, I can give no satisfactory answer.

Nevertheless, the difficulty of assigning any good reason for the absence of vast piles of strata rich in fossils beneath the Cambrian system is very great.

The case at present must remain inexplicable; and may be truly urged as **a valid argument against the views here entertained**'

Of course, the sudden appearance of a great number of diverse living things is exactly what could be expected if they originated by creation rather than evolution.

ABSENCE OF 'TRANSITIONAL' FORMS

If, as Darwin postulated, one living species gradually evolved into another by that series of '*successive, small, transitional gradations*',

then those intermediate forms should be much more common in the fossil record than either the original or the final creature. To take a crude example, if the giraffe originally had a neck of normal length that gradually extended over millions of years to give rise to the animal we have today, then the fossils of those transitional animals should be evident in the geological record. Indeed the transitional forms should be much more frequent. But this is not so, and Darwin admitted that this was a serious objection to his theory of natural selection – even being sufficient to cause complete rejection of it. Here are some of his candid comments:

‘Firstly, why, if species have descended from other species by insensibly fine gradations, do we not everywhere see innumerable transitional forms? Why is not all nature in confusion instead of the species being, as we see them, well defined?’

But, as by this theory, innumerable transitional forms must have existed, why do we not find them embedded in countless numbers in the crust of the earth?

Lastly, looking not to any one time, but to all time, if my theory be true, numberless intermediate varieties, linking closely together all the species of the same group, must assuredly have existed.

‘But I do not pretend that I should ever have suspected how...the absence of innumerable transitional links between the species which lived at the commencement and close of each formation, pressed so hardly on my theory.

‘Why then is not every geological formation and every stratum full of such intermediate links? Geology assuredly does not reveal any such finely graduated organic chain; and this, perhaps is **the most obvious and gravest objection which can be urged against my theory**’.

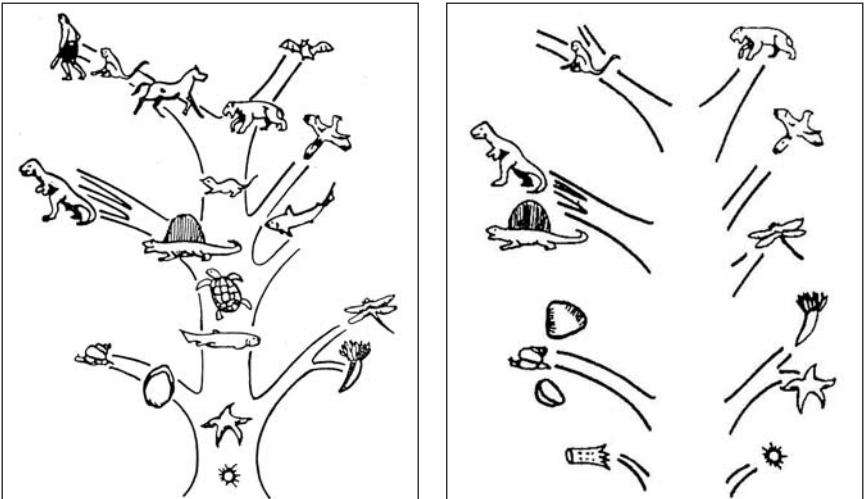
He who rejects this view of the imperfection of the geological record, will **rightly reject the whole theory**’.

However, Darwin was confident that with the uncovering of more fossils these 'missing links' would be discovered. But were they?

NO 'MISSING LINKS'

The fact is that despite the discovery of over a quarter of a million fossil species, not a single confirmed evidence of evolutionary transition has been found. But this is swept under the metaphorical carpet by evolutionists; one Harvard University professor referring to it as 'the trade secret of palaeontology'. [Stephen Gould, *Professor of Geology and Palaeontology, Natural History* 86 (5)1977, 14.]

Yet every modern biology textbook propounds the theory of evolution as a fact, based on this supposed transition. The Professor says elsewhere: 'The evolutionary trees that adorn our textbooks have data only at the tips and nodes of their branches; the rest is inference ... not the evidence of fossils'. [Gould, 'Evolution's Erratic Pace', *Natural History*, Vol.5, 1977.]



On the left is an 'evolutionary tree' as represented in school text books, suggesting that all the traditional links that led to present day creatures are known. The right hand diagram illustrates the real situation according to the more privately expressed views of geologists.

