



Light

...on a new world

a quarterly magazine focusing
on the Bible and its message
for today

Volume 32.3

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cover picture

The compound eyes of the fruit bee, common to many of today's insects, and also to the fossil record. See article 'Living Fossils' on page 14

LIGHT BIBLE PUBLICATIONS

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cover



“The harvest is the end of the world”

The title of this article is taken from some words of Jesus explaining one of his parables to his disciples. Perhaps they were puzzled; for them harvest was a time for joy and celebration, but Jesus' words sounded ominous. What did he mean?

Bible translators have not always helped. The Greek word translated 'world' is 'aion', meaning an age or period of existence, not the physical planet. All the main modern versions translate the phrase as 'the harvest is the end (or close) of the age'. Jesus is not referring to some cataclysmic destruction of the planet and its inhabitants. He is talking about the close of the present age, meaning the end of the kingdoms of men, and the beginning of a new age, the Kingdom of God.

Jesus had been teaching a great crowd of people about this coming kingdom. Matthew's account of the day's work of preaching contains a number of Jesus' parables on this subject of the kingdom of God; this

article will focus on just one, the parable of the wheat and the tares.

At the outset we should note two important elements of Jesus' teaching as follows:

It focused on the kingdom; this was the essential message that he taught. The miracles of healing were a means of proving his authority as a teacher sent from God. His moral teaching of the supreme power of love was intended to show us the ways of God. But above and beyond both these elements, was the teaching about the kingdom of God; a kingdom where everyone will know God's laws and obey them, and where sin, disease and death itself will eventually be removed from the earth.

Jesus' method of teaching required his listeners to exercise their minds, to want to seek out and understand this divine teaching. The disciples asked why he spoke in parables. Jesus' reply was that only those who were prepared to seek out the truth

The Amish community in America still harvest in the traditional way



would come to appreciate the full meaning of his words (Matthew 13:10-17).

This magazine tries to follow this pattern, to shed light on that new world order which will come when God's Kingdom is established on the earth. We encourage our readers to explore the teaching of the Bible, in order to know and appreciate the promises that God has made to those who listen and respond to His Word.

Parables of the Kingdom

In Matthew chapter 13, there are seven separate parables, each one explaining something about the Kingdom. Most of them start with the phrase '*The **kingdom of heaven** is like...*' The phrases '*kingdom of God*' and '*kingdom of heaven*' have the same meaning. The Gospel message taught by Jesus was focused on this coming kingdom. The Bible does not teach that the kingdom of God is **in** heaven. It is **of** heaven in the sense that it is of divine origin, but it will be established on the earth when Jesus returns.

Some of these parables are probably familiar; the description of the man sowing his seed is perhaps the best known. It describes how the soil in which the seed is grown has a very great effect on the quality and quantity of the harvest yield. Seed sown on the path, in stony or weedy

ground, will not produce as much grain as seed planted in good, well prepared ground (Matthew 13:18-23). Having explained the meaning of this parable, Jesus went on to give another harvest parable.

The wheat and tares

This parable is the one from which our subject is taken (Matthew 13:24-30). It describes a man who planted good quality seed in his field. The impression given is that he was a careful farmer who worked hard to achieve a good crop. But the farmer had an enemy, who came by night and over-sowed the field with tares.

Tares are a weed, also known as darnel. In appearance (see right) especially during the early stages of growth, it is almost indistinguishable from wheat. It is only when the plant has grown and the grain is developing that the difference becomes apparent. The darnel is a slate grey colour and is very bitter in taste. If its grain is mixed with the wheat, then the end product will be spoiled.

As the crop grew, the farm labourers realised that their original planting had been over-sown with the darnel. They asked the farmer what they should do. His instruction was to leave the two crops to grow together until the harvest. The crops were both now grown to the point where



they could be distinguished but their root systems would be intertwined. If an attempt was made to pull up the tares, it would also destroy the wheat. When the field was harvested, it would be easy to identify what was the good crop and what was bad. The two could be separated, and the weeds bundled up and burned before the grain was gathered in.

Explanation of the parable

Jesus did not provide an interpretation of the parable in his teaching. After the crowd had been sent home, Jesus was approached by his disciples, who asked him to

explain the parable to them. Jesus then went through each element of the story, identifying its meaning (Matthew 13:37-43).

Jesus is the farmer who had spent time and energy preparing the field to receive the good seed. Drawing on the earlier parable of the sower, we can be sure that this ground was well broken up, the stones removed and all the encroaching weeds taken out. The farmer had helpers who assisted in the preparation of the field to receive the seed. The helpers are the apostles who were commissioned to take the gospel to the whole world (the field of the parable) following Jesus' death and resurrection (Mark 16:15). The good seed are the children of the Kingdom. A comparison with Jesus' final words on this parable shows that the good seed are those who will eventually enter the Kingdom of God. Jesus describes them as the righteous who will *'shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father'* (Matthew 13:43).

The meaning of the parable is shown in the table on page 6.

Following the sowing of the good seed, an enemy also sows some seed. The important thing to notice is that the evil planting was not an obvious weed like thistles. It was something which, at first, had every appearance of a good crop. In reality it was not only useless, but positively damaging

PARABLE	MEANING
The sower of the good seed	the son of man (ie Jesus)
The field	the world
The good seed	The children of the kingdom (i.e.those who respond to Jesus)
The tares or darnel	The children of the wicked (i.e.those opposed to the good seed)
The enemy who sowed the tares	The devil (i.e. human nature)
The harvest	The end of the age and the kingdoms of men
The reapers	The angels of God

and poisonous. Jesus explains it as the work of ‘the devil’ (Matthew 13:39). This article is not the place to explore the Bible teaching about the devil. This is dealt with in detail in other issues of Light on a New World (see for example Light Volume 31.1 page 8). In essence, the Bible reveals the devil to be none other than our own human thinking, which left to its own devices will exalt self-importance and try and reduce the authority of divine instruction (Matthew 7:15-20).

Because of the similarity between the good wheat and the evil tares, we must interpret this as an indicator that there would be false religions which pretended to be true but were found to be false – religions based on human thinking and preferences

rather than the clear teaching of God’s Word.

The development of false religion

This interpretation of the parable is not an isolated example of Scriptural teaching. Other examples abound, both in the teaching of Jesus and of the apostles. In his sermon on the mount, Jesus makes a much more explicit pronouncement: ‘Beware of false prophets’ (Matthew 7:15). He goes on to identify how true teachers and false prophets can be distinguished: ‘A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them’ (Matthew 7:18-20). There is a close similarity to the

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parable of the wheat and tares in these words. The tares were identified once their fruit was revealed; then the tares were cut down and burned.

