

BEYOND TODAY

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Scott Ashley
Managing editor

What Would Charles Lindbergh Think?

As I was passing through the San Diego Airport recently after attending a conference, being an aviation buff I saw something that stopped me in my tracks. Suspended to one side of the airport terminal was a plane that I instantly recognized—a full-size replica of the *Spirit of St. Louis*, the plane Charles Lindbergh flew in crossing the Atlantic Ocean from New York to Paris in 1927.

Today we live in a world that takes air travel for granted, so it's hard for us to fathom how great Lindbergh's achievement was viewed at the time. No one had achieved such a feat before—flying solo nonstop across the Atlantic Ocean for 33½ hours. There was no margin for error—failure meaning near-certain death.

The 25-year-old Lindbergh was instantly hailed as a hero around the world. Although a civilian, as a reserve military officer he was awarded the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military decoration, and the Distinguished Flying Cross. France awarded him the Legion of Honor medal, its highest honor.

In New York, he was honored with a massive ticker-tape parade attended by an estimated 4 million people. *Time* magazine chose him as its Man of the Year. San Diego International Airport is named Lindbergh Field in his honor. He was a true hero.

After admiring the plane for a few minutes and contemplating Lindbergh's monumental achievement, I left to find my gate only to be stopped in my tracks once again. Only yards from this plane was a bathroom sign that baffled me.

I was used to seeing the generic universal male and female symbols on restroom doors, but this one had both those plus another—a half-male, half-female icon.

"All Gender Restroom," the sign helpfully explained. "Anyone can use this restroom, regardless of gender identity or expression."

I started to go in, thought better of it, then chose to go elsewhere. "What would Charles Lindbergh think?," I asked myself as I walked away.



Indeed, what would Charles Lindbergh think? If he'd had any idea how radically his country would be transformed only a generation or two after his death, I wonder if he might have never wanted to come back down to earth?

I also thought about how this sign must strike the hundreds of U.S. military personnel from the nearby naval base, aviation field and U.S. Marine base who pass through this airport daily. Is this what they signed up for, to defend the rights of confused men to use women's bathrooms and vice versa?

The contrast between these colliding realities was disorienting. "What a sick world," I thought to

myself, to be so blatantly reminded of our ever-increasing societal degeneration and rejection of our Creator and His instruction when all I wanted was a simple bathroom break before catching my flight.

Sadly, it's getting harder and harder to escape a world in which, as the prophet Isaiah foretold, people "call evil good, and good evil" and "put darkness for light, and light for darkness" (Isaiah 5:20).

As I've been working on this issue with its theme on the futility of Darwin's theory of evolution, I've thought back to that bathroom sign with its three genders and how the powers that a year ago forced homosexual marriage down the throat of the American public are now forcing acceptance of another form of sexual deviancy. I shudder to think what's next.

Yet it shouldn't be surprising, because when many in society come to believe they're the result of a series of random, unguided accidental mutations as assumed by Darwinian evolution, then nothing is right and nothing is wrong, and none of it matters anyway.

Ideas have consequences! That's why it's crucial that you arm yourself with the facts about the key questions of life, including whether God really exists, whether the Bible is His inspired Word, and what His plan and purpose is for you. This issue is a good place to start! **BT**





Charles Darwin admitted that the available fossil evidence didn't support his theory of "survival of the fittest," better known as evolution. But he expected that plenty of evidence would be found in the coming years. Now, more than a century and a half later, the evidence still fails to support his theory—showing people accept Darwinian evolution more as an article of faith rather than of fact.

by Mike Kelley

EVOLUTION

An Article of Faith

In 1859 Charles Darwin rocked the scientific—and religious—worlds with his book *On the Origin of Species*. It wasn't long before the scientific communities on both sides of the Atlantic accepted the notion that life evolved over "millions on millions of years," as Darwin put it in his book, after arising spontaneously from "some warm little pond," as he described it in a letter to a friend. Darwin found himself enshrined as one of the greatest scientific thinkers of all time, on a par with Galileo and Newton.

But not all who then read Darwin's book were convinced of his theory. Other scientists and geologists noted inconsistencies, unexplained creatures appearing at the wrong times in the fossil record, and other holes in the theory—some of which Darwin himself acknowledged.

Fast forward 150 years to today, and most of the scientific world still accepts the theory of evolution as fact in spite of growing evidence to the contrary. And a world that does not

want a God who can tell them what to do wants instead a theory that explains a creation without a Creator.

A theory full of holes

The past half-century has not been kind to Darwin's theory. When his book was published, Darwin admitted that the fossil record that ought to have supported his theory was full of gaps, but confidently predicted that a great many of the missing transitional species would be found to fill these. But now, more than 150 years later, with paleontologists having explored vast reaches of the planet, the fossil record still fails to show the evidence Darwin predicted would be found.

Meanwhile, new discoveries about the vast complexity of the cell, and the explosion of the field of microbiology, have added further difficulties that challenge Darwin's theory. Today, hundreds of scientists doubt evolution to the point of rejecting it.

The Discovery Institute, a Seattle-based think tank devoted to the critical examination of evolution, lists more than 700 leaders of scientific thought who have gone on record as doubting the theory to the point that many of them now admit a belief in some higher intelligence as the most logical source of the existence of life.

Lost in the furor over evolution is the fact that the theory of evolution is not a fact, but is unproven. A scientific theory is a reasoned explanation that appears to fit all the facts at hand but that cannot be tested and verified as scientific law through the observed results of repeated experiments according to the scientific method. Evolutionary theory cannot be verified through observation because it has supposedly transpired over eons of time—and therefore must remain a theory rather than a proven law.

However, Darwinian evolution should not truly be classed as a scientific theory since it does not really fit the evidence that exists in a reasonable way. Evolution might be better termed a *hypothesis*—an educated guess—about how the vast array of life we see in the world around us came to exist. Except it's not so educated as it's touted to be since its pro-

ponents dismiss considerable evidence to the contrary.

Along came Copernicus in the mid-1500s showing mathematically that the Sun is the center of the solar system and that the earth and other planets revolve around it. This was confirmed by Galileo and his new invention, the telescope, around 1600.

That revolutionary discovery was initially rejected by most, and Galileo was severely persecuted. In like manner scientists who challenge evolution today often endure ridicule from their colleagues for acknowledging publicly the growing anti-evolutionary discoveries.

One of Darwin's two central ideas was what the scientific community terms *universal common descent*. Basically, this says that all life forms ultimately descended from a single common ancestor, which Darwin estimated to have appeared on the scene somewhere between 700 and 800 million years ago.

If his theory were accurate, the fossil record should show millions of evolving life forms over millions of years, resulting in billions of fossils of transitional life forms. However, as already pointed out, he had to admit in his book a major problem with the fossil record that he

could not explain: "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?" (1859, *Masterpieces of Science* edition, 1958, p. 137).

Later in his book he again acknowledged the problem with the fossil record: "*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*" (p. 260-261, emphasis added throughout).

Instead of the "innumerable transitional forms" predicted by Darwin's theory, the actual fossil record is vastly different.

The record showed that suddenly, nearly 600 million years ago by paleontologists' dating, an *explosion* of life forms occurred during what came to be called the Cambrian period. Over a period of just a few million years in paleontologists' chronology, a mere blip in the purported geological record of the earth, thousands of new creatures appeared that exhibited a high level of anatomical sophistication.

What had Darwin really stumped was the fact that no fossil evidence of an evolutionary ancestor, no "missing link" for these complex creatures, could be found anywhere, on any continent.

Again, Darwin acknowledged huge gaps in the fossil record that should've supported his theory. As he stated: "The explanation lies, I believe, in the extreme imperfection of the geological record" (p. 261). He hoped and assumed that future scientists would discover the missing links.

But, notes journalist George Sim Johnston: "This is the verdict of modern paleontology: The record does not show gradual, Darwinian evolution. Otto Schindewolf, perhaps the leading paleontologist of the 20th century, wrote that the fossils 'directly contradict' Darwin. Steven Stanley, a paleontologist who teaches at Johns Hopkins, writes in *The New Evolutionary Timetable* that 'the fossil record does not convincingly document a single transition from one species to another'" ("An Evening With Darwin in New York," *Crisis*, April 2006, online edition).

Since Darwin's time, millions of new fossils have been discovered representing thousands of different species, but none have been shown to be the missing links he had hoped would be found. In his 1991 book *Darwin on Trial*, Dr. Phillip Johnson wrote: "The single greatest problem which the fossil record poses for Darwinism is the 'Cambrian Explosion' of around 600 million years ago. Nearly all the animal phyla (major classifications of animals) appear in the rocks of this period, without a trace of the evolutionary ancestors that Darwinists require" (p. 54).

What the fossil record *does* show are soft-bodied worms, jellyfish and similar creatures that lacked any sort of skeletal structure. Then a relatively short time later, a myriad of much more sophisti-

More than 150 years later, with paleontologists having explored vast reaches of the planet, the fossil record still fails to show the evidence Darwin predicted would be found.