Most prominent geologists admit the absence of fossilised transitional forms. Here are a few examples. David B. Kitts, Head Curator of the Department of Geology at the Stoval Museum says:

‘Despite the bright promise that palaeontology provides a means of ‘seeing’ evolution, it has presented some nasty difficulties for evolutionists, the most notorious of which is the presence of ‘gaps’ in the fossil record. Evolution requires intermediate forms between species and palaeontology does not provide them.’

N. Heribert Nilsson, a famous botanist, evolutionist and professor at Lund University in Sweden adds:

‘My attempts to demonstrate evolution by an experiment carried on for more than 40 years have completely failed... The fossil material is now so complete that it has been possible to construct new classes, and the lack of transitional series cannot be explained as being due to scarcity of material. ***The deficiencies are real, they will never be filled***’ (Italics ours). [Quoted in ‘*The Earth Before Man*’ p.51.]

Dr. Colin Patterson, Senior Palaeontologist at the British Museum wrote a book for the British Museum of Natural History entitled, ‘*Evolution*’. When asked why he had not included a single photograph of a transitional fossil in his book, Patterson responded:

‘I fully agree with your comments on the lack of direct illustration of evolutionary transitions in my book. If I knew of any, fossil or living, I would certainly have included them...Gould and the American Museum people are hard to contradict when they say there are no transitional fossils. As a palaeontologist myself, I am much occupied with the philosophical problems of

identifying ancestral forms in the fossil record. You say that I should at least “show a photo of the fossil from which each type of organism was derived”. I will lay it on the line – there is not one such fossil for which one could make a watertight argument. [*Colin Patterson, personal communication. Luther Sutherland, Darwin's Enigma: Fossils and Other Problems, 4th edition, 1988, 88-90.*]

So, after finding rock formations containing hundreds of billions of fossils and with museums filled with over 100 million fossils of 250,000 different species, Darwin's ‘grave objections’ to his theory remain; the ‘missing links’ have not been found!

What would that honest biologist say if he were alive today?

THE ALTERNATIVE

We have looked at the three main planks supporting Darwin's theory of evolution – the spontaneous origin of life, the development of species by natural selection, and the fossil record – and have found them very wobbly planks indeed! For a more detailed look at the imperfections of the theory the reader is directed to the booklet ‘*Light on Creation*’ advertised on page 16 of this issue.

But there is another book about the origin of species, much older than 150 years, which also says much about how life arose. Not only that, it tells us about the **purpose** of life – which is something the evolutionary theory can never do. It is one of the amazing aspects of a so-called Christian culture that it undermines the beliefs and teaching of its founder in capitulation to a theory with such dubious credentials.

In the Bible, a Supreme Being is described as the Creator of everything, including life. He says: ‘*I have made the earth, and created man on it. It was I – My hands that stretched out the heavens, and all their host I have commanded*’ [*Isaiah 45.12*]. Another Bible writer says: ‘*For with you is the fountain of life*’ [*Psalms 36.9*].

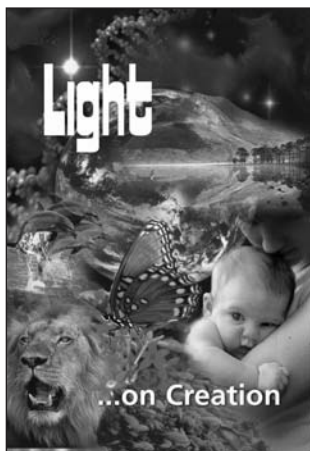
Jesus, the one Christians profess to follow, and who has demonstrated his authority by his teaching and especially his resurrection, clearly believed and taught the Biblical account of creation: *'Have you not read, that he who made them at the beginning made them male and female'* [Matthew 19.4]. And yet, as we saw at the beginning of this article, the organisation that bears his name and professes to follow him has abandoned his teaching for a dubious theory, which has atheists among its staunchest advocates.

But above all the Bible gives the **reason** for creation. God *'did not create it (the earth) in vain'* [Isaiah 45.18], but that the *'earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD'* [Habakkuk 2.14]. This will come about when Jesus returns to the earth as he promised – *'I will come again'* [John 14.3].

How much more reassuring than a bankrupt theory!

P. J. Southgate
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For further information on this vitally important subject, send for your free booklet entitled Light on Creation to:



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Is There Life After Death?

YES, there certainly is! Well that sounds a very confident start to this article but we have very good reasons for this optimism. This confidence is based on the promise of God found in His inspired Word the Bible. Consider for example, these words of Jesus just before his crucifixion:

‘...Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son also may glorify you, as you have given him authority over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent’ [*John 17.1-3*].