On another occasion, Jesus was having one of his many arguments with the Scribes and Pharisees, men who professed to worship God but had made their own philosophy and tradition more important than the Word of God (Mark 7:8-13). Jesus condemned these false teachers

saying: *'You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do'* (John 8:44). The tares in the parable were 'the children of the wicked one', and this link provides further evidence that the tares represent those who pretend to teach true religion, but instead teach ideas based on their own thinking. In a very similar way the Apostle Paul had to withstand a false prophet and condemned him in these words: *'you son of the devil...will you not cease from perverting the straight ways of the Lord?'* (Acts 13:10).

Paul constantly warned the early churches about the dangers of false religion. To the elders of the church at Ephesus he said: *'Also, from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves'* (Acts 20:30). In a letter to the believers at Thessalonica, he warned them about the development of a religion that claimed to be from God, but in reality was a manifestation of sin: *'...the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God'* (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). Similar warnings can be found in the writings of the Apostles Peter, John and Jude.

These warnings were not unfounded pessimism. Church history shows that the original Gospel taught by Christ and the apostles was slowly changed. At the beginning of this article, we showed how the Kingdom of God on earth was the centrepiece of Christ's teaching. The historian Gibbon confirms that in the first century this hope was 'the reigning sentiment of orthodox believers', but he goes on to comment that 'The doctrine of Christ's reign on earth was at first treated as profound allegory, was considered by degrees as a doubtful and useless opinion and was at length rejected as the absurd invention of heresy and fanaticism.'

(The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, chapter 15, by Edward Gibbon)

So men rejected the clear teaching of the Son of God.

Lessons for today

The parable of the wheat and the tares has very important lessons for all who wish to be followers of Jesus. He has shown us that true Christianity would be challenged by another form of religion which at

first sight looks the same. In reality, this religion is counterfeit, valueless and worthy only of destruction.

Although this religion is opposed to Christ, it will be allowed to co-exist with true religion until the Kingdom of God on earth is established. There will then be a time of judgement, when only those who have genuinely tried to follow the true teaching of Christ will be gathered into the Kingdom. Those represented by the tares will be destroyed, as we read in Matthew: *'...they will gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire...'* (Matthew 13:41-42).

It's easy to be complacent and say that the tares represent the pagan religions of the ancient Middle East. But the tares appeared to be very similar to the wheat, not something totally different. Combined with the warnings which abound in the New Testament, we must accept that the tares represent a corrupt form of Christianity. This sobering lesson must be a real challenge for all Christians today.

This publication can provide stimuli to set the reader thinking, but at the end of the day there is only one source of true understanding about God's Kingdom and the basis of true

Edward Gibbon's monumental work
'The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire'



‘The time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe’ Revelation 14:15



religion. The prophet Isaiah spoke out against the corrupt form of religion in his day that eventually led to the downfall of the nation of Israel. His words are just as relevant today:

‘To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.’

Isaiah 8:20

As he told his parables by the lakeside, Jesus pronounced a blessing on those who would seek to find out the real meaning of his teaching: ‘... *blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear*’ (Matthew 13.16).

This is the main lesson that comes from this study – to determine to seek out from the Bible the true gospel message of salvation, and having found it, to act upon it and prepare for that day when the angels will separate the wheat from the tares! Jesus concluded the parable with an appeal to his hearers:

‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear!’

Matthew 13:43

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Isaac as a type of Christ

Perhaps it is wrong to play favourites with Bible characters, but I like Isaac. Surely in God's eyes, all his children are equal. The reason for my preference is that Isaac seems to be the important 'filling' in a 'Patriarchal sandwich', between Abraham and Jacob about whom much more is written. For that reason, perhaps, Isaac is overshadowed.

What are 'types'?

We are thinking about Isaac as a 'type' of Christ. As explained in an earlier article, Isaac's life foreshadowed Jesus' life and several key events were the same, or at least have strong similarities (see Light volume 32.1 page 37). We use the word 'type' in a different context from the everyday. We could say 'prototype', but that carries the idea of someone trying out a few things and using some trial and error to get the final version right. God doesn't use trial and error! We could also use the word 'precursor', but this does not tell the full story either. 'Forerunner' is perhaps the nearest, which means 'something or someone that acts as an early and less advanced model for what will appear in the future, or a warning or sign of what is to follow'.

Isaac was certainly earlier than Jesus and less advanced! But we see the similarities and parallels as showing us something about God's plan for the world and humankind. Just as the patterns in Creation point to a Designer, so the patterns in the Bible show us the Divine Author.

A summary of Isaac's life

'Types' do not match every single aspect of the life they foreshadow, only some of the critical events or characteristics. So, let's see what the Bible tells us about Isaac:

- ❖ God promised Isaac's parents, Abraham and Sarah that they would have a son when they were well on in years and Sarah was long past child-bearing age (Genesis 17:15-16).
- ❖ God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22:1-2).
- ❖ God stopped Abraham from actually carrying out the killing of Isaac and provided a ram as a substitute sacrifice (Genesis 22:10-13).
- ❖ Isaac married Rebekah (Genesis 24:67).
- ❖ Isaac had twin sons, Jacob and Esau (Genesis 25:21-26).

- ❖ Isaac dwelt in the territory of Abimelech the Philistine for a time and misled him about Rebekah being his sister (Genesis 26:1-7).
- ❖ Isaac's servants quarrelled with his neighbours over water for their flocks (Genesis 26:15-23).
- ❖ Jacob deceived Isaac, who then gave him the blessing which he intended to give to Esau the first-born (Genesis 27:1-29).
- ❖ **Isaac was a child of promise** (Romans 9: 6-13, see page 12)

How did Isaac foreshadow Jesus?

Although the Bible tells us about many of the events in peoples' lives, we do not generally get much of a biography. We know more about Jesus than many Bible characters, but from an infant to an adolescent we know nothing at all, and from an adolescent to the age of thirty, again we are told nothing. So, it is not surprising that we know a lot less about Isaac.

In his general demeanour we know that Isaac was a devout man; he was a devoted son and a devoted father – although both he and Rebekah his wife played favourites with their sons, which led to friction later. Isaac was patient, avoided trouble and tried to live peaceably with his neighbours. Was Isaac like Jesus

because he was devout and patient? They undoubtedly shared those same characteristics, but so do many others. The main similarities are that they were both children of promise, and both were offered as sacrifices by their father – Isaac as a type of the sacrificial work of Jesus.

More about Isaac

The first sighting of the adult Isaac gave an indication of his character – in a time of meditation with eyes raised to heaven. Isaac lived in the land of the South, and he went out to meditate in the field in the evening (Genesis 24:62-63). We are reminded of the frequent times when Jesus went off by himself to pray. Was Isaac praying for the success of his father's mission to find him a wife? Was he meditating about the greatness of God and his wonderful Creation? We are not told, although both are possible.

God blessed Isaac with bountiful crops and wealth, which suggested he found favour with God. The blessing was so great that the Philistines became jealous and stopped up the water wells Abraham had dug. We can see the peaceable nature of Isaac, in that the Philistine king asked Isaac to move, and Isaac complied, moving from place to place, digging new wells when his neighbours quarrelled with him over the water. The Philistine king soon

realised that Isaac had been blessed by God and made a treaty of peace with him (Genesis 26:26–31). This again gives a good indication of Isaac's nature, and we can see another parallel with Jesus.