New discoveries that chop away at the trunk of the tree of evolutionary thought have created a situation reminiscent of the Late Middle Ages, when medieval thought held that the earth is the center of the universe. The prevailing view in the year 1500 was that the sun, moon, planets and all the stars revolved around the earth.

cated creatures having external skeletons, internal organs, and hearts burst onto the scene. In fact, most if not all of the basic body plans of animals alive today were present in the Cambrian period, in stark contrast to what Darwin had theorized.

Also in 2013, in a review of an article about the Cambrian explosion in the magazine *Science*, Stanford University's Christophe Lowe commented on the scientific world's struggle to explain the sudden burst of life in evolutionary terms. "The range of hypotheses proposed to explain the Cambrian explosion is as diverse and broad as the fossils they seek to explain." He went on to verify that this huge group of new Cambrian animal species did indeed appear suddenly, and that the few pre-Cambrian fossils were not their ancestors.

Scientists have put forward many theories to try to explain away the Cambrian explosion and other ways the fossil record contradicts Darwinian evolution, but it still remains an enormous challenge to evolutionary thinking.

Are mutations really helpful?

Darwin's other main point, natural selection, gave rise to the phrase "survival of the fittest"—an expression widely used in today's business and political worlds. According to Darwin, mutations would arise in life forms, bringing new traits, and the more advantageous of these would be passed on to successive generations. These were "the fittest," and those lacking such traits would die out.

To Darwin it seemed simple enough: Genetic changes or improvements that gave an animal an edge in survival would be the most likely to be passed on. But is that the way most mutations work?

Decades spent in the study of mutations have shown that most are *harmful*, leaving the animal *less likely* to survive. So one might ask, what are the chances of favorable mutations actually being passed on? Or to state it differently, what are the odds that the DNA of a particular creature would be improved through random occurrence and successfully passed on to new generations?

Dr. Murray Eden, professor of engineering and computer science at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston, delved into this question. He compared DNA to a computer code, noting that any computer code would be rendered useless with only a few random changes:

"No currently existing formal language can tolerate random changes in the symbol sequences which express its sentences. Meaning is almost invariably destroyed" ("Inadequacies of Neo-Darwinian Evolution as a Scientific Theory," *Mathematical Challenges to the Neo-Darwinian Interpretation of Evolution*, 1967, p. 14). In other words, the need for *specific arrangement of DNA sequences* makes it extremely improbable that random mutations would generate new functional genes.

Since it has been determined that mutations occur only once in about every 10 million DNA copies, a logical question might be: What are the odds of a *beneficial* mutation happening on its own, at random, with no guidance?

In *Darwin's Doubt*, Dr. Stephen Meyer commented on Eden's findings: "Did the mutation and selection mechanism have enough time—since the beginning of the universe itself—to generate even a small fraction of the total number of possible amino acid sequences corresponding to a single functional protein of

that length? For Eden, the answer was clearly no" (2013, p. 176).

Following the evidence wherever it leads

Ongoing discoveries about the astounding complexity of DNA continue to provide solid evidence for the divine creation of life. In fact, it was an objective look at DNA that led the late Sir Antony Flew, long the leading atheist in England, to renounce his atheism and accept the existence of a divine Creator.

He acknowledged that he had changed his mind about a Creator "almost entirely because of the DNA investigations." He explained: "What I think the DNA material has done is that it has shown, by the almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements which are needed to produce (life), that *intelligence must have been involved* in getting these extraordinarily diverse elements to work together.

"It's the *enormous complexity of the number of elements and the enormous subtlety of the ways they work together*. The meeting of these two parts at the right time by chance is simply minute. It is all a matter of the enormous complexity by which the results were achieved, which looked to me *like the work of intelligence*" (*There Is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*, 2007, p. 75).

He went on to say: "I now believe that *the universe was brought into existence by an infinite Intelligence*. I believe that *this universe's intricate laws manifest what scientists have called the Mind of God*. I believe that life and reproduction originate in a divine Source.

"Why do I believe this, given that I expounded and defended atheism for more than a half century? The short answer is this: this is the world picture, as I see it, that has emerged from modern science. Science spotlights three dimensions of nature that point to God. The first is the fact that nature obeys laws. The second is the dimension of life, of intelligently organized and purpose-driven beings, which arose from matter. The third is the very existence of nature."

He concluded that when it came to assessing the evidence of nature, "We must follow the argument wherever it leads"—which in his case was to the conclusion that the only reasonable and logical answer is a Divine Creator (pp. 88-89). (Be sure to read "Answers From an Ex-Atheist About God," beginning on page 8.)

Startling admissions from evolutionists

The weight of evidence against Darwinian evolution is growing in biology, genetics and the fossil record itself. To their credit, some advocates of evolution openly admit some of the problems—as evidenced by the following comments.

David Raup, former curator of geology at Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History, put it this way nearly 40 years ago: "Well, we are now about 120 years after Darwin [and now nearly 160], and knowledge of the fossil record has been greatly expanded . . . [yet] *ironically, we have even fewer examples of evolutionary transition than we had in Darwin's time*.

"By this I mean that *some of the classic cases of Darwinian change in the fossil record, such as evolution of the horse in North America, have had to be discarded or modified as a result of more detailed information*—what appeared to be a nice, simple progression when relatively few data were available now appears to be much more complex and much less gradualistic"

The weight of evidence against Darwinian evolution is growing. To their credit, some advocates of evolution openly admit some of the problems.

“Conflicts Between Darwin and Paleontology,” *Field Museum of Natural History Bulletin*, January 1979, pp. 22-25).

He also later admitted: “In the years after Darwin, his advocates hoped to find predictable progressions. In general, these have not been found—yet the optimism has died hard, and *some pure fantasy has crept into the textbooks*” (*Science*, July 17, 1981, p. 289).

Steven Jay Gould, Harvard University paleontologist and ardent evolutionist, wrote in his book *The Panda’s Thumb*: “*The extreme rarity of transitional forms in the fossil record persists as the trade secret of paleontology . . . Gradualism [evolutionary change over long periods of time] was never ‘seen’ in the rocks*” (1977, p. 181).

The fossil evidence forced Gould to admit in a 1980 essay that the traditional view of Darwinian evolution isn’t supported by the fossil evidence and “as a general proposition, is effectively dead, despite its persistence as textbook orthodoxy” (“Is a New and General Theory of Evolution Emerging?” *Paleobiology*, Winter 1980, p. 120).

C.P. Martin of McGill University in Montreal wrote: “Mutation is a pathological process which has had little or nothing to do with evolution” (“A Non-Geneticist Looks at Evolution,” *American Scientist*, January 1953, p. 100).

All of these men have strongly supported evolution. But they, and others like them, frankly acknowledged some of the uncomfortable facts that contradict the theory. Yet unlike Antony Flew, mentioned earlier, they were not willing to follow all of the evidence to its logical end.

An article of faith

Deeply held beliefs are hard to give up. Just as those who believed 400 years ago that the sun revolved around the earth opposed the new truth that the earth actually revolves around the sun, so today do most scientists refuse to accept modern findings on the origins of life. The evolutionary paradigm so governs their thinking that they are unable to

objectively see other alternatives.

How has the scientific community reacted to the growing weight of evidence against evolution? The answer: They practice the same sort of denial of which they accuse religion—they *accept evolution as an article of faith*.

Notice this admission by biologist Richard Lewontin regarding his attitude and that of his scientific colleagues: “We take the side of science in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, . . . in spite of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, *because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism . . . Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door*” (“Billions and Billions of Demons,” *The New York Review of Books*, Jan. 9, 1997, p. 31)

Kansas State University immunologist Dr. Scott Todd echoed that sentiment: “Even if all the data point to an intelligent designer, *such an hypothesis is excluded from science because it is not naturalistic*” (*Nature*, Sept. 30, 1999, p. 423).

New Zealand molecular biologist Michael Denton carefully examined the main arguments for Darwinian evolution and found them full of errors and inconsistencies. In his 1985 book *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, he wrote that the problems with the theory “are too severe and intractable to offer any hope of resolution in terms of the orthodox Darwinian framework” (p. 16).

He concluded, “Ultimately *the Darwinian theory of evolution is no more nor less than the great cosmogenic myth*

of the twentieth century” (p. 358).

More recently, a chapter in Dr. Meyer’s book titled “The Possibility of Intelligent Design,” touched on the scientific world’s refusal to accept any possibility that intelligence, rather than blind chance, was involved in the creation of all life form, including human beings:

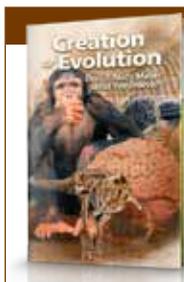
“When the case for intelligent design is made, it’s often hard to get contemporary evolutionary biologists to see why such an idea should even be considered . . . Though many biologists now acknowledge serious deficiencies in current strictly materialistic theories of evolution, they resist considering alternatives that involve intelligent guidance, direction or design” (p. 337).

In other words, those who cling to the evolutionary theory refuse to see and accept the plain evidence. “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God,’” says your Bible (Psalm 14:1; 53:1). A spiritually blinded, deceived and materialistic world will go to extreme lengths to deny the existence of the Creator.

Do we see any parallels between today’s agnostic scientific community and the philosophers of the apostle Paul’s time? Paul said of them: “Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man, or of birds and animals . . . *As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind . . .*” (Romans 1:22-23, 28).