Note the promise of eternal life in this verse. We do not have it now; it must therefore refer to a life that is still future. We understand from this prayer of Jesus that the promised life to come is to be an eternal or never-ending life. There are many other parts of God’s Word where this future promised life is described. It is something beyond the wildest dreams of humankind. Here are some of the words of the prophet Isaiah:

‘For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth...I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people; the voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, nor the voice of crying. No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days...for as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of my people, and my elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands’

[*Isaiah 65.17,19,20,22*].

This is a truly wonderful promise that is on offer to all who seek it. The Apostle John wrote: *‘And this is the promise that he has promised us – eternal life’* [1 John 2.25].

THE WAY TO LIFE CLEARLY SET OUT

Such an amazing promise requires faith because these are promises that relate to a time in the future, as we read in the letter to the Hebrews:

‘...without faith it is impossible to please him, for he who comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.’

[Hebrews 11.6]

A life subject to Divine rules is also required of any that would attain to this age: *‘Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man’* [Ecclesiastes 12.13]. The promise will be realised, by individuals who will receive the reward – **not separately** at the time of their deaths over many centuries. No, the faithful ones will be rewarded – **together** at the last day. In referring to faithful men and women of past ages, the writer to the Hebrews tells us that *‘all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us’* [Hebrews 11.39,40]. This ‘promise’ is still held out to all who come to God in faith and *‘keep his commandments’*.

Before this ‘better’ time comes, there is this present life. We know that as far as its duration is concerned, it takes up that interval between birth and death and is filled with all sorts of experiences, some good and some bad. We also know that life is very short as the Psalmist reminds us: *‘the days of our lives are seventy years’* [Psalm 90.10] or if we really want to understand its brevity, 840 months! Can we repeat that? Eight hundred and forty months from cradle to grave! Many

people live longer but often in failing health. No wonder the Apostle James wrote: *'For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appears for a little time and then vanishes away'* [James 4.14]. That highlights the one certain thing in life – it ends in death. Unfortunately most people recognising these facts concerning the present life, tend to think and say, *'well we only come this way once so let's enjoy it while we may,'* or in the words of one of the parables of Jesus: *'take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry'* [Luke 12.19].

In recent years 'The Theory of Evolution' and its godless idea that everything came about by blind chance, combined with the other god, materialism, has caused peoples understanding of a loving God to totally dry up and there is now a world-wide spiritual famine through not listening to the Word of God – the only means whereby we can be saved from death. As a result people laugh off the fact of death by saying, *'we've all got to go sooner or later'* and adopt a resigned acknowledgement that there's nothing that can be done about it. However it is probably very true to say that, no matter what life's experience has thrown up for them, if the opportunity to have another shot at life under different and more favourable circumstances were given, very few would decline the offer.

The rich, successful and happy person would welcome the opportunity to try again, to see if the past good experience could be improved upon. The poor, sick, oppressed person would also like to try again, under these improved circumstances, to see what happiness, success and plenty were all about. This perhaps explains why the Lottery is so important to so many people - they are striving to attain a better way now, even though all the money in the world cannot buy time and put off the day of death. The wise man Solomon wrote:

'For what happens to the sons of men also happens to beasts; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over beasts, for all is vanity... all are from the dust, and all return to dust' [Ecclesiastes 3.19, 20].

‘BE SAVED FROM THIS PERVERSE GENERATION’

We are reminded of Peter’s words at this point, for here he tells us that there is something that can be done about the destiny that faces the majority of mankind; that destiny is an appointment with death and oblivion [see Acts 2.38-40]. That empty prospect can be changed – it can instead be filled with the prospect of a future that is nothing less than perfect. Hearts and minds need to be opened to God’s saving Word of Truth, for as Jesus taught: *‘He who believes and is baptized will be saved’* [Mark 16.15].

This was the message that both Jesus and his Apostles took out into the world. Not a message saying it doesn’t matter how you live or how you behave, because you will still end up in the same place. No, their message was very specific about believing the Gospel or good news about God’s coming kingdom on earth and living a repentant or changed way of life in daily expectation of it. As they lived out their changed lives, Jesus taught them to pray that God’s will be done on earth. No teaching here about a kingdom in heaven or of a ‘spiritual existence’ – instead a message of hope for a literal kingdom on earth, inhabited by men and women made perfect and given eternal life. These were the things they had to do in order to have a hope of the promised reward; they lived *‘in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began’* [Titus 1.2].