But what is the main connection between Isaac and Jesus as the child of promise? This is a title used in the Bible, for Isaac and indeed for believers as 'children of promise', but can the same be said of Jesus? Compare the following New Testament passages:

Isaac as a child of promise:

'By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.'

Hebrews 11:17–19

Jesus as a child of promise:

'... we declare to you glad tidings – that promise which was made to the fathers. God has fulfilled this for us their children in that he raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm: "You are my Son, today I have begotten you."'

Acts 13:32–33

If that was the end of the story, we would say that God kept His promise to Abraham and gave him a son, and God also kept the promise He made in the Bible to provide humanity with a Messiah, or Saviour. The offering of Isaac, referred to in the passage from Hebrews, also reminds us of the sacrifice of Christ.

Abraham was told by God to sacrifice his son, Isaac. Even though he had eagerly waited to a great age to have a son with Sarah, Abraham was ready to obey. Ultimately, this was proof of Abraham's great faith in God, but he would have also remembered that God had promised that Abraham's descendants will come through Isaac (Genesis 17:19 and 18:18). So, although Abraham could not know exactly how things would work out, through faith he knew that there was a divine plan to raise Isaac from the dead.

It is worth noting that up until the time of Abraham, no-one we are told about had ever come back from the dead. The first was not until the time of Elijah, so this puts even greater emphasis on the faith of Abraham – and Isaac! Conversely, it is likely that child sacrifice was practiced by pagan peoples in the neighbourhood, so whilst no-one had yet been brought to life, plenty of young people had been put to death!

12 Isaac as a type of Christ

Note the similarities between the two sacrifices (see chart below) and see how close a match they are:

Isaac was **not** killed. The ram was offered as a substitute. Jesus **was** killed; He was not a substitute but a representative of humanity – he died for us.

Conclusion

Isaac, being saved from death, led a full and faithful life, living to the age of 180. Such was his faith, that we are told clearly that Isaac will be in the Kingdom of God:

‘There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and

all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out.’
Luke 13:28

For us, there is the wonderful hope that if we become brothers and sisters of Christ, we too will become **children of promise** and have a place in that future Kingdom!

‘Now you brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.’

Galatians 4:28 NIV

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ISAAC	JESUS
The wood of the burnt offering was laid on Isaac to carry (Genesis 22:6)	Jesus had to carry his cross at first, but had been so weakened that Simon of Cyrene was compelled to carry it (Luke 23:26)
He had done nothing deserving death	He had done nothing deserving death
Isaac allowed himself to be bound and placed on the altar (Genesis 22:13)	Jesus allowed himself to be crucified rather than calling on legions of angels to free him (Matthew 26: 25–36)
A ram caught in a thicket was offered in place of Isaac (Genesis 22:13)	Jesus was the ‘Lamb of God’ and died as a representative of humanity (John 3:16)

Living fossils

‘But what if Darwin was wrong?’

So asks David Gelernter, writing a review of the book ‘Darwin’s Doubt’ by Stephen Meyer (2013 – see end note). Gelernter is a professor of computer science at Yale University. He continues:

‘Darwin himself had reservations about his theory, shared by some of the most important biologists of his time. And the problems that worried him have only become more substantial over the decades. In the famous ‘Cambrian explosion’ of around half a billion years ago, a striking variety of new organisms – including the first ever animals – pop up suddenly in the fossil record... predecessors of the Cambrian creatures are missing. Darwin himself was disturbed by their absence from the fossil record. He believed they would turn up eventually...’

‘Those missing pre-Cambrian organisms have still not turned up. The ever-expanding fossil archives don’t look good for Darwin... Any thoughtful person must ask himself whether scientists today are looking for evidence that bears on Darwin, or looking to explain away evidence that contradicts him’ (Review of Books 2019).

The insect eye

This article looks at the eye as a particular example of an organ that defies the fossil evidence and Darwin’s evolutionary explanation; not in this case the human eye which is quite well-known to us, but the compound eye shared by a myriad insects in the world today (see above and front cover).

COMMENT



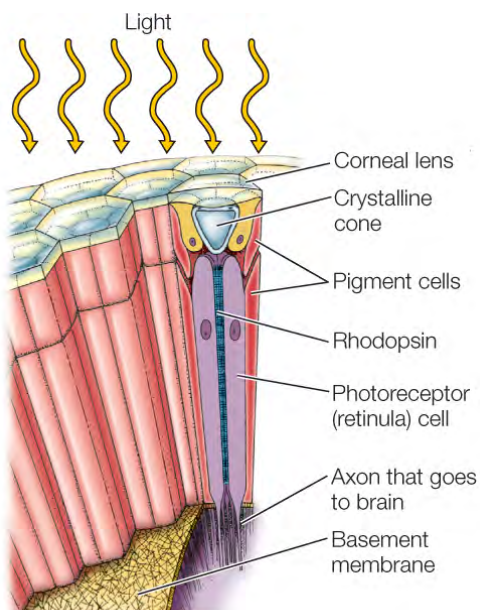
The compound eyes of the common house fly

For the sake of argument I propose to go along with the description of the earth's history represented in the standard Geological Table, with its succession of geological ages covering a total period of about four billion years. This is what Gelernter refers to in his review above, when he talks about the 'Cambrian Explosion'. Bible believers have good reason to be sceptical of this scheme and some of the dating techniques used to support it. Other interpretations are available, related to the geology of the universal flood described in Genesis. The question here is, if the earth is as old as scientists tell us it is, do the fossils support the story of evolution? The Genesis account is unspecific about the age of the earth, so age alone is not in itself a problem.

Back to **the compound eye**.

In contrast to the human eye, which basically employs a single opening (aperture), lens and sensor (the retina), the insect's 'compound eye' has many, often hundreds, of individual apertures or eyes (described as *ommatidia* – see later) each with its separate sensor and nerve (axon) feeding information to the host insect (see right).

Close-up photos show how some of our most familiar insects, like the common housefly have this amazing assembly of multiple miniature 'eyes' offering an extreme wide angle of vision without the insect moving its head.



This eye construction is not just an engineering marvel – it requires some advanced information processing if it is to present a usable image to the host insect. Visualise it for yourself: individual eyes are very close together, so the image from each eye will overlap to a large degree those of adjacent eyes. Simply trying to add all these images together will produce an unintelligible mess.

What is needed is some way of analysing each image to select the vital area unique to each eye, so that the insect is presented with a single coherent picture which is in fact a composite of maybe hundreds of different images. The technique is well known to us in this digital age, when for example hundreds of satellite images may be individually edited and combined to form a single composite image. It needs some quite powerful computers and some highly specialised computer software to achieve a result. In the same way the compound eye requires a neurological system and some complex data-handling and interpretation if it is to be of any value.

There is an important question here: how can you produce a light sensor like this without ever having any concept of what light is or how it works?