Where, then, is your faith? Is it in the evidence of the fantastically complex creation you can see around you, or in a discredited theory riddled with problems? Critics of religion says it takes faith to believe in a divine Creator. But in fact it takes far more faith to believe in evolution—indeed, *blind* faith!

What about you? Do you have the faith required to still believe in evolution? Or are you willing to truly examine the evidence? **BT**



LEARN MORE

What are some of the problems with Darwin’s theory of evolution? We seldom hear about them, but there are many more than those summarized in this article. You need to know the truth! Download or request our free study guide *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What We Believe?* to get the seldom-seen other side of the story. A free copy is waiting for you!

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Answers

From a Famous Ex-Atheist

About God

When you've devoted a lifetime to arguing against the existence of a divine Creator, it can be hard to admit you were wrong. So what compelled one of the world's leading atheists to do just that?

by Mario Seiglie

Imagine for a moment being one of the world's foremost atheists. You've basked in the fame of academic circles for 50 years and have written more than 30 books, many of which are hailed as hallmarks of atheistic thought. You're highly respected, honored as one of the world's brightest minds.

Then, suddenly, you announce you have reversed course and now believe in God.

You can imagine the reaction from most of your colleagues and the secular press—mostly anger, scorn and a withering hail of criticism.

What made you sacrifice your reputation and good standing among many of your peers, knowing full well how unpopular your belief in God was going to be, especially in an increasingly secular and atheistic society?

It's a fascinating story, and one that holds many valuable answers for young and old alike who have asked the most basic and most important question: *Does God exist?*

It's not often that you can view this topic from the other side of the aisle—from one who had been a champion of atheistic thought and had based his life and

teachings on the premise that God *did not* exist.

Who is this person? His name is Dr. Antony Flew, an Oxford professor who spent 50 years teaching philosophy and constructing clever arguments to support an atheistic point of view.

Why did he change his mind? And more importantly, why did he *go public* about his acceptance of God's existence, knowing the damage to his reputation among his colleagues that would follow?

Prior to his death in 2010, Dr. Flew wrote a book in 2007 titled *There Is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*, explaining why he had reversed his long-held position and what had compelled him to admit he had been wrong. It's not often that we see a premier philosopher who was an atheist explain why he changed his mind and came to believe in a divine Creator. His reasons are great answers to those who question God's existence.

A principle to guide your life

In his book Dr. Flew mentioned that early in life, he

came on a principle that would guide his career: Follow the evidence wherever it leads, no matter how unpopular that may be.

In his youth, he thought the evidence at that time backed an atheistic perspective, namely, that the scientific data and philosophical reasonings pointed more toward a belief that God did not exist.

Yet, he mentioned, from the 1980s on, the evidence started turning against atheism and toward a Creator God.



Dr. Antony Flew

evidence that convincingly led him to his belief in God.

How did the laws of nature come to be?

The first of these has to do with the origin of the laws of nature.

Dr. Flew was quite candid about his former atheistic views on the laws of nature, which are the standard explanation against God's existence. Yet he would later call this type of reasoning "the peculiar danger, the endemic evil, of dogmatic atheism" (p. 86).

This is the assumption that things in the universe exist as they are and should be accepted as such without much further thought. It had been his defense against any questions about the ultimate origins of what exists.

He noted: "Take such utterances as, 'We should not ask for an explanation of how it is that the world exists; it is here and that's all' or 'Since we cannot accept a transcendent source of life, we choose to believe the impossible: that life arose spontaneously by chance from matter' or 'The laws of physics are "lawless laws" that arise from the void—end of discussion.' They look at first sight like rational arguments that have a special authority because they have a no-nonsense air about them. Of course, this is no more sign that they are either

as Plato in his *Republic* scripted his Socrates to insist: 'We must follow the argument wherever it leads'" (p. 89).

He admitted that the accumulation of the evidence in the last two decades now supported the existence of a Creator God, and he had the courage, personal integrity and humility to accept this conclusion—no matter how personally disagreeable it had been for him.

He mentioned that the evidence dealing with the laws of nature increasingly indicated a Superior Mind was operating at a cosmic level.

"The leaders of science over the last hundred years," he wrote, "along with some of today's most influential scientists, have built a philosophically compelling vision of a rational universe that sprang from a divine Mind. As it happens, this is the particular view of the world that I now find the soundest philosophical explanation of a multitude of phenomena encountered by scientists and laypeople alike.

"Three domains of scientific inquiry have been especially important for me . . . The first is the question that puzzled and continues to puzzle most reflective scientists: *How did the laws of nature come to be?*" (p. 91).

One of the most enigmatic aspects of the laws of nature is that these invisible forces *act on* matter and energy, but *are not* matter or energy themselves. For them to work, *they had to be in place before matter and energy existed*, and they are not tangible objects. To believe all these intricate laws that act in unison somehow appeared together at just the right time, with just the right force, without some organizing Intellect behind them, defies logic.

"The important point," Flew brought out, "is not merely that there are regularities in nature, but that these regularities are mathematically precise, universal, and 'tied together.' Einstein spoke of them as 'reason incarnate.' The question we should ask is *how nature came packaged in this fashion*. This is certainly the question that scientists from Newton to Einstein to Heisenberg have asked—and answered. *Their answer was the Mind of God*" (p. 96).

So, although it may not be well known, a number of cosmologists and physicists have admitted that the orderly laws of the universe point to something

As the growing body of evidence in science pointed increasingly to a theistic explanation of the universe, Dr. Flew found that the standard atheistic explanations were untenable.

He then had to reluctantly reassess his beliefs.

"I now believe," he came to admit, "that the universe was brought into existence by an infinite Intelligence. I believe that this universe's intricate laws manifest what scientists have called the Mind of God. I believe that life and reproduction originate in a divine Source. Why do I believe this, given that I expounded and defended atheism for more than a half century? The short answer is this: *this is the world picture, as I see it, that has emerged from modern science*" (*There Is a God*, p. 88, emphasis added throughout).

In particular, he offered three lines of

rational or arguments" (p. 87).

As the growing body of evidence in science and technology pointed increasingly to a more theistic explanation of the universe, he asserted that these standard atheistic explanations were becoming antiquated and untenable.

"My departure from atheism was not occasioned by any new phenomenon or argument," he said. "Over the last two decades, my whole framework of thought has been in a state of migration. This was a consequence of my continuing assessment of the evidence of nature. When I finally came to recognize the existence of a God, it was not a paradigm shift, because my paradigm remains,

“I now believe that the universe was brought into existence by an infinite Intelligence. I believe that this universe’s intricate laws manifest what scientists have called the Mind of God.”

bigger and grander than the universe itself!

Flew quoted numerous of these scientists, like the famous cosmologist Paul Davies, who affirms: “Science is based on the assumption that the universe is thoroughly rational and logical at all levels. Atheists claim that the laws [of nature] exist reasonlessly and that the universe is ultimately absurd. As a scientist, I find this hard to accept. There must be an unchanging rational ground in which the logical, orderly nature of the universe is rooted” (p. 111).

Flew concluded: “Those scientists who point to the Mind of God do not merely advance a series of arguments or a process of syllogistic reasoning. Rather, they propound a vision of reality that emerges from the conceptual heart of modern science and imposes itself on the rational mind. It is a vision that *I personally find compelling and irrefutable*” (p. 112).

How did life originate from non-life?

Flew’s second line of evidence for a belief in God has to do with the great difference that exists between life and non-life.

“When the mass media first reported the change in my view of the world,” he related, “I was quoted as saying that biologists’ investigation of DNA has shown, by the almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements needed to produce life, that intelligence must have been involved.

“I had previously written that there was room for a new argument to design in explaining the first emergence of living from nonliving matter—especially where this first living matter already possessed the capacity to reproduce itself genetically. I maintained that *there was no satisfactory naturalistic explanation for such a phenomenon*” (p. 123).

Pondering over this question, Flew came to the conclusion that a self-replicating living thing being produced by chance from non-life utterly defies all odds. Self-replication means that something has within itself the ability to copy components of its being and pass traits and the mechanism itself to future generations.

Indeed, that copy has to be *so perfectly reproduced* that it can perpetuate itself in turn, and yet it also has to carry an additional system that permits it to adapt to a changing environment to improve its chances of survival.

As a philosopher, Flew pointed out: “Most studies on the origin of life are carried out by scientists who rarely attend to the philosophical dimension of their findings. Philosophers, on the other hand, have said little on the nature and origin of life. The philosophical question that has not been answered in origin-of-life studies is this: *How can a universe of mindless matter produce beings with intrinsic ends, self-replication capabilities, and ‘coded chemistry’?* Here we are not dealing with biology, but an entirely different category of problem” (p. 124).

He came to see that scientists don’t have a satisfying answer to this question.

“Carl Woese, a leader in origin-of-life studies,” he explained,

“draws attention to the philosophically puzzling nature of this phenomenon. Writing in the journal *RNA*, he says, ‘The coding, mechanistic, and evolutionary facets of the problem now became separate issues. The idea that gene expression, like gene replication, was underlain by some fundamental physical principle was gone.’