A PATH TO FOLLOW

There are one or two important things to note with reference to beginning a life of living *‘in hope of eternal life’*. A reference from the Acts of the Apostles puts it all together like this: *‘when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized’* [Acts 8.12]. We note the need to hear the message, to understand it, to believe it and to be baptized. The path is clearly defined and there is no short cut because: *‘faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God’* [Romans 10.17].

This was not a new message or a new hope. Abraham, the Father of the Jewish nation and a man of great faith, had promises made to him by God about inheriting the land that he lived in – the land of Canaan or Israel as we know it today. Also he was promised that through him and his ‘seed’ (his descendant Jesus Christ – see Matthew chapter 1.1) all nations would be blessed, because he believed God.

Before Abraham, another man of faith called Noah, built the Ark in obedience to God’s word and saved himself and his family from perishing in the Flood. The Apostle Peter wrote about it in these words:

‘...God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolises baptism that now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience towards God.’

[1 Peter 3.20,21 NIV]

These words of Peter forcefully reminded those who received his letter how to live in hope of the better life promised and he is telling us the same thing.

A WAY TO LIVE IN HOPE

We will now mention three other Old Testament characters who knew and believed the good news of a future kingdom of God on earth.

Firstly, the man Job, whose patience under suffering is proverbial, who maintained his faith in God in spite of his wife’s provocative suggestion that he should curse God and die. Job demonstrated to his faith and hope in God’s promise in these words:

‘For I know that my Redeemer lives, and he shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see

for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.
How my heart yearns within me!’ [Job 19.25-27].

David the shepherd, the giant killer, the man of God and king of Israel, expressed his belief and hope of standing on the earth in this new life: *‘I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever’* [Psalm 23.6]. His confidence was built on the promises that had been made to him – that his kingdom under the kingship of his ‘seed’ the Lord Jesus Christ, would be established for ever.

Daniel is another great character who was told that as a result of his devotion to God’s way: *‘you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days’* [Daniel 12.13].

From these examples we understand clearly that these things are to be brought about by the resurrection of the body to a new life on earth. We also notice that these men lived their lives in faith and obedience, characteristics that are well pleasing to God. In writing to the Roman believers in the first century, the Apostle Paul addressed Gentile (non-Jewish) believers in this way:

‘...do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of his death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of his resurrection’ [Romans 6.3-5].

Paul lived his life in hope of the resurrection of the dead [see Acts 23.6]. Without doubt then, these things can only be brought about by a resurrection. The one who is to perform this mighty work is Jesus, who is *‘the resurrection and the life’* [John 11.25].

When Jesus was on earth 2,000 years ago, one of his friends whose

name was Lazarus, died. Jesus went to see his sister with the intention of raising Lazarus from the dead. He said to Martha, the sister of Lazarus, *‘Your brother will rise again’* [John 11.23], to which she replied: *‘I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day’* [John 11.24]. The raising of Lazarus was a ‘miraculous sign’ that pointed forward to that great future work of Jesus. Lazarus eventually died for the second time and ‘sleeps’ with Martha and all those faithful men and women of the past, awaiting the call of the Master.

Now the point we are making here is, that this woman, as a result of listening to the Lord Jesus, understood, as Job did that the Redeemer will raise the dead [See Job 19.25-27]. She believed the words of Jesus which are recorded in John’s gospel record: *‘And this is the will of him who sent me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day’*[John 6.40].

Consider Paul’s stirring words about this future time:

‘For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.’

[1 Thessalonians 4.16]

When Jesus returns to raise the dead, what next? There are some more remarkable words found in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians:

‘Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold...We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed –in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality,

then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written:
“Death is swallowed up in victory” [1 Corinthians 15.50-54].

THE FUTURE ASSURED

Life after death, spoken of in the Scriptures, is God’s plan for the redemption of mankind and is to be brought about by Jesus at his second coming. This will result in the bestowal of eternal life on those found worthy of it - like the thief who was crucified alongside Jesus. His plea to Jesus was: *‘Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom’* [Luke 23.42].

Note that Jesus not only knew that he would die but he assured the repentant thief that he would be raised again. The words of Jesus in reply to the man’s dying request are misunderstood by so many Christians: *‘Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise’* [Luke 23.43]. Jesus did not go to heaven or paradise at death –like all men he was *‘asleep’* in the grave until the third day when he rose again and was perfected. The words of Jesus addressed to a dying man who understood the Gospel message, are a reference to the day of his coming again. At that time paradise will be restored on earth as the Scriptures tell us through many word pictures of the age to come.