But where do fossils come into the picture? This compound eye, present in the fly and so many other insects in the world today, is well represented in the fossil record. We would expect that record to give us some clues about how this eye evolved, if it did.

Trilobites

If we go right back to what are said to be the earliest life forms on our planet, we find the compound eye already in place. Trilobites were small scaly animals rather like our wood lice, and classified as 'arthropods'. We are told they first appeared at the beginning of the Cambrian Period about 542 million years ago. They are some of the commonest fossils and some of them are very well preserved.

They had compound eyes very similar to the ones we know today. An article in Scientific American in August 2020 described one particular fossil that



had fractured in the eye position, exposing in detail the workings of this compound eye, including the lenses, receptor cells and other parts. It is made up of about 200 facets or *ommata*.

The trilobites have no evolutionary 'ancestors.' They

The compound eye of a trilobite fossil

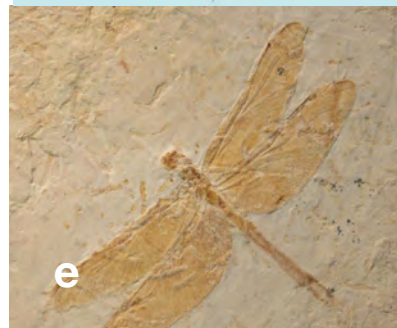
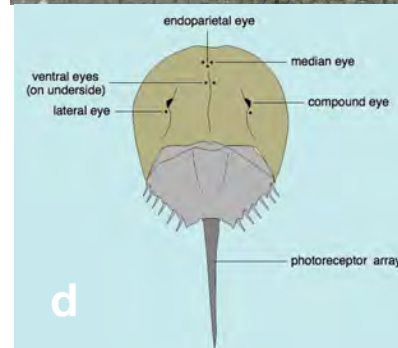
appear suddenly right at the beginning of the fossil record with a sophisticated eye design that has lasted unchanged till our own day.

The trilobites themselves flourished for a while and then disappeared, we are told, about 250 million years ago.

But other 'early' life forms did not disappear. **Horseshoe crabs** (see **a**) flourish today in the shallow coastal waters of America and Asia. But like the trilobites they have left their mark in the fossil record, the earliest supposedly going back to the Ordovician Period 450 million years ago (**b**). They too have a pair of compound eyes each made up of about 1,000 ommatidia (**c**). In fact each horseshoe crab has **nine** eyes altogether, some of them much simpler, plus some photo-receptors on the tail (**d**) – a sort of living compendium of different eye types, and presenting no evidence that any particular eye is more 'primitive' than another.

The **dragonfly** never fails to excite our admiration during its brief life. Dragonflies too we are told have a long fossil history, going back to the Upper Carboniferous period some 325 million years ago (**e**). Some of these fossils are much bigger than the animal we know today (some with a 75cm wing span) but otherwise essentially the same, categorised in the same order as today's specimens. The dragonfly has two spectacular compound eyes that cover most of its head, with nearly 24,000 ommatidia in each in a current example.

Gunter Bechly, until recently a Curator of the State Museum of Natural History of Stuttgart in Germany, is a renowned expert on the fossil history of insects and of dragonflies in particular.



In his view the fossil record does not support the theory of evolution:

‘Neo-Darwinian macro-evolution has been decisively refuted by modern science and is demonstrably failing to be a feasible explanation.’

‘Living Fossils’

There is a long list of animals which have been termed ‘living fossils’ – animals which make their appearance in the fossil record supposedly many millions of years ago and have since remained virtually unchanged. According to evolutionary theory they should be extinct, long dead and replaced by an improved version, but in fact they are still alive and kicking or jumping or swimming today!

Here are a few more of them, with their supposed age in years:

nautilus	500	million
purple frog	120	million
platypus	100–50	million
hagfish	330	million
pig-nosed turtle	140	million
crocodile	24	million
coelacanth	400	million

The coelacanth

The coelacanth (see picture below) is one of the most famous of these ‘living fossils’. This large fish was known from a number of fossils, and believed to have flourished in the Permian geological period about 350 million years ago, becoming extinct about 66 million ago. That is, until 3

December 1938, when a living specimen was found in the catch of a local angler off the east coast of South Africa. A second species, the Indonesian



Coelacanth, was found in 1998. These ‘modern’ fish are somewhat bigger (about 2M long) than their fossilised relatives, but otherwise very similar. If current estimates are to be believed, they have lived and swum almost unchanged for the best part of half a billion years.

Darwin’s doubt

The scientific consensus of our day is that everything around us is the product, not of design or creation, but a long process of evolution. This is essentially an endless series of genetic accidents and mistakes which have been selected by pressure from the environment and competition with other species to produce ever more complex and diverse life forms.

This process is supposed to be unavoidable, inexorable. If it is real, it seems inconceivable that any living organism could survive the supposed turbulent history of this planet with its various tectonic upheavals, its multiple ice ages, its catastrophic ‘extinction events’, its asteroid or comet strikes etc., without ‘adapting’, without being changed, ‘evolving’ in some way. But that is what the fossil record says: things don’t always change, many things stay the same. The host of intermediate life forms which must have been generated in the history of evolution are conspicuous by their absence. They are the stuff of many of evolution’s imaginative ‘**just-so**’ stories, (see Light Vol 31.1 page 23) but they have never existed.

Evolution is not supported by the standard interpretation of the fossils, yet many regard it as incontrovertible fact. The fossil record itself may be interpreted in a very different way. Evolution has a stranglehold on our society, almost like an alternative religion, but a religion without hope, a faith without a foundation.

Darwin was right to be doubtful. He expected the picture to change, but, 160 years after he wrote ‘The Origin of Species’, it hasn’t. We are blessed in our day that there is now a core of well-informed scientists who are prepared to publicly expose the failure of Darwinism and seriously contemplate the alternatives.

Footnote: A new book by Stephen Meyer, ‘The return of the God Hypothesis’, has recently been published (May 2021).

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Bible Questions and Answers

This is the first in a new series of articles which provides answers to questions that have been asked by Bible students. Our aim is to shine a light on passages of Scripture which could be misunderstood. Like the Bereans in the time of the apostles, we are encouraged to search the Scriptures to find out whether these things are so (Acts 17:11).

This enquirer has asked for an explanation of Bible passages which suggest that Jesus was the creator of the world.

QUESTION: Did Jesus create the world we live in?

Many people believe that Jesus is the same person as God and that he created the world in the beginning. However, a careful reading of several Bible passages will show this is not the case. The Bible teaches that God the Father created the world but had Jesus Christ in mind as part of his future plan. Jesus is the first person of a **new creation**, not marred by sin.

The first verse of the Gospel of John is often used to 'prove' that Jesus and God are the same being and have always been so. It reads: '*In the beginning was **the Word and the Word** was with God and **the Word** was God*' (John 1:1).

What does 'the Word' mean?