“Not only is there no underlying physical principle, but the very existence of a code is a mystery. ‘The coding rules (the dictionary of codon assignments) are known. Yet they provide no clue as to why the code exists and why the mechanism of translation is what it is.’

“He frankly admits that we do not know anything about the origin of such a system. ‘The origins of translation, that is before it became a true decoding mechanism, are for now lost in the dimness of the past, and I don’t wish to . . . speculate on the origins of tRNA, tRNA charging systems or the genetic code’” (pp. 127-128).

Although there is an increasing body of knowledge about how DNA and RNA work, scientists still don’t have a clue about how all these coding systems originated, which Flew concluded do point to a Superior Intelligence at work.

He asked: “So how do we account for the origin of life? The Nobel Prize-winning physiologist George Wald once famously argued that ‘we choose to believe the impossible; that life arose spontaneously by chance.’ In later years, he concluded that a preexisting mind, which he posits as the matrix of physical reality, composed a physical universe that breeds life . . . This, too, is my conclusion. The only satisfactory explanation for the origin of such ‘end-directed, self-replicating’ life as we see on earth is an infinitely intelligent Mind” (pp. 131-132).

Did something come from nothing?

Flew’s third line of evidence is the very existence of the universe.

In his early years, Flew believed that the universe had always existed, a popular belief at that time. If something had always been around, he reasoned, there was no need to bring up a Creator to explain it. But new scientific discoveries made him question this premise and whether something could come out of nothing.

“In fact,” he related, “my two main antitheological books were both written long before either the development of the big-bang cosmology or the introduction of the fine-tuning argument from physical constants. But since the early 1980s, I had begun to reconsider. I confessed at that point that atheists have to be embarrassed by the contemporary cosmological consensus, for it seemed that the cosmologists were providing a scientific proof of what St. Thomas Aquinas contended could not be proved philosophically; namely, that the universe had a beginning.

“When I first met the big-bang theory as an atheist, it seemed to me the theory made a big difference because it suggested that the universe had a beginning and that the first

Who's Behind Beyond Today?

sentence in Genesis ('In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth') was related to an event in the universe . . .

"If there had been no reason to think the universe had a beginning, there would be no need to postulate something else that produced the whole thing. But the big-bang theory changed all that. If the universe had a beginning, it became entirely sensible, almost inevitable, to ask what produced this beginning. This radically altered the situation" (pp. 135-137).

Of course, atheists and secular scientists came up with counterarguments for the growing evidence for a universe with a beginning. Over the years all kinds of unlikely explanations have appeared.

"Modern cosmologists," he pointed out, "seemed just as disturbed as atheists about the potential theological implications of their work. Consequently, they devised influential escape routes that sought to preserve the nontheist status quo. These routes included the idea of the multiverse, numerous universes generated by endless vacuum fluctuation events, and Stephen Hawking's notion of a self-contained universe" (p. 137).

Flew found all these arguments to be desperate attempts and quite unconvincing.

He concluded: "The three items of evidence we have considered in this volume—the laws of nature, life with its teleological [or purpose-exhibiting] organization, and the existence of the universe—can only be explained in the light of an Intelligence that explains both its own existence and that of the world. Such a discovery of the Divine does not come through experiments and equations, but through an understanding of the structures they unveil and map" (p. 155).

Thus the existence of a divine Creator is a certain fact of logic. As Scripture attests: "From the beginning, creation in its magnificence enlightens us to His nature. Creation itself makes His undying power and divine identity clear, even though they are invisible; and it voids the excuses and ignorant claims of these people [who would deny Him]" (Romans 1:20, The Voice).

Professor Flew died in 2010, but his intellectual and philosophical pursuit led him to accept the existence of an intelligent Creator—a surprising outcome for him, but one that was based on his lifelong premise that one should follow the evidence wherever it leads.

We hope his example, as well as the irrefutable evidence he was compelled to examine, will help others resolve the question of whether God exists. And by answering in the affirmative, it is the natural starting point for one's journey of faith in developing a *relationship* with this awesome God who made us! **BT**



Who's behind the *Beyond Today* magazine and television program? Many readers have wondered who we are and how we are able to provide *Beyond Today* free to all who request it. Simply put, *Beyond Today* is provided by people—people from all walks of life, from all over the world, as enabled by God.

And those people have a common goal—to proclaim



the gospel of the coming Kingdom of God to all the world as a witness and to teach all nations to observe everything Christ commanded (Matthew 24:14; 28:19-20).



We are dedicated to proclaiming the same message Jesus Christ brought—the wonderful good news of the coming Kingdom of God (Matthew 4:23; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43; 8:1). That message truly is good news—the answer to all the problems that

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Professor Antony Flew found himself confronted with the greatest question of all: Does God exist? He followed the evidence, and came to a life-altering conclusion. What about you? Are you willing to look at the evidence? Download or request our free study guide *Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?*

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A Scientist's Journey to GOD

We may have heard it said that science and God are incompatible. But that isn't the case, as this scientist shows how studying her chosen field has helped develop a deeper relationship with God.

by Kayleen Schreiber

If all goes well, in less than a year I will have earned my Ph.D. in neuroscience—the study of the brain, spinal cord and peripheral nervous system. As I went through eight years of science education, many people have asked me how I was able to retain my faith in God while being bombarded by so much science.

It's important to first define what science really is. It's easy to want to avoid science if it seems like a collection of questionable "facts" assembled by scientists who are biased against God. But science is actually *investigation*—an organized, rigorous and ongoing attempt to find truth.

Isaac Asimov, a professor of biochemistry and author of hundreds of short stories and books, said: "Science doesn't purvey absolute truth. Science is a mechanism. It's a way of trying to improve your knowledge of nature. It's a system for testing your thoughts against the universe and seeing whether they match. And this works, not just for the ordinary aspects of science, but for all of life" (interview on *Bill Moyers' World of Ideas*, Oct. 21, 1988).

In addition to understanding that science is a process for discovery, I also started out with a critical belief: The Bible is divinely inspired and is the foundation of all truth (John 17:17). Everything that I hear and learn I compare to what God says. Without this starting point, my journey would have veered off course long ago. Albert Einstein said, "Science without religion is lame; religion without science is blind" (paper for a science, philosophy and religion conference, Sept. 9-11, 1940).

Because I understand what science really is, and because

I believe God's Word is the foundation of truth, being a scientist does not hinder my relationship with God. My scientific journey has actually helped me grow closer to God in distinct ways.

I've learned to love and pursue truth

So much information is available to us today, but in many cases people are not held accountable for whether what they say is true. It's easy to find information that matches what I already think is right. It's easy to find information that makes up in emotion, bias and curiosity what it lacks in truth.

The scientific method has helped me assess whether I really love truth. Am I able to admit wrong when I find good evidence that refutes what I believe? Do I let my pride influence my opinions?

It's very difficult to let go of a hypothesis or theory that I thought really made sense when I get results I don't expect. But because science is a systematic process with controlled experimentation, it is a great mechanism for eliminating lies and false information. When my hypothesis is disproven, I must adjust my thinking since science values honesty and accuracy very highly. God also takes this matter very seriously, telling us in Proverbs 19:5 that "a false witness will not go unpunished, and he who speaks lies will not escape."

I also need to use this same attitude in my spiritual life. The apostle Paul says that love "rejoices in the truth" (1 Corinthians 13:6). I cannot try to interpret God's Word to fit what I want it to say. I must be humble enough to seek God's truth, even when it goes against what I think should be true.

And I have found that the ongoing search for truth can be a challenging, exhilarating experience. It takes work and is a very humbling process, but in the end it brings godly love and peace.

I've learned humility

One of the reasons I decided to pursue neuroscience was that there is so much still to learn. We are nowhere near understanding how the human brain works—we're still trying to figure out how the nervous system of a worm works! This is true in every corner of creation. God made the physical world so wonderfully complicated that we will be studying it until Jesus Christ returns!

Here's a short example: In the brain there are neurons (the main cells that talk to each other). They communicate with each other by sending chemicals as neurotransmitters (such as calcium, dopamine or gamma-aminobutyric acid or GABA) across synapses, which are little spaces between neurons.

The neurotransmitters are sent and received through little molecular channels. Sounds simple, right? Except that for each neurotransmitter there are many different types of channels that respond in different ways based on the environment of the cell, other surrounding chemicals, the type of cells that are involved, etc.

Just focusing on calcium, there are many, many types of calcium channels, which open and close in different environments, deactivate at different times, and serve various purposes in different areas of cells.

For each type of calcium channel, there are multiple subtypes of that channel. For each channel subtype, in each type of cell, scientists must isolate the channel and investigate it experimentally to discover what properties it has, what its purpose is, and what happens when it doesn't work properly.

And that is all just for one tiny molecule! As I delve deeper into understanding God's creation, it allows me to appreciate more just how detailed, how organized, how beautiful the mind and creative ability of God is.

With the physical world being this complex, how much more amazing is the spirit world? We can't even begin to comprehend it! Studying God's physical creation helps me to maintain an awe and reverence toward Him. As Exodus 15:11 exclaims, "Who is like You, O LORD, . . . glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

I've learned to deal with uncertainty

As I noted above, the results we get from science provide a set of facts, of data. But experiments, perhaps more so in biology than the physical sciences, deal with uncertainties and random variables.