So there is life after death! It is not some vain hope brought about as a result of human imagination, but it is the intention of Almighty God to be realized at the return of Jesus Christ. The time of opportunity is now – for who knows what will happen tomorrow. God has offered salvation to all through the work Jesus and Peter tells us that He is *‘long suffering towards us, not willing that any should perish – but that all should come to repentance’* [2 Peter 3.9].

That is what we hope you will do – repent with the whole heart, in faith and obedience while there is still time – for tomorrow may be too late.

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Signs of the Times

Global Disasters

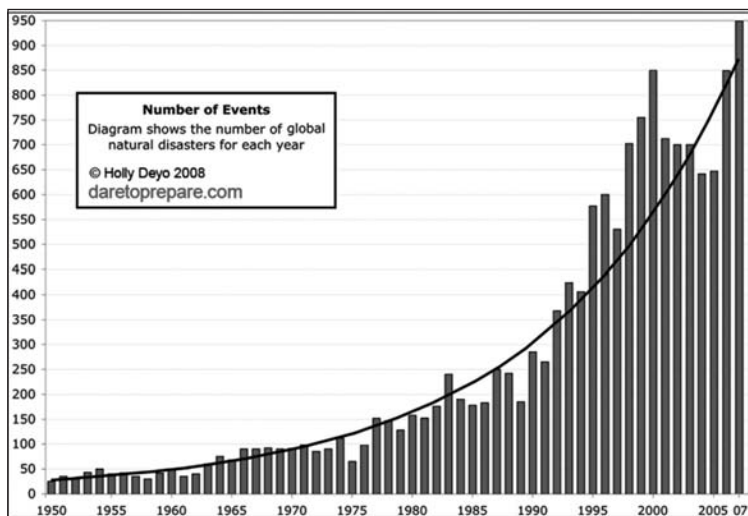
THE expression '*It's a sign of the times*' has passed into the English language, almost as a throw-away comment, as if to say, '*That's the way things are*'. However a similar phrase is found in the words of Jesus:

'...You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times' [*Matthew 16.3.*]

As natural disasters increase and appear to be spiralling out of control (see chart on page 26), man still believes he can solve all the world's problems. Humanity refuses to accept that its attempts to rectify the situation through committees, councils and resolutions are failing and that this can only lead to a catastrophic end. In fact there is only one event that can possibly save mankind from all these calamities, whether they be natural or man-made – the return of Jesus Christ to the earth. Jesus described a number of '*signs*' that would herald his return:

'For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places' [*Matthew 24.7.*]

After giving a list of '*signs of the times*' Jesus said: '*and then the end will come*' [*Matthew 24.14.*]. Recent trends in natural disasters show that Jesus' prophecy is now being fulfilled.



EARTHQUAKES AND NATURAL DISASTERS

In May 2008 for example, two major disasters struck Asia, resulting in many outside nations rushing to alleviate the plight of millions of people. The first occurred in Myanmar (Burma), where Cyclone Nargis caused severe loss of life and damage to that country's infrastructure. It made landfall on 3rd May, with winds exceeding 130 mph, followed by a 12-foot tidal wave that destroyed the coastal region. The aftermath – more than 130,000 people dead and millions more displaced. Destroying entire rice crops, Nargis was the worst cyclone to hit the region since 1991, when 140,000 people died.

In a country with 90% of its population surviving on less than one dollar a day, at least two million are in need of food and shelter due to Nargis. According to Unisys Weather, when the cyclone made landfall it brought two feet of rain to a region already prone to flooding. In the aftermath, desperate survivors blocked roads to request assistance from motorists. Canals once used for fishing were flooded with debris and the decomposing bodies of both people and animals.

The second disaster occurred on 12th May, when an earthquake measuring 7.9 on the Richter scale struck China's Wenchuan County, devastating the Sichuan province. The quake occurred in the early afternoon, when schools, offices and other facilities were filled with people. Buildings collapsed instantly, killing thousands and trapping others alive under the debris. 88,000 people have died and 5 million have lost their homes.



China's 12th May earthquake is one of many that have devastated the country in recent times. In the last three decades the severity of earthquakes has increased all over the world. In 1976, an earthquake that struck Tangshan, China, killed 255,000 people. In 2004, an earthquake measuring 9.0 on the Richter scale occurred beneath the ocean off the west coast of northern Sumatra, triggering a tsunami that killed some 225,000 people in 11 countries, with many missing.