'**The Word**' here (put in bold for emphasis) is a translation of the Greek word **logos**, which primarily means 'word' and 'reason'. A standard Greek lexicon has the following entries:

1. 'The word by which the inward thought is expressed.'
2. 'The inward thought or reason itself.'

So **logos** doesn't just mean 'word', it also means the thought and reasoning process that gives rise to the word or speech. It is about the idea in the speaker's mind. The Greek language uses a different word **rhema** to indicate an utterance or something spoken. **Logos** is used more than 300 times in the New Testament, and especially in the context of the Word of God as spoken or written by the apostles, but it is also used to refer to both the unspoken and spoken thought processes of the mind of God.

To a first century reader, their understanding of **logos** would primarily relate to the Word of God. The phrases 'Word of God' or 'Word of the Lord' appear about 660 times in scripture. That is how God communicated with the writers of the Bible. A reader would not have

attached any personality to the word **logos**. It was the wisdom of God, His Word put into action. You cannot separate God from His purpose or mind, they are one and the same, hence John says in poetic form, '*the Word was God*'.

Modern theologians and the logos

The Greek scholar, William Barclay (1907-1978), wrote this about the meaning of *logos*: 'First, God's **Word** is not only *speech*; it is power. Second, it is impossible to separate the ideas of **Word** and **Wisdom**, and it was God's **Wisdom** which created and permeated the world which God made' (New Testament Words page 186).

Jesus Christ was the essential element in the mind and purpose of the Father from the very beginning, to put right all that was wrong with the world, now marred by sin after the fall of Adam and Eve.

Barclay again wrote: 'Logos has two meanings, which no English word can express. Logos means 'Word', Logos means 'Mind'. A word is the expression of thought. Therefore, Jesus is the expression of the thought of God. Or to take the other meaning, in Jesus we see the mind of God... In

Jesus the mind of God becomes a person.'

Another theologian, James Dunn (1939-2020), writes of this prologue to John's Gospel:

'We are dealing with personification rather than persons, personified actions of God rather than a divine being as such... But if we translated logos as 'God's utterance' instead, it would become clearer that the poem did not necessarily intend the logos in verses 1-13 to be thought of as a personal divine being' (Christology in the Making 1989).

Jesus was in God's mind and purpose.. God's purpose was then put into action. The word was spoken through the mouth of Gabriel to both Joseph and Mary. The virgin conceived through the power of God, the Holy Spirit, and gave birth to a Son, Jesus. His plan (the **logos**) required a redeemer to deal with the issue of sinful human nature, and that redeemer was born of a woman, as a descendant of Abraham and David (Matthew 1:1), in the exact physical likeness and nature of those who he came to save, to accomplish that work of redemption (Hebrews 2:14).

We should also note that Jesus is called the son of God, **never** God the

son. In Hebrews 2 verse 10 the writer speaks of Jesus as the first of ‘many sons’ of God being brought ‘to glory’. Jesus was not God Himself, but after his resurrection he was made an immortal son:

‘the first-fruits’ of a new creation
(I Corinthians 15:21–23).

Jesus the light of the world

John uses the original creation account as a model for the new creation in Christ. Just as the creation of Light was the first act, so the birth of Jesus is described as Light coming into the world, as opposed to the darkness of sin:

‘In him was life and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness...That was the true Light which gives light to every man...’ (John 1:4–5,9).

John is speaking of a new, sinless creation of which Jesus is the very beginning. This is God’s purpose focused in Jesus to rid the world of sin, and to show the way to the Kingdom of God on earth. Therefore, the context and use of *logos*, (the word), does not support the doctrine that Jesus physically pre-existed and was actually God himself. Rather, *logos* being the mind and pre-determined purpose of God, Jesus was that plan put into action, ‘*the Word became flesh...*’ (John 1:14). As Paul wrote ‘...when the fullness of the

time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons’ (Galatians 4:4).

All things were created by God with Jesus in mind – the focal point of His plan for the world. Jesus is described in the Bible as the beginning of a new creation. Through his sinless life, his sacrifice and his resurrection to eternal life, he has opened the way for others to be made like him.

Why the personal pronouns ‘he’ and ‘him’?

Many modern English versions attach the personal pronoun ‘he’ and ‘him’ to *logos*, thus appearing to suggest a personality. The Greek language, however, is constructed with many nouns having either a masculine or feminine gender; this is inherent in the language. The French language is similar but we don’t have that specifically in English, though to take a crude example, we might refer to a ship as ‘she’ but we would not say that it is a person!

We can note with interest that in AD 1525, when William Tyndale first translated the New Testament from ancient Greek manuscripts to English, he did not use personal pronouns, ‘he’ and ‘him’, but ‘**it**’ (the neuter form) and ‘**the same**’ when

speaking of *logos* in John 1:1. So this is how Tyndale's translation, using 'it' and 'the same' reads:

'In the beginning was the word, and that word was with God and the word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by it, and without it, was made nothing, that made was. In it was life, and the life was the light of men, and the light shineth in darkness, but the darkness comprehended it not.'

(Tyndale's translation modern spelling edition Yale University Press).

The Emphatic Diaglott is a word-for-word translation of the original Greek text and agrees with Tyndale's translation, using 'it' not 'he', because *logos* is not a person.

Another New Testament passage which needs explanation occurs in Hebrews chapter 1, which by translation suggests that Jesus created the world:

'God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he has appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds'

Hebrews 1:1-2

The New International Version reads *'and through whom also he made the*

universe'. But this is an incorrect translation. The Greek for '*worlds*' literally means '*ages*', and has nothing to do with the physical earth, sun moon and stars or the universe beyond! (see also page 3). The Emphatic Diaglott renders verse 2:

'...in the last of these days spoke to us by a son, whom he appointed heir of all things, on account of whom also he constituted the ages' (my emphasis).

Throughout the ages, from the time of Creation, God has been preparing the world for the time when Jesus will return to establish God's Kingdom on the earth. During the age of the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (see page 10) received promises, repeated many times, about the coming of Jesus to bring a time of blessing to all nations.

Later, the Old Testament Prophets foretold his coming as king of the world. In New Testament times, Jesus and the apostles preached the same message, the gospel (good news) about the coming Kingdom of God, and since then God has continued to invite people to inherit a place in that kingdom (Matthew 25:34). In this way, people of all generations have been called to become part of a new creation.

Jesus is the first-born of the new creation

This new creation is spoken of in Colossians chapter one. Firstly, in verse 12, there is reference to the future inheritance for God's children '*in the light*', the qualification for which is redemption from sin through Christ's sacrifice. Verse 13 speaks of a deliverance from '*darkness*' into the kingdom of God's son in love. This is a new constitution of '*all things*', a world in which the darkness of sin will be extinguished, and over which Jesus will rule – a new world with a new government and people. The chapter continues:

He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born over all creation. For by (*in) him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers

(*Thrones, Lordships, Governments or authorities).

All things were created through (*on account of) him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the

beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he may have the pre-eminence.