That's why we have statistics, to help us understand the likelihood that results of a particular experiment are true. And with time and further testing, we become more certain about a specific piece of the puzzle that is our world.

As a scientist, I have come to accept that we don't have all the answers, but we must continue to grow in our understanding of truth. That is why God's Word is so comforting and so critical. It is one thing of which we can truly be certain. God didn't provide us the answers to everything yet, but He gave us enough information so that we can have successful lives, grow in character and have hope for the future. As we're told, "The

peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ" (Philippians 4:7).

I've learned to broaden my perspective

At the end of the book of Job, God asks: "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? . . . Who has put wisdom in the mind? Or who has given understanding to the heart?" (Job 38:4, 36)

It's easy to forget what a limited perspective we human beings have. Science allows us to expand our perspective by a few orders of magnitude. We can now see cells and molecules and atoms, as well as galaxies far across the universe. Science enables us to get a small glimpse of the awesome scale of God's perception. And I like to think about the fact that *God can see all the different views at once*. He sees neurotransmitters flowing across the synapses in your brain; He sees the moons orbiting Saturn; He sees *you*.

The fact that science allows us to expand our perspective is important because it's so easy to be narrowly focused on our immediate circumstances. It's so easy to automatically question God when hard things happen in my life: "Why would God allow this to happen? How come God won't just give me this one thing—I know it would be good for me."

It's easy to forget how much bigger a view God has. He knows me better than I know myself (1 Kings 8:39), and knows how everything works together (Job 38). Many times things that seem so clear aren't even actually true. Science shows us that.

I've learned to appreciate God's power and creativity

The more I study the physical world, the more I see its expression as God's handiwork, and the more I appreciate how much God loves diversity and creativity. He created millions of species for us to discover, to explore, to take care of.

He created a seahorse the size of your fingernail. He created cuttlefish skin that can camouflage through both color and texture. He created all sorts of incredible marvels. God is involved in every little detail—and the more I learn about His creation, the more I learn about *Him*. He is caring and thoughtful and perfect!

Paul expressed this beautifully: "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse" (Romans 1:20, New International Version).

Science itself isn't scary or inherently bad. God made the world, and for me, becoming a scientist has allowed me to grow in knowledge, character, humility, respect and appreciation of creativity! **BT**



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As noted in this article, God's creation offers astounding glimpses into His thinking, mind and character. We've prepared a free study guide, *Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?* that helps you understand much more about Him from looking at His creation. Download or request your free copy today!

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An Evolutionary Fantasy:

USELESS Body Parts?

Did chance evolution leave us with unneeded vestigial body parts—or did a Creator carefully design every part of us? As it turns out, there are uses for body parts previously assumed to be useless!

by Dan Dowd

If you sat down and counted all the cells in the human body, you would find more than 10 trillion (10,000,000,000,000) cells. About 12 billion of these are nerve cells linked by more than 10 trillion connections. The body's cells make up groups of systems that work together to sustain life—the skeletal system, the muscular system, the digestive system, the nervous system, the reproductive system and the cardiovascular system.

All of these systems have subsystems. For example, the muscular system has involuntary and voluntary muscles. Involuntary muscles work without our conscious effort—such as the cardiac or heart muscle. Voluntary muscles are muscles that we have to think about to use—like a bicep muscle that helps us to pick up things.

Not only do the systems in the human body perform specific tasks, but they also work together to improve the work of each system. For example, the skeleton provides the framework to support the body and to protect vital organs. It also provides mobility to the body and produces red and white blood cells that move energy through the body, fight infection and remove waste material.

Despite how impressive and complex our bodies are, proponents of Darwinian evolution have long insisted that parts of the human body are useless. They assume these so-called “vestigial organs” are just leftovers of man's evolutionary process that serve no useful bodily function.

A Discovery News article several years ago featured a list of supposed “useless” parts in the human body without any follow-up or consideration as to what value these body parts could have. Are these “vestigial organs” really useless body parts, or did a Creator God Himself design them with important roles to play? Let's give them a closer look.

The third eyelid: *plica semilunaris*

The *plica semilunaris*, or the “third eyelid” located in the corner of your eye near the tear duct, looks like an “extra” fold of skin. Evolutionary theory sees it as a remnant of an extra eyelid like the kind a lizard or a shark has. The fact is, it has an important job.

When we wake up we often have gunk in the corner of our eyes—the result of the *plica semilunaris* secreting

sticky mucus that collects dust, dirt and other matter on the surface of our eyes. This debris is gently moved to the corner of our eye where it can be easily removed. If not removed, it could scratch or damage our sensitive eyeballs. The plica semilunaris also provides a first line of defense to prevent the entrance of microbes into the eye.

Adenoids and tonsils

The tonsils are located on each side of the back of the mouth, and the adenoids are located above the roof of the mouth behind the nose. Darwinian evolution's supporters claim that these organs are prone to infection and should be taken out early in life. After all, they think, these perform no important function in the body. Not true! Just glance in any medical reference book. It will show that these organs are prone to infection *because they trap bacteria* as part of the lymphatic system.

These two organs are situated where they are because they're a vital part of the body's first line of defense. Doctors have found that the adenoids and tonsils "sample" bacteria and viruses that enter through the nose and mouth to help figure out the body's response. While they can become infected,

Are these "vestigial organs" really useless body parts, or did a Creator God Himself design them with important roles to play?

this is more a result of the job they perform rather than being useless. On top of that, the adenoids have specialized cells that make antibodies to help fight infections.

The tailbone or coccyx

The coccyx serves a very important purpose as an anchor for various muscles, tendons and ligaments. While most medical doctors know how important the coccyx is, many still assume it's a leftover tail from our supposed earlier primate evolution from monkeys. The coccyx is actually three to five separate or fused vertebrae. As the lowermost part of the spinal column, it is designed to be an anchor while the rest of the spinal column remains more flexible.

If we didn't have a tailbone for attaching the abdominal muscles that help us lean back and sit down comfortably, we couldn't function. Many ligaments that cooperate in the flexing and support of the spinal column attach to the coccyx. It works along with muscles of the pelvic floor and muscles that help us walk. The coccyx also offers some protection when we fall on our rear, helping to prevent the more sensitive spinal column from being damaged.

Body hair

Evolutionists maintain that early humans were hairier when they supposedly first branched off from other primates. It's argued that our ancestors lost the hair over time, not needing as much to keep warm as they learned other ways to keep warm and as their bodies developed better temperature regulation. Thus, our body hair today is taken to be a useless leftover. But let's look at some of the more up-to-date medical

understanding about our body hair.

Body hair provides a variety of functions. The hair on our heads protects us from excessive sunlight and UV radiation as well as wind damage. The hair of our armpits, genitals and legs reduces friction. Hair also aids in the sweating process, pulling the sweat away from our bodies. That helps it to evaporate more easily, keeping it from sticking to the skin and causing chafing or blistering. Body hair can also redirect sweat to protect more sensitive areas, like our eyebrows keeping sweat out of our eyes.

Body hair also aids in our sense of touch. Have you ever felt a bug crawling on the hair of your head? We don't often think about it, but a lot of what we feel on our skin is because of sensations transmitted through hairs.

As for the thick body hair that supposedly covered prehistoric man, scientists are guessing at this—making an assumption based on their belief that we descended from hairier primates. The fact is, the amount of hair we have perfectly suits our needs.

Erector pili

The ability of our hair to stand up comes from the erector pili (also spelled arrector pili), a muscle attached to several hair follicles. Evolutionists say we needed this ability when we were hairier to look bigger and scarier. Now, they say, it isn't much good except for giving us goose bumps.

Yet the erector pili serve many functions. Pressure exerted by the erector pili help the sebaceous glands to secrete sebum (a natural skin lubricant), which helps maintain the integrity of the skin as a barrier (this is also why excessive skin washing is not good because it removes this sebum that helps to moisturize and protect our skin).

Sebaceous secretions work with apocrine glands to help regulate body temperature. In hot conditions the secretions emulsify and foment formation of and prevent the loss of sweat drops from the skin. In colder conditions, sebum repels rain from skin and hair. This muscle tightening also helps to retain body heat, while the loosening of these muscles can help to cool the skin.

While we can indeed get "goose bumps," the previous section elaborated on the many other functions our body hair provides. Additionally, God gave us a wide range of emotions that can be expressed in many different ways—being frightened can cause our hair to stand up, but being cold can make our hair stand up too. God gave our bodies the ability to give us feedback on our environment and to give physical expression to our mental or emotional state.

Wisdom teeth

According to accepted evolutionary theory, humans used to have bigger jaws with 32 teeth. It's said that what we call wisdom teeth were needed to chew a rougher diet. Then, as man supposedly evolved, the jaws became smaller to match the softer diet, and the wisdom teeth were no longer needed. In fact, they're even a problem in the smaller mouth. Some evolutionists speculate that the extra teeth were needed to replace other molars that fell out.



The major problem with viewing the molars this way is that evolutionists can't explain why a smaller jaw is an advantage to human beings. Some modern studies have shown that jaw and tooth development and alignment have a lot to do with how strong the jaw muscles are. Foods that require more chewing (not modern processed foods) have a big determination in how the molars develop and align.