Earthquakes across the planet have shown a marked increase in both number and magnitude since 1997. There are more major earthquakes occurring now on an ever more frequent basis. But between 1997 and 2007, a period of only 11 years, there were 99 earthquakes with magnitude 7.0 or greater. This is more than a six-fold increase on the previous similar period, and is a stark increase on any earlier decades in the 20th century too.

Period	Number of earthquakes (magnitude > 7 on Richter scale)
1863 to 1900 (38 years)	12
1901 to 1938 (38 years)	53
1939 to 1976 (38 years)	71
1977 to 2014 (38 years)	131 (to July 2008) predicted >180 for this period

These trends, particularly from 1997, support the wider fulfilment of prophecy – that an increase in earthquake activity is a pre-requisite of the ‘second coming’ of Jesus Christ foretold in the Bible. The earthquake trend does not indicate exactly how close we are to the return of Jesus, but it does suggest that this world shaking event is not too far away!

WARS AND CONFLICTS

About 180 million people have been killed in the various 20th century atrocities, wars and conflicts. This is a far larger total than for any other century in human history. Advances in weapons technology mean that many more people are affected and killed.

The Greek word translated ‘*nation*’ in Matthew 24.7 (see quotation above) is *ethnos*, the root word for our word ‘**ethnic**’. More and more ‘**ethnic**’ wars are occurring. The main reason is that as political competition increases within countries, ruthless leaders use ‘**ethnic**’ violence as a tool to attempt to ensure that they have the advantage over their opponents. Few countries have been exempted from war and widespread violence. Watching international and regional news, we are constantly faced with images and reports of wars taking place around the globe. In the period 1946-2001, there were 225 armed conflicts and 34 of them were active in all or part of 2001. Armed conflict remains a serious problem in the ‘post Cold War’ period. The following quotations from a modern writer and the prophet Daniel (Approx 2,500 years ago) make an interesting comparison:

‘That civilization entered a ‘time of troubles’ in the twentieth century was evidenced by two world wars, the propaganda of opposing ideologies, and a protracted period of “cold war”.’ [Wright & Wright, *A Study of War*]

‘And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation’ [Daniel 12.1].

This prophecy is being fulfilled - the world is now seeing that ‘*time of trouble, such as never was*’. Even with the supposed end of the ‘Cold War’ between ‘East’ and ‘West’, a large number of small wars continue to fester in different parts of the world. Indeed, it may be argued that ethnic conflicts have increased in both numbers and intensity in the post Cold War period, especially but not exclusively, in Africa and Eastern Europe.

Since the end of the Cold War, Africa has experienced more armed conflicts and endured more direct and indirect casualties of war than any other continent. The violence has been both pervasive and brutal. During the last decade of the twentieth century, endemic violence has played a key role in inhibiting social and political progress and preventing the majority of Africans from experiencing the unprecedented economic growth that so many other countries enjoyed.

Examples of this phenomenon have been seen in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia (the Horn of Africa), Kenya, Zimbabwe, Sudan (Darfur), Congo and Rwanda. At one stage the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo involved at least eleven African nations and was characterized by some as ‘Africa’s First World War’.

Many of these wars have been driven by competition for natural resources, especially water and minerals. According to a report published in 2007 by a group of non-governmental organisations, including Oxfam, the cost of conflicts in Africa over the previous 15

years was equal to the amount of money received in international aid during the same period.

In Europe, the last decade of the 20th century was marked by conflicts in the Balkans, most of which were essentially ethnic and religious wars. The former Yugoslavia disintegrated into its five constituent parts. Kosovo is now a nation in its own right. In 2008 we have seen Russia attack Georgia supposedly to protect ethnic Russian minorities in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

In Asia there are also on-going conflicts as ethnic minorities struggle to assert their independence from the nations whose frontiers they overlap. For example the Kurds want independence from Iran and Iraq; Tibet desires independence from China; Kashmir wants independence from India and Pakistan.

A headline in August 2008 reported '*Philippine ethnic war brewing*' and went on to describe a violent conflict between Moslems and Christians in Mindanao (the second largest island in the Philippine archipelago). According to the Filipino government at least 47 civilians have been killed and more than 360,000 displaced since violence escalated in nine southern provinces following a rebel raid that left dozens shot or hacked to death.

The Bible prophecies of '*a time of trouble*' [Daniel 12.1] and '*wars and rumours of wars*' [Matthew 24.6] are being fulfilled as we watch.

FAMINE

Jesus' words about increased famine heralding the time of his return are being fulfilled. In the wake of changed global climatic conditions and other factors, food production and reserves have dwindled; millions of people now face malnutrition and starvation. The United Nations is finding it difficult to keep up with the demand from poverty

stricken countries. Over 5.5 million Sudanese and 10 million Ethiopians are currently in need of food aid.