Colossians 1: 15–18

*Emphatic Diaglott translation

In verse 16, Paul is referring to the new order made possible through Christ, the inheritor of thrones and dominions who is called '*the first-born over all creation*', not the creation of birds, animals and plants, but '*the firstborn from the dead*' (verse 18).

From the very beginning Jesus was in the mind and purpose of God, but not revealed in person until New Testament times. He is the beginning or first-born of a new creation of believers who, like him, will be raised from the dead and be given eternal life and an inheritance in the coming Kingdom of God on earth.

Justin Giles
London, UK



from the editor

As I write this editorial, the Olympic Games are well underway in Tokyo. As a result of the Covid Pandemic there are no spectators, only competitors. The unifying aspect of this world-wide competition is represented by the symbol of the Olympic Games, composed of five interlocking rings. This symbol was originally designed in 1912 by the founder of the modern Olympics. It's ironic that soon afterwards the Games had to be suspended because of the outbreak of the First World War.

We have seen winners from the hardest of starts in life and the unlikeliest of competitors, all training hard to achieve success and win a gold medal. What is evident from all the competitors is the dedication which they put into the preparation for their particular event. Each one has to believe that the end is achievable and work single-mindedly towards it.

In New Testament times, the Greek Games were a familiar part of daily life. The Apostle Paul made a number of allusions to the Games which provide powerful lessons for the followers of Jesus. He wrote to Timothy about a race in which the

winners will receive something of far greater value than a gold medal. These are his words:

'...I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing' (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

In ancient Greece, the winner of an event was often awarded a crown of interwoven leaves as a symbol of victory. In the same way Paul reminds Timothy that he and all Christ's true followers will receive a crown if they, like Paul, finish their course – not a crown of leaves (see picture overleaf) but as the Apostle Peter described it *'the crown of glory which will not fade away'* (1 Peter 5:4)

All sports have rules which fashion the shape of the sport and which guide teams and individual competitors. Each athletic discipline has its own distinct rules. The sprinter must not stray outside his lane; the steeplechaser must not avoid the water jump; the shot putter and hammer thrower can only enter and exit the throwing circles via the back of the circle. For every sport and every discipline the regulations, rules

and codes of conduct seek to ensure that fair competition takes place.

To compete we must accept the rules. They tell us how to compete and how we will be adjudged a winner. In the Bible, God tells us how to run the race for life and what we should do to please Him, just as the rule book governs an Olympic race. It is not enough to be leading a good life. God sets out the conditions as Paul reminded Timothy: *'... if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules'* (2 Timothy 2:5 NIV).

The Bible is very specific about the rules of the race for life – about God's rules; and we can only learn this by doing what it says. That way is God's way, just as the course of a race track is clearly defined. The athlete accepts the rules of the race and it's the same for all who compete in the race for life.

However, just as athletes who would wish to run faster, throw further, or jump higher, will have times when they compete badly and fail to reach their personal best, so we, in trying to emulate the example of Jesus, fall short of the Divine standard. For athletes, this could mean the failure to gain the medal they striven for,

but this is not the same for the follower of Jesus. God, the judge of all our efforts, has given us His Son who offers us forgiveness for our failures. For the believer in God and the followers of Jesus, 'the race for life' is life itself. If we follow His teaching, God has promised us a blessing as rich as any victor's crown.

The race for life requires no selection by a committee whose decision is based on prior achievement. It is open to all who are called by God, who are willing to compete and prepared to finish the course. The competitors in the Games dress to minimise any hindrance to their efforts; so those in the race for life must do the same (Hebrews 12;1,2).

Paul wrote: *'do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize?'* And he added this important advice:

'... run in such a way that you may obtain it.'

1 Corinthians 9: 24



The History of Israel Part 3

In the last two articles in this series, we examined the development of the nation of Israel from the time of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. Their history continued through Egyptian enslavement, the Exodus from Egypt, and the giving of the Mosaic Law at Mount Sinai. God punished the children of Israel for their disbelief, and they wandered in the Sinai desert for 40 years before entering the land of Canaan.

The conquest of Canaan

First, the conquest of Canaan might appear as a kind of ethnic cleansing which is abhorrent to most people in modern times. However, we need to bear in mind that these events were directed by God and are part of His plan to form a nation for Himself as He promised to Abraham.

Second, we see in current news that there is continual conflict in the Middle East between the State of Israel, the disputed West Bank territory, the Gaza Strip and neighbouring countries. Israel's conquest of the land of Canaan, subsequently known as Palestine, and now known as Israel, is recorded in the book of Joshua in the Old Testament. These events took place about 1,450 years before Christ. The reason why to this day there is continual conflict over the land of Israel, is central to the message of God in the Bible. This revolves around the Jews, God's chosen people, and his plan of salvation for the human race.

As far as the Middle East and the relationship between Jews and Arabs are concerned, the rest of the Bible narrative up to the end of the 1st century AD and the 2,000 years since then, is all about claim and counter-claim to the land God promised to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their descendants. It is important to note that whilst the Jewish claim to the land is contested widely across the world today, many being in favour of Arab claims, God very clearly told Abraham, (who was father of the Arab nations as well as Israel) that the descendants of Ishmael, Abraham's son by Hagar, would also be blessed. The words are printed

here for absolute clarity regarding the various claims on the land of Israel (Palestine):

‘And Abraham said to God, “Oh, that Ishmael might live before you!” Then God said: “No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year”. Then he finished talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.’

Reading: Genesis 17:18–22.

Note that the everlasting blessing or covenant is not with Ishmael the son of Hagar, but with Isaac, and the whole of the Biblical narrative about the salvation of all mankind, including the Arab nations, will be brought about through Isaac’s great descendant, Jesus of Nazareth, the promised Messiah.

It is also worth repeating that Jacob was Abraham’s grandson. In Genesis 32:28 Jacob, whose name literally means ‘holder of the heel’ or ‘supplanter,’ was renamed Israel by God. The new name given to Jacob means ‘God prevails’. Jacob was a twin and supplanted his brother Esau.

Reading: Genesis 25:23–28.

With this background, we can pick up the narrative where we left off (see Light Volume 32.2 page 27). Last time we considered the covenant God made with the Hebrews (the descendants of Abraham) at Mount Sinai, a reiteration and development of the covenant originally made to Abraham. This covenant is referred to as the Law of Moses because it was given to them through their leader Moses; it instructed them how to worship God and behave in everyday life.

But there was strife and disobedience to God’s laws and even Moses, in an uncharacteristic moment of frustration, succumbed to loss of faith. For this he forfeited going into the promised land of Canaan with the people he had led for 40 years.

Reading: Numbers 20:1–13.

Joshua became the new leader of the Hebrews, who became known as the children of Israel.

Joshua and the conquest of the land

Joshua was appointed leader after the death of Moses. He led their successful campaign resulting in the conquest of the land of Canaan. The first city to be taken was Jericho. Rahab, who lived in Jericho, played an important part in the victory. She was adopted into the tribe of Judah and had an inheritance in Israel because of her faith in God and the help she gave to the two Hebrews who came to spy out the land.