What's more, this evolutionary perspective would have more weight if every case of erupting wisdom teeth required removal, but studies have shown that most of the cases involving removal of wisdom teeth were done preventatively. Studies have shown that about 80 percent of wisdom tooth removal was done whether there was a dental problem or not.

The bottom line is that wisdom teeth should be treated as any other tooth—useful in chewing the food we eat, or treated appropriately if they fail to function properly.

The appendix

Sitting at the junction of the small intestine and large intestine, the appendix is a thin tube about four inches long and normally in the lower right abdomen. As might be expected, evolutionists claim that the appendix was useful for digestion during our early plant-eating years, but is now useless since we started eating more easily digestible foods. Modern medical science is now admitting this is not the case.

Doctors have discovered that the appendix is very important in the immune system of babies in the womb and young adults. Loren Martin, professor of physiology at Oklahoma State University, wrote in *Scientific American*:

“The appendix serves an important role in the fetus and in young adults. Endocrine cells appear in the appendix of the human fetus at around the 11th week of development. These endocrine cells of the fetal appendix have been shown to produce various biogenic amines and peptide hormones, compounds that assist with various biological control . . . mechanisms.

“During the early years of development . . . the appendix has been shown to function as a lymphoid organ, assisting with the maturation of B lymphocytes (one variety of white blood cell) and in the production of the class of antibodies known as immunoglobulin A (IgA) antibodies. Researchers have also shown that the appendix is involved in the production of molecules that help to direct the movement of lymphocytes to various other locations in the body” (“What Is the Function of the Human Appendix? Did It Once Have a Purpose That Has Since Been Lost?” Oct. 21, 1999).

Some medical doctors believe that the appendix acts as a storehouse for good bacteria, “rebooting” the digestive system after diarrheal illnesses.

Evolution's useless arguments

These examples can't begin to detail *all* the arguments regarding parts of the human body that are considered vestigial, unnecessary or of “unknown use.” The point is that medical



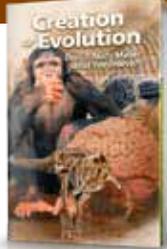
The more research done into the natural world and understanding our bodies, the more obvious it becomes that evolution fails to account for the complexity of life.

science eventually finds that these parts *do* have purposes.

But one great failing of evolutionary thinking is to not recognize that God has also designed our bodies to adapt to survive. Can we survive without an appendix, or wisdom teeth or any other “minor” part of our body? Of course we can. Humanly, we can adapt to a loss of an appendage, sight or hearing and still have a productive life. *Adaptability is not evidence of evolution—it is evidence of good design.*

The more research and study that's done in the natural world around us and in understanding our bodies, the more obvious it becomes that evolution fails to account for the complexity and resiliency of life—life that God created. There is no doubt that the human body is amazing. The more scientists study it, the more complexity they discover. The bodies of other creatures are of course amazing too—as we all share the same Designer. The evidence is abundantly clear that God created us, and we are indeed fearfully and wonderfully made (Genesis 1:26; Psalm 139:14; Romans 1:20).

God made you and me, and He did so for a purpose. The next time you hear or read some statement about how evolution has shaped us, take the time to do the research and find out more about why God designed our bodies to work the way they do. **BT**



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Darwin's theory of evolution has a great number of problems. For more insight into its many shortcomings, download or request our free study guide *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What We Believe?* to get the seldom-seen other side of the story!

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Is The Bible True?

The Bible claims many things. Most importantly, it claims to be the very Word of the Creator God. Can we trust the Bible in its claims?

by Darris McNeely

The Bible is the most influential book of all time. It's been translated into virtually every language on earth. Millions of copies have been printed. You probably have a copy somewhere in your home right now.

The Bible is debated, discussed and all too often dismissed. It is revered and respected—but also reviled by some.

But perhaps the most important question about the Bible is one that is often taken for granted: *Is the Bible true?* Is it what it claims to be—the inspired, divine, holy revelation of God, the Creator of the universe?

If the Bible is true, and it is what it claims to be, then it is a book where you can find the deepest truths of life. If the Bible is true, it's the source of ultimate truth about the Creator God and His plan for mankind and for your life.

We at *Beyond Today* hold this book in high regard as the ultimate source of truth for life. Every topic we cover is rooted firmly in the teachings of the Bible, and we want to help you see that you can have confidence in the Bible as the guide and authority for how to live a good life of following God's lead.

Right now you may be seeking a source of reliable knowledge to support your belief in the Bible. We know there are many challenges by skeptics and scoffers. These questions have been around ever since the first words

were written down. But here is our stand: We take the Bible as true—not blindly, but based on many documented proofs and a developed trust. In fact, no credible effort has been made and succeeded in undermining the validity of this book.

How have we come to the position where we trust the Bible to be true? There are many reasons supporting what the Bible itself tells us. Let's take a look at a few.

Proof 1: Fulfilled prophecy

The Bible records many events that took place in the past. But most extraordinary is its record of events that *have yet to take place*.

The word "prophecy" in our modern day brings with it baggage. It's a word used in fantasy novels or movies where some aged religious guru calls out some future event. To be honest, when we hear about prophecies today, it's often in the context of unbalanced people proclaiming kooky, unbiblical ideas about the end time.

But prophecy is real, and it's a major part of the Word of God. It takes a balanced approach to look into the study of biblical prophecy. God is the God of history and the future. He knows what has happened and what *will* happen.

Look at what God said through the prophet Isaiah: *"I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient*



times, what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please'" (Isaiah 46:10, New International Version 1984, emphasis added throughout).

A proper understanding of prophecy can build faith. When we see prophesied events come to pass, we know that God is in charge, and we can be confident in trusting and obeying Him.

The Bible records many prophecies, then shows how they were fulfilled. The most important ones describe the first and second comings of Jesus Christ. Prophecies spanning thousands of years from Genesis to Isaiah to Micah described Christ's first coming—even down to naming the town where He would be born, Bethlehem. The Bible contains more prophecies about Christ's coming than about any other event. And there are many more that describe what His return will be like. Studying these is an awe-inspiring exercise that builds faith and helps make sense of the world.

After all, look around—events are happening all over the world that you may not fully understand but that are already affecting your life. Bible prophecy tells us where events like these will ultimately lead.

Prophecy should motivate us to change

Another impactful reason for prophecy is *to change who you are*. There is an essential scripture we should read to keep a balanced approach to prophecy:

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. *Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness . . . ?*" (2 Peter 3:10-12).

We can trust that God is working in our lives, and we need to do our part in overcoming sin and becoming more like Him. The Bible makes claims like no other book. God reveals future events. Some of the events revealed in advance have already come to pass.

We could examine many additional fulfilled prophecies to help prove that this book is true, but we don't have room in this article to cover them in enough detail to do them justice. If you want to know more, I encourage you to search our website ucg.org/learnmore for Nebuchadnezzar's dreams, the prophecy of Daniel 11 and prophecies of the Messiah.

Proof 2: Archaeological evidence

Biblical archeology is a field that supports prophecy and the biblical record. Let's consider a specific example—the story of Cyrus, king of Persia.

In 539 B.C., Cyrus captured and took over the kingdom of Babylon. It was Babylon that had captured Jerusalem and deported its people less than 100 years earlier, ending the Kingdom of Judah. Babylon's policy was to remove conquered people from their homeland and resettle them elsewhere. Most of the Jews had been resettled in the area of Babylon. When you read the story of Daniel, you see a man caught in this web.

Cyrus' policy was different. He allowed peoples he defeated to remain in their homeland. As he took power from Babylon, he let those peoples already conquered go back to their homelands. Ezra 1 records that Cyrus made a proclamation allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city.

That decree was a fulfillment of a prophecy made more than 100 years before by the prophet Isaiah. God had said through him, "I am the LORD . . . who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, 'Let it be rebuilt,' and of the temple, 'Let its foundations be laid'" (Isaiah 44:24, 28, NIV 1984).

Not only did God foretell what Cyrus would do more than a century before it happened, but He even called him out by name!

Archaeology substantiates the biblical record

Now this is where it gets interesting. In 1879, a clay cylinder was discovered in modern-day Iraq, with the story of Cyrus' conquest of Babylon. Clay tablets were the notebook or text file of the ancient world, recording events and important details to be remembered later.

The Cyrus cylinder, which can be seen at the British Museum, has been studied and verified by top scholars. This fascinating ancient historical document corroborates the biblical account in Ezra of Jews returning to Jerusalem along with treasures taken from God's temple. More than that, it supports Isaiah's amazing prophecy from more than 100 years prior to Cyrus.

Some Bible critics say that it was someone who lived long after Isaiah's death and the fall of Babylon who wrote that prophecy. They argue that referring to Cyrus by name more than a century in advance is impossible. A modern secular mind cannot admit that the revelation of God to a prophet could be legitimate. But the facts speak otherwise.

For one, the cylinder uses language similar to Isaiah. Like Isaiah's prophecy, Cyrus calls himself a shepherd. And instead of giving the Persian god credit for his victory over Babylon, Cyrus gives it to the Babylonian god Marduk—just as he gives credit to the God of the Jews in his proclamation for them recorded in Ezra, demonstrating in both cases a policy of cultural pluralism and promotion of the religions of the conquered. He would have allowed Jews to return and build the Jerusalem temple under this policy.