The increase of food prices has already resulted in ‘food wars’ around the globe as the poor reach out to their leaders to seek help. The lives and livelihoods of people living in poverty are under serious threat from rocketing food prices. The number of hungry people now stands at 967 million and around 24,000 people die daily of hunger-related causes. Millions more are extremely vulnerable to increased prices. Here are some of the statistics:

- Around 2.7 billion people live on less than £1 (\$1.5) a day.
 - Up to 80 per cent of this income goes on food.
 - The price of basic foods is up as much as 300 per cent.
- (Figures from Oxfam, October 2008)*

and some headlines from 2008:

- Myanmar (Burma): Cyclone, starvation - now plague of rats devastate Burmese villages.
- Millions in Africa face starvation, says aid agency.
- Green famine in Ethiopia. Acute food shortages mean people are facing near starvation.

As global food supplies tighten, rich consumers are pushed into competition with the hungry. This is sometimes known as ‘food colonialism’ which some see as rich nations snatching food from the mouths of the poor. An example is Senegal in West Africa, whose fish stocks are being pillaged by European Union countries’ fishing fleets. The result is that Senegalese people, a high proportion of whose diet consists of fish, are going hungry while the richer nations of Europe often have more than enough to eat. This kind of so-called manufactured famine is caused solely by human greed.

A report from Action Aid published in August 2008 and titled '**SelfISH Europe**' shows that fishing families which once ate three times a day are now eating only once or twice. As the price of fish rises, their customers also go hungry. The same thing has happened in all the West African countries with which the EU has maintained fisheries agreements. In return for wretched amounts of foreign exchange, their primary source of protein has been looted, and the result is poor nutrition, poor health and in some cases, internal conflict in the countries being impoverished.

DISEASE

With the increasing prevalence of food shortages and climate change come increases in serious disease (or 'pestilences' as we read in *Matthew 24.7*).

In 2007 Malaysian health authorities reported that '*Malaria, dengue fever, jaundice and encephalitis will most likely be on the rise due to global warming, as mosquitoes thrive on such climatic conditions*'. The World Health Organization recently announced that global warming has affected 40% of the world's ecosystems resulting in an increase in tropical diseases.

HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) and Ebola virus, both thought to have originated in primates in the wild, are associated with deforestation in Africa. But humans, from rural tropical villages to crowded cities everywhere, are extending their boundaries and coming in contact with wild host animals and their disease carriers – mosquitoes, fleas, and ticks.

Today, 'neglected' tropical diseases are a symptom of poverty and disadvantage. Those most affected are the poorest populations often living in remote, rural areas, urban slums or in conflict zones. With little political voice, neglected tropical diseases have a low profile and

status in public health priorities. Lack of reliable statistics and unpronounceable names of diseases have all hampered efforts to bring them out of the shadows.

Although medically diverse, ‘neglected’ tropical diseases share features that allow them to persist in conditions of poverty, where they cluster and frequently overlap. Over **one billion people** – one sixth of the world’s population, suffer from one or more neglected tropical diseases. Conflict situations or natural disasters aggravate conditions that are conducive to the spread of these diseases.

Statistics on these dreadful diseases make sobering reading. For example there were 50% more known cases of leprosy in 2007 than in 2005, with some countries (e.g. Brazil) reporting a 100% increase. In South America, ‘Chagas’ disease affects 16–18 million people as of 2008, with some 100 million (25% of the Latin American population) at risk of acquiring the disease, which kills around 50,000 people annually.

THE ‘SIGNS OF THE TIMES’ ARE INTER-LINKED

Water-borne diseases such as cholera and typhoid abound in refugee camps due to crowded living conditions and lack of clean water and sanitation. Yet often the refugee camps exist because thousands of people are displaced from their homes due to war and civil unrest. So war often leads to the spread of disease. Another reason for refugee camps being set up is because the people in them have been displaced due to natural disasters such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and tsunamis.

Because these problems are inter-related they are all increasing at the same time. Never before has the world seen such an increase in so many large-scale problems all at the same time, not to mention the street violence, immorality of many kinds and financial problems that

have dominated newspaper headlines in recent months. The ‘*signs of the times*’ are certainly increasing in number and intensity, as many people acknowledge, although most do not know what the ‘*signs*’ portend.