The conquest of Canaan is set out in the book of Joshua. Sometimes the children of Israel made mistakes in the way they conducted the assault on the land, and God punished them by refusing to fight their battles for them. On another occasion the angel of the Lord instructed Joshua to reduce the army of Israel down to a very small size, yet the battle was still won. The narrative is a demonstration of how God protects and develops those who serve Him faithfully.

We could quote a few passages here and there from Joshua, but really the whole book is worth reading to get the flavour not only of the assault on Canaan, but also how God views wicked nations and how He requires obedience to His specified commandments.

Readings: Joshua 1:1-9, ch. 6; 13:7-8 and for context Numbers 33:50-56.

It should be noted that, at the end of the conquest, the children of Israel had not completely driven out all the wicked tribes that inhabited the land of Canaan as God had instructed them to. The Amalekites, for example, became a continual problem during the later history of Israel.

The time of the Judges

After the death of Joshua, God raised up many different leaders called judges, who led the people into battle and delivered them from the oppression of their enemies. This period of Israel's history took place between 1400 and 1100 BC.

Reading Judges chapter 2.

This gives an account of the way the children of Israel continually went astray from God and how He punished them. This falling away from

God's laws occurred throughout the period of the Judges and was largely due to the influence of the surrounding nations, some of whom would not have existed if Israel had been thorough with their conquest of the land earlier under Joshua. In the book of Judges we can observe that there is a cycle to Israel's behaviour. Disobedience to God's laws is followed by oppression by their enemies, orchestrated by God as punishment for their waywardness. Israel pleads for help, and a judge is raised up to save them from oppression and return them to serving God.

Readings: Deuteronomy 7:1-11; Judges 2 and 3:1-7.

There is in these events a very important lesson for us. True service to God requires separation from the evils of the world. Intermingling with the world at large and its evil practices leads to enmity with God. The same lesson can be observed throughout the history of Israel. A true servant of God will strive to honour God and avoid being tainted by worldly practices that are opposed to His ways.

Reading: 1 John 2:15-17

But there is a striking contrast that tells us a lot about the character of Almighty God. In all the events of the period of the Judges we can see that God had continuing mercy and love towards His people. His forbearance and repeated forgiveness of Israel's transgressions are a testimony to His patience with those whom he loves and those who strive to serve Him. We can see in the Book of Judges that when the people repented of their evil ways and turned again to God, then He gave them deliverance from their enemies, sometimes by spectacular means. Good examples of such cases are the judges Gideon, Barak and Samson.

Readings: Judges chapters 4, 6,7,14,15 and 16.

Not all the Children of Israel went away from serving God during the times of the Judges. There were always some faithful, God-fearing men and women who tried to obey and serve God. The book of Ruth, which follows the book of Judges, demonstrates such cases. The book of Ruth is short (only four chapters) and it's well worth reading the book in one sitting. Not only does it demonstrate the things we are considering here, but also how God includes people who are trying to serve Him properly, and whom He cares for, in His purpose. You should also note that both

Rahab and Ruth the Moabitess were Gentiles (non-Jews) but both demonstrated their faith in joining the Jewish people and serving Israel's God. They both became part of the ancestry of Christ. Note the implied blessing that comes through those two women of faith.

Readings: Matthew 1:1–17 and Hebrews 11:31.

Israel – The Kingdom of God

Samuel was the last judge of Israel. During his lifetime something pivotal happened in the nation's history. The people asked Samuel for a king to rule over them. In the book of Deuteronomy, written by Moses, God predicted that this would happen and even set out what the king should and should not do.

Reading: Deuteronomy 17:14–20.

However, Samuel was at pains to try to dissuade the nation from this request. God was displeased with it because He was their King. He had set them apart as His people at Mount Sinai. They were a '*kingdom of priests and a holy (or separate) nation*' (Exodus 19:5–6). Nevertheless, God instructed Samuel to grant them their request but at the same time warned them of the consequences.

Reading: 1 Samuel 8:1–9, 19–22; 1 Samuel 12:12–19.

The result was that Saul was selected as the first king. He was the sort of person the people wanted, to be like the nations around them. Saul was head and shoulders taller than anyone. With the help of Samuel and the blessing of God, he waged a successful war against the Philistines.

Reading: 1 Samuel 14:47–48.

The Philistines were a continual source of trouble to Saul and were not entirely defeated until King David came to the throne. Saul's tenure on the throne came to an end when he disobeyed a direct instruction from God.

Reading: 1 Samuel chapters 13, 14 and 15.

What we learn from these events recorded in the First Book of Samuel is significantly important: God requires obedience to his commandments. This is essential in God's dealings with man. At this point it is a good idea to get some background on this precise point.

Readings: Isaiah 66:1–2; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6–8; Matthew 9:13; Mark 12:32–33.

King David

Samuel was instructed to anoint David son of Jesse to replace Saul on the throne.

Reading: 1 Samuel 16:1-13.

The two books of Samuel and the first book of Chronicles record the events of David's life and reign. David's trust in God was clearly demonstrated when he fought the Philistine giant, Goliath, single-handed.

Reading: 1 Samuel 17:26,34-50.

Again, it is worthwhile reading a larger portion of the narrative and noting how David had complete faith in God.

Reading: 1 Samuel chapters 24-26.

Next time

In the next issue, God willing, we will take a look at how God's people went forward under the rulership of human kings. To begin with we'll look at how God's covenant with Abraham Isaac and Jacob was renewed to King David in person. We will see how the kingdom of Israel deteriorated into idolatry and lost sight of their God, and how God sent prophets to warn them to repent or suffer the consequences.

The important points to note in all these historical considerations is how God deals with people who seek to serve Him righteously (e.g. Ruth, Rahab and David) and so are rewarded, and how He deals with people who ignore Him and live wickedly (e.g. Saul). It is interesting to note that in Jewish communities the world over to this very day, there are many establishments named after King David but there are none named after King Saul!



signs of the times

'All the world's a stage', it's been said, and in the last few months, three new principal 'actors' have stepped onto it. They are the US President, the Iranian PM, and the Israeli PM. They are all recent appointments (this year in fact – Biden in January, Bennet in June, and Raisi who will already be appointed by the time you read this), replacements for previous 'actors' who were written out of the story (at least for now). God is the 'author' of this great drama. All the scenes are written, including the finale, in this gripping theatre production. The audience hasn't seen them all yet. We know, if we've been paying attention, broadly what the ending will be. But we don't know how many scenes there are and of course how many there are to go! And what other actors might be involved. But we need to keep watching.

Not sure about God's controlling role in world affairs? Consider this verse from the Old Testament prophet Daniel: '...until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of

men, and gives it to whomever he chooses.' (Daniel 4:32).