Here is evidence from archaeology that backs up Bible prophecy in a remarkable way. Archaeological discoveries in Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Turkey and other lands where the Bible's events occurred have unearthed mountains of information shedding light on the people, places and events recorded in the Bible. This is verified in many well-documented and reputable books, papers and museum exhibits.

Proof 3: Scientific discoveries

If you hear the words "science" and "Bible" in the same sentence, it's usually because someone is talking about a conflict between them. But it doesn't have to be that way.

The Bible is certainly a book that has to be understood and accepted by faith. But, as mentioned, this faith is not to be ignorant or unreasoning. God doesn't want us to stop using our brains and intellects to be able to believe that the Bible is His Word. We don't have to ignore the advances of science to still believe in God.

If we keep an open mind when looking at the Scriptures and understand how science works, it's plain that the Bible is sensible, consistent and logical and that a proper reading doesn't contradict what we see in the creation God made.

We need to keep two things in mind when talking about

this subject. First, science is simply a process for learning about the observable universe. Second, the Bible is primarily a book for spiritual guidance.

Scientists are constantly studying, testing and reviewing their conclusions to ensure that what they've discovered is correct. The scientific method itself is the logical workflow of wondering about something, testing whether that something is true, and then retesting to double-check. In the modern world, the way we make scientific progress is by making a new discovery, forming a new conclusion, then having *others* review and test that conclusion to ensure its validity.

Very often, new discoveries are made that modify and in some cases overturn conclusions made before. In fact, that is a point that scientists take pride in: Science constantly revises its conclusions, each time getting closer and closer to the truth through observation and experimentation.

Something else to remember is that the Bible is primarily

The Bible is a book that has to be understood and accepted by faith. But this faith is not to be ignorant or unreasoning.

a book of *spiritual* guidance. It's a book intended to give us meaning for life, to reveal God as our Creator and Heavenly Father, and to give us a road map for how to live. It isn't meant as a science textbook.

That being said, it is an accurate description of nature from man's perspective. In scriptures that comment on the physical nature of the universe, a proper reading shows that what is written does not attempt to contradict what we can prove through scientific observation.

I hope you can see how science and the Bible can work together. Science seeks to reveal the physical truths of what we can observe, and the Bible gives answers about the meaning of life and the spiritual mysteries that we as human beings have wondered about for all of history—as well as providing some factual information about the physical realm.

Bible authors were aware of medical and scientific principles

Let's look at an example of how biblical authors had a sometimes-remarkable understanding of the physical world. It's an example from the life and work of Moses, who lived about 3,500 years ago.

Moses was raised in an Egyptian home as an adopted son in the house of Pharaoh. Modern archaeologists have uncovered many artifacts from Egypt in Moses' day, and one of those is an Egyptian medical document. What it describes about how Egyptian doctors treated illness and wounds would make us feel sick today.

Some examples include using statue dust, beetle shells, mouse tails, cat hair, pig eyes, dog toes, eel eyes and goose guts for medicinal purposes. If somebody had a splinter, they would treat it with a salve of worm blood and donkey dung. We know today that dung is full of tetanus spores, so somebody in ancient Egypt might have died from lockjaw simply due to the way a doctor would have tried to treat a splinter.

Yet the Bible doesn't prescribe any of those disgusting

things for treating disease or illness. If the law of Moses were simply something given by the man Moses, and not divinely revealed by God, no doubt Moses would have relied on his 40 years of growing up in Egyptian society in giving basic health advice. Instead, he gave sanitation principles that were thousands of years ahead of their time!

Major disease epidemics through history have been caused because people didn't understand that good hygiene is essential to good health. In the early 1800s, a major cholera outbreak started in India and over the course of 20 years spread all the way to the United States, killing thousands of people along the way. Cholera breakouts are almost always linked to improper sewage disposal. In many places around the world, sewage would flow openly in the streets and contaminate the water supply.

In stark contrast with that principle, God clearly instructed Israel on how to dispose of waste: "Designate a place outside the camp where you can go to relieve yourself. As part of your equipment have something to dig with, and when you relieve yourself, dig a hole and cover up your excrement" (Deuteronomy 23:12-13, NIV 1984).

If mankind had listened to God's instructions, recorded by Moses thousands of years before, countless lives could have been saved.

There are many more examples like this, where scientific discoveries of modern times have proven principles in the Bible that are plain for anybody to read.

The Bible is true—believe it and live it!

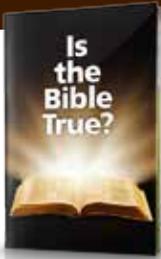
The Bible *is true*. It is what it claims to be—the inspired, divine, holy revelation of God. It is the source of truth and wisdom and the path to know the Creator of the universe. It is an accurate record of the history of the world, both in what has already happened, and in what will happen in the future.

As we study these things, we have to take a close look at the lives we lead. We have to analyze what changes we need to make.

God has given us an instruction book on life. Through His Word, He foretells the events that will lead up to the return of Jesus Christ. What are you going to do about it? It's between you and God. We can only show you where to go to find truth—the Bible. It's now in your hands.

Pick up your Bible today. Read its words and believe them. Pray to God and ask Him to open your mind and heart to understand what He's saying to you in its pages. Ask Him to show you how you should respond to its message.

The Bible *is true*. When you believe it and put it into practice and live it, it *will* change your life! **BT**



LEARN MORE

This article has touched on only a few of the many proofs that the Holy Bible is indeed God's inspired revelation to humankind. You can find many more in our free study guide *Is the Bible True?* Download or request your free copy today!

BTmagazine.org/booklets

Push for European military and growing superstate

Germany released a statement to the European Union (EU) pushing for a joint effort in military power. The EU has been a major economic power since the 1990s, though the euro has had its ups and downs in the market. Germany has been the stabilizing factor for countries struggling financially again and again, and knows its stability gives it the credibility to suggest creating a military power.

“German security policy has relevance—also far beyond our country,” the paper states. “Germany is willing to join early, decisively and substantially as a driving force in international debates . . . to take responsibility and assume leadership” (“Germany to Push for Progress Towards European Army,” *Financial Times*, May 2, 2016).

Creating a centralized military would be beneficial for the European Union on a few levels. Primarily, a joint military would minimize redundancy of efforts—combining efforts could mean more efficient use of funds for one centralized military force.

“The paper says that the EU’s defense industry is ‘organized nationally and seriously fragmented,’ raising costs, handicapping it in international competition and making it difficult for national militaries to



German Leopard 2 battle tanks on maneuvers.

operate together. It is therefore necessary that military capabilities are jointly planned, developed, managed, procured and deployed to raise the interoperability of Europe’s defense forces and to further improve Europe’s capacity to act,” the paper states” (ibid.).

Revelation 13 and 17 talk about a time before Christ’s return when leaders will unite to create a political power called “the Beast.” Putting together the evidence of biblical prophecy and world history, we can see that this joint power will arise out of Europe. From the ashes of the Roman Empire is to eventually come a political, financial and military superpower that will be in control at the return of Jesus Christ.

The financial partnership of the euro was a step towards this power. A combined military would be a huge leap that could be the next step in becoming a supranational power on the world scene. History is in the making with this German proposal. Europe is moving closer to the political and military integration the book of Revelation describes of the end time.

We should consider a recent warning from former London mayor Boris Johnson, as reported in the London *Telegraph*: “The European Union is pursuing a similar goal to Hitler in trying to create a powerful superstate, Boris Johnson says . . . He warns that while bureaucrats in Brussels are using ‘different methods’ from the Nazi dictator, they share the aim of unifying Europe under one ‘authority.’ . . .

“The former mayor of London, who is a keen classical scholar, argues that the past 2,000 years of European history have been characterized by repeated attempts to unify Europe under a single government in order to recover the continent’s lost ‘golden age’ under the Romans” (Tim Ross, “Boris Johnson: The EU Wants a Superstate, Just as Hitler Did,” May 15, 2016).

Many have decried his warning as absurd. But prophecy marches on. Read our free study guide *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* to learn more. (Sources: *Financial Times*, *The Telegraph*.)

Islamic State puts Israel in its sights

Despite daily U.S. and allied forces’ airstrikes, the self-proclaimed Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) continues to seek the destruction of the Syrian state and the entirety of the current Middle East order. The focus on media attention is on ISIS’ military campaigns and the intense violence that is their calling card.

The terrorist organization is waging war on another front and in another way, however, and ISIS’ endgame holds potential danger for the state of Israel. *The Washington Times* reports about the next step in ISIS’ push to dominate the Middle East:

“With a media blitz, the Islamic State has set its sights on Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula as the next shot at expanding its empire and establishing a base from which to attack neighboring Israel. The terrorist group’s propaganda units have gone into high gear for recruitment this month to build a force in Sinai large enough to one day conquer Jerusalem—the same way its fighters took over large parts of

Syria and Iraq” (Rowan Scarborough, “Islamic State Aims to Destroy Israel, ‘Liberate’ Jerusalem With Sinai Peninsula Terrorist Force,” May 22, 2016).