THE DIVINE SOLUTION

But students of the Bible have no need to be fearful. They know that these events mean that the return of Jesus Christ to the earth is not very far ahead. When Jesus returns he will cleanse the earth of all wickedness and establish the Kingdom of God. Then – and only then, will all these problems be resolved.

The Bible has many ‘word pictures’ of that time to come when the earth will be cleansed and made fit for the eternal habitation of the righteous, as one of the Old Testament prophets wrote:

‘...the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea’ [*Habakkuk 2.14*].

There is a wonderful future ahead for this planet and for those who put their trust in God and obey the message of His Word, the Bible. To them, Jesus will say: ‘*Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*’[*Matthew 25.34*].

Will you be among those who will be ‘*blessed*’ in that day?

Clifford Wharton
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The Bible is True:

The Evidence of Archaeology

A tiny tablet found in the British Museum's collection in 2007, confirms the accuracy of the writings of the old Testament prophet, Jeremiah. Archaeologists originally discovered the tablet at the ancient city of Sippar in Iraq, in the 1870's and it was subsequently acquired by the museum.

Professor Michael Jursa, an Assyriologist, made the discovery when he was sifting through the Museum's collection of 130,000 Assyrian cuneiform tablets. Searching for Babylonian financial accounts among the tablets, Professor Jursa came across the name of a man described as '*the chief eunuch*' of Nebuchadnezzar II, king of Babylon. The tablet according to a British Museum expert, is a bill of receipt acknowledging this man's payment of 0.75 kg of gold to a temple in Babylon.

Cuneiform is the oldest known form of writing and was commonly used in the Middle East between 3,200 BC and the second century AD. It was created by pressing a wedge-shaped instrument, usually a cut reed, into moist clay to form the characters.



▲ Writing on a soft clay tablet with a reed pen.

The full translation of this tablet reads:

‘1.5 minas (0.75 kg) of gold, the property of **Nabu-sharrussu-ukin**, the chief eunuch, which he sent via Arad-Banitu the eunuch to [the temple] Esangila: Arad-Banitu has delivered [it] to Esangila. In the presence of Bel-usat, son of Alpaya, the royal bodyguard [and of] Nadin, son of Marduk-zer-ibni. Month XI, day 18, year 10 [of] Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.’



The amazing thing about this seemingly insignificant find is that it confirms the words of Jeremiah written 2,500 years ago:

‘...In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched against Jerusalem with his whole army and laid siege to it. And on the ninth day of the fourth month of Zedekiah’s eleventh year, the city wall was broken through. Then all the officials of the king of Babylon came and took seats in the Middle Gate: Nergal-Sharezer of Samgar, **Nebo-Sarsekim** a chief officer...and all the other officials of the king of Babylon’ [*Jeremiah 39.1-3 NIV*].

Nebo-Sarsekim, the chief officer mentioned in this passage from Jeremiah is none other than Nabu-sharrussu-ukin mentioned on the tablet. The comment of Dr Finkel the British Museum expert, was ‘*A throwaway detail in the Old Testament turns out to be accurate and true. I think that it means that the whole of the narrative (of Jeremiah) takes on a new kind of power*’. Here is an assurance of the accuracy of the Old Testament as a historical record and more than that, it gives us confidence in this much neglected part of Scripture which as Paul wrote to Timothy ‘*is given by inspiration of God*’ [2 Timothy 3.16].

Editor

The Christadelphians (Dawn Fellowship) believe the Bible (Old and New Testaments) to be the wholly inspired and infallible Word of God. Its principal theme is the salvation of mankind through the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ and the setting up of the kingdom of God under his rulership when he returns to the earth.

Light on a New World is published to provide a better understanding of this true Christian hope and the Correspondence Secretary will be pleased to arrange for the magazine to be posted to any address upon request.

The Christadelphians are very willing to answer questions about Bible teaching either privately or in the pages of LIGHT magazine and correspondence will be welcomed. Please send your questions to:

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Alternatively by E-Mail to: mail@lightmagazine.org

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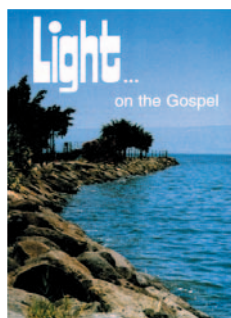
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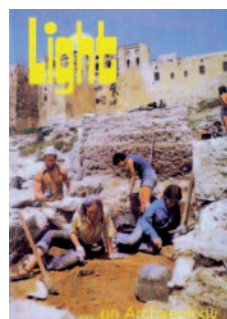
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