Earlier in Daniel chapter two, which describes the meaning of a dream seen by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, there's another interesting passage that describes the state of the world just before the return of Jesus:

'... you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided... And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay. And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed... it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand forever.'

Daniel 2;41–44

If you were to express poetically the state of international relations and the turmoil within most countries in our world today, could you describe the situation better!

Here's another Bible passage, this time from the New Testament. It describes the moral characteristics that will prevail before Jesus' return:

'But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!'

2 Timothy 3:1-5

Marry these scriptures together and what a sad summation they present of the world today!

Let's look now at the two of the recent appointments mentioned earlier (President Biden has been commented on at length in earlier articles).

Israel and Iran

Israel's new prime minister is **Naftali Bennett**. He has had an interesting

life to date. He has been a very successful businessman, has served with distinction in Israel's army, and has had considerable success as a politician. He first entered the Knesset (Israel's parliament) in 2009 and has navigated Israel's overly complicated politics at ministerial level for some years, holding positions in the education and defence fields.

His political views are right wing, even more so than his predecessor Netanyahu. In October 2016, he said: 'On the matter of the Land of Israel, we have to move from holding action to a decision...We can't keep marking the Land of Israel as a tactical target and a Palestinian state as the strategic target.' And after Trump's election 'The era of the Palestinian state is over.' (Both quotes from a Wikipedia article on Bennett).

Now he is Prime Minister, he must hold together the fragile coalition



that is his parliamentary support, and deal with much else that is contrary to his personal views. But he is a politician and has given an undertaking not to pursue annexing the West Bank while he is PM. But nevertheless, so much could happen. Bible students watch with interest!

Ebrahim Raisi was elected president of Iran in June. The Guardian Council which vets candidates eliminated 593 of 600 candidates, setting up the election for the hardliner Raisi to win. He will replace the moderate Hassan Rouhani on 3rd August. All key political institutions in Iran are now run by conservatives.

What does this mean for the future policies of the Iranian government? Many Iranians are concerned by the threat to civil and political rights, and view Raisi's election as a setback for economic and social reforms. Only 49% of those eligible voted in the election, reflecting the silent protest

over the manipulation of the result. A potential for revolution?

The Iranian people are suffering economically because of the sanctions imposed by President Trump when the US withdrew from the 2015 nuclear agreement. There have been recent talks in Vienna to re-establish the nuclear agreement between Iran and the West. President Biden has made it clear that he wants to re-enter the agreement. A new agreement, whether by Rouhani or by Raisi, would provide some internal stability for Iran and make it easier for the conservatives to bring in the changes to Iranian society which they want.

In reaction to the result of the Iranian election, Israel's new PM Bennett said that the world should 'wake up', stating that the 'regime of brutal hangmen' led by Raisi should never be allowed to have weapons of mass destruction. He was referring to Raisi's role as Prosecutor in the 1980's and 1990's when thousands of political dissidents and prisoners were executed.

Once again the possibility of the US and Israel being at odds with each other arises. Will disagreement over the Iran nuclear deal be a further step towards Israel's isolation? You can see another touch point for our three main characters to interact. It is



noteworthy also, how exposed Israel would be without US support.

For more information about the role of Israel and Iran in God's plan for the world send for your free copy of *Light on Bible Prophecy* (see back page for further details).

Climate change

Before considering climate change, I want to point out that I'm not a climate scientist and that as a Christadelphian I believe, as stated in the verse from Daniel quoted earlier, that despite appearances to the contrary, God is in control. My efforts are therefore to obey Him and do what He requires. Not to become embroiled in arguments over how humanity is running the earth. It does however strike me that one way and another we have made a serious mess of our world, compromising its environment in so many ways. The concept that the same activity is adversely affecting the climate seems a more than reasonable proposition to me. And I'll refer to one instance shortly. First a verse from Gods Word that has an interesting concluding clause (my highlighting in bold):

'The nations were angry, and your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that you should reward your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear your

name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth.' Revelation 11:18

In Greek (the language these words were originally written in) the word 'destroy' can be both in a physical and a moral sense. This seems to me a perfect description for what we have done to the environment over the last couple of centuries from the beginning of the industrial revolution. The verse makes it clear that there will be consequences from God.

Lytton, Canada

This small town is in western Canada north of Vancouver. In June and July of this year it became famous for what I imagine its citizens would regard as very unfortunate reasons. For three days in June it became one of the hottest places on earth. Several days later the town was almost completely wiped out by what the locals call a wildfire. Fires in that part of the world are not that unusual. But extreme heat most certainly is. Of all that I've read about the recent extreme weather event over most of North America, the most moving came from Roger Harrabin, BBC environment analyst. He wrote an article on BBC Online entitled 'Why North America's killer heat scares me.' I've quoted some parts of his article:

'We've just enjoyed our first blissful sleepover weekend with our 20-month granddaughter, Hazel, so maybe that softened me up. Or perhaps it was a week's leave away from the news that rusted my BBC armour of emotional detachment from the climate story. Either way, I confess to a gut-tightening sense of foreboding when Hazel left and I caught up with North America's killer heat dome on TV. That's not because new record temperatures were set in the north-western US and Canada – that happens from time to time. No, it's because old records were smashed so dramatically.

The previous all-time Canada record of 45C was set in the 1937 Dust Bowl era when, like this year, the parched ground failed to mitigate temp-

eratures. Normally records like this are over-topped by a fraction of a degree, but this year the former high was obliterated on three days running. The final temperature in the town of Lytton was fully 4.6C higher than the old record.

Emissions from human activities inarguably contributed to the rise, increasing global average temperature by about 1.2C since the late 1800s.

Climatologists are nervous of being accused of alarmism – but many have been frankly alarmed for some time now. 'The extreme nature of the record, along with others, is a cause for real concern,' says veteran scientist Professor Sir Brian Hoskins. 'What the climate models project for the future is what we would get if we are lucky. The models' behaviour may be too conservative.' In other words, in some places it's likely to be even worse than predicted...

A satellite monitors the wildfire outbreaks that are taking place throughout the world on an unprecedented scale. In Siberia an estimated 62,000 square miles have burnt since the beginning of this year, more than in all the rest of the world put together



Some scientists are warning that areas of the world will become uninhabitable if current trends continue. So what are our leaders doing to keep us safe? Well, they're talking a good show, and doubtless some really mean to curb climate change. But the impacts of global heating are happening right now, whereas major nations plan to phase out emissions by 2050.

Conclusion

As they say, the world keeps on turning, one day follows another and it's all too easy to be blasé about the many problems the world is facing. Unless of course you have a direct reason to be concerned. Like living in Lytton for example. It is an enormous comfort to me, and can be to you too, to not have to be concerned with any of these things. Our God is in control. His plan is proceeding exactly as He intended it to. His son will return to our earth and fix the mess that humanity is making of the world. I hope it is soon but I know that it will be in God's good time.

David Gamble
Melbourne, Australia



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We believe that over the centuries the original message of Christianity has been corrupted. Light is published to provide a better understanding of the true Christian hope.

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