An armed guerrilla force on the Egyptian-Israeli border would mean immediate danger for both Egyptian and Israeli citizens. ISIS has already promised violence against both groups in pursuing its goal of conquest:

“Islamic State propaganda promises recruits that they will one day ‘liberate’ Jerusalem and end the state of Israel, according to analysis by the Middle East Media Research Institute [MEMRI], which tracks jihadi communications. The Egyptian army, the force standing in the way, is threatened with beheadings if soldiers continue to fight” (ibid.).

If Syria falls and Sinai is overrun, Israel may face a future of being surrounded by extremist forces in both the north and south. To see how things will ultimately turn out in the region, be sure to read our free study guide *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. (Source: *The Washington Times*.)

Children of married parents show higher self-esteem

A new study in the United Kingdom shows that children whose parents are married have the highest self-esteem. The study, conducted by the Marriage Foundation, surveyed 3,822 children. The results contradict other studies, which have shown that two parents simply cohabiting, whether married or not, is the best.

But this study goes further to show that the stability provided by marriage—a public declaration of commitment to one another—boosts the self-esteem of children in those families.

“Conventional wisdom has it that child outcomes depend on parents staying together rather than mari-

tal status. This new finding shows that assumption to be false. In terms of self-esteem, teenagers living with parents who are together but not married are no better off than children living with lone parents,” said Harry Benson, research director at the foundation.

He continued, “A number of studies have shown that self-esteem is closely related to how secure people feel in their relationships” (quoted by Vanessa Allen, “Children of Married Parents Have Highest Self-Esteem, Says New Research,” *Daily Mail*, May 29, 2016).

These results should come as no surprise for anybody who understands the biblical basis for marriage. Marriage is a physical institution that in various

respects is meant to model the spiritual relationship Jesus Christ desires to have with His Bride, the Church—oneness, unity, perfect harmony—the same committed love God the Father and Jesus Christ now share.

Likewise, unshakeable unity between man and wife creates an atmosphere of trust, stability and love in a family. Free from deep-seated, subconscious anxiety, a child brought up in such a home stands a far better chance of succeeding later in life.

Our free Bible study guide *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension* goes into more depth on the deep meaning, responsibility and holiness of the marriage relationship. Read it online at www.ucg.org/booklets or request it from one of our offices listed on page 39.

Muslim terrorist carries out most deadly shooting in U.S. history

The largest terrorist attack in the United States since 9/11 of 2001, and the largest mass shooting in U.S. history, occurred June 12, 2016, at a gay night club in Orlando, Fla. A radical jihadist who swore allegiance to the Islamic State (ISIS) gunned down 49 people and injured another 53 before he was killed by police. ISIS quickly took responsibility, calling the perpetrator “an Islamic State fighter.” The attack followed calls by ISIS leaders to carry out attacks on non-Muslims during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan.

Yet when President Barack Obama spoke in response immediately after, he would not refer to what happened as Islamic terrorism, following his established pattern, and used this as an opportunity to declare the need for more gun control.

Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump quickly said the president should resign if he could not identify the country’s enemy here. He also leveled criticism against his Democratic opponent in the presidential race, Hillary Clinton, for similarly refusing to make the identification—though she then said she could use such terminology but did not want to

label the whole religion of Islam.

Regarding Obama not mentioning the words “radical Islamic terrorism,” Trump said, “He doesn’t get it or he gets it better than anybody understands. It’s one or the other, and either one is unacceptable” (CNN, June 13, 2016).

The attack has thrown the progressive left into a quandary. Had a “right-wing Christian” perpetrated



Police respond to the June 12 shooting at a gay bar in Orlando, Fla., in which more than 100 patrons were gunned down by a Muslim male who had proclaimed allegiance to the Islamic State.

this act, it would have been used to vilify all conservative Christians who want to deny gay rights. But as it was a Muslim, great effort is made to distance him from “authentic Islam”—lest the left’s alliance with Islam against traditional Christianity be put in jeopardy. The shooter was portrayed as a troubled, unbalanced person—but what Islamic terrorist is not? The real problem is that, while those like him are in the minority among Muslims, they still constitute a sizable number of people—perhaps millions.

This should be a wake-up call to those on the left. Radical Islamists are not their friends. In a number of Islamic countries, homosexual behavior is punishable by death and gays are routinely jailed and/or executed. Commentator Mark Steyn said: “The arithmetic isn’t that complicated. The more Islam the fewer gays . . . In the end, you have to pick and choose which squares you want in your diversity quilt” (SteynOnline.com, June 13).

While we obviously do not agree with the lifestyle of those who were attacked, we stand outraged and saddened over this murderous attack. And we pray for a world of peace and right understanding under the rule of the Kingdom of God. (Sources: CNN, Fox News, SteynOnline.com.)

Deadly superbug reaches United States

For the first time, researchers have found a person in the United States carrying bacteria resistant to antibiotics of last resort, an alarming development that the top U.S. public health official says could mean “the end of the road” for antibiotics.” So began a May 27 *Washington Post* article titled “The Superbug That Doctors Have Been Dreading Just Reached the U.S.” (Lena Sun and Brady Dennis).

The bacteria strain was detected in a Pennsylvania woman and has proven resistant to the antibiotic colistin, “the antibiotic of last resort for particularly dangerous types of superbugs.” Such bacteria can kill up to half those infected with it.

While the particular strain found in the woman can be treated with other antibiotics, “researchers worry that its colistin-resistance gene, known as mcr-1, could spread to other bacteria that can already evade other antibiotics.”

The director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Tom Frieden, said in an interview that this development “basically shows us that the end of the road isn’t very far away for antibiotics—that we may be in a situation where we have patients in our intensive care units, or patients getting urinary-tract infections for which we do not have antibiotics.”

“I’ve been there for TB patients,” he continued. “I’ve cared for patients for whom there are no drugs left. It is a feeling of such horror and helplessness. This is not where we need to be” (ibid.).

Lance Price, director of the Antibiotic Resistance Action Center and a George Washington University professor, said in a statement about the case: “It’s hard

to imagine worse for public health in the United States. We may soon be facing a world where CRE [antibiotic-resistant bacteria] infections are untreatable.”

Researchers and medical personnel have increasingly warned in recent years that the spread of such antibiotic-resistant bacteria may lead to a situation in which minor infections and routine operations could easily become life-threatening crises.

Almost on cue, health officials in the United Kingdom announced that “a super-resistant form” of the sexually transmissible disease gonorrhea “is cutting a swath through straight and gay communities” there (Miriam Stoppard, “Why Outbreak of Super Gonorrhoea Is Proving Difficult to Contain,” *The Mirror*, June 2, 2016).

Officials reported that this new strain can resist medicine’s most powerful antibiotics, so it is being treated with a combination of two drugs. However, the bacterium has developed resistance to one of the drugs, and experts say it will inevitably develop resistance to the other—at which point no other antibiotics would be available. Public Health England described the growing crisis as a “perfect storm scenario” (ibid.).

Such developments remind us of Jesus Christ’s prophecy of “pestilences”—disease epidemics—that will plague the world in the time leading up to His return (Matthew 24:7). These things “are the beginning of sorrows” (verse 8), leading up to a time when all human life will be threatened with extinction (verses 21-22). We need to be continually aware of where world trends are taking us. To learn more, download or request our free study guide *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* (Sources: *The Washington Post*, *The Mirror*.)

How can you make sense of the news?

So much is happening in the world, and so quickly. Where are today’s dramatic and dangerous trends taking us? What does Bible prophecy reveal about our future? You’re probably very concerned with the direction the world is heading. *So are we.* That’s one reason we produce the *Beyond Today* daily TV commentaries—to help you understand the news in the light of Bible prophecy. These eye-opening presentations offer you a perspective so badly needed in our confused world—the perspective of God’s Word. Visit us at ucg.org/beyond-today/daily!





What's Behind the TRANSGENDER Movement?

With increasingly mandated acceptance of transgenderism, society is careening off a cliff. How did we get here? And where will we end up?

by Tom Robinson

A shocking salvo in the culture war came on May 13, 2016, when the Obama administration told American schools to allow transgender students to use the bathroom of whatever sex they identify as. Though having no explicit legal force, there was nevertheless the threat that schools refusing to go along could lose federal funding, crippling them financially.

Many argue that such government-backed extortion will lead to non-transgendered deviants going into opposite-sex bathrooms with a mere claim of gender choice that cannot be questioned. A number of states have since filed lawsuits against the move.

This followed the passing of a North Carolina law in March against using a restroom not matching one's biological gender. Obama's administration promptly declared this a civil rights violation, with Attorney General Loretta Lynch absurdly and outrageously comparing bathrooms having men and women signs to racial segregation signs of decades ago! (Meanwhile, the media studiously overlooked the fact that public opposition to the North Carolina law was led by—you guessed it—a convicted homosexual sex offender.)

The transgender issue got a jolt a year ago with former Olympic athlete Bruce Jenner coming out as "Caitlyn" and starring in a TV reality show titled *I Am Cait* chronicling Jenner's transition from a man to a woman. That seemed a cultural turning point—and oh, how far we've come since!

The range of what the public will accept, known as the window of discourse or Overton window, ever more frequently shifts. And what was before unthinkable is suddenly part of the public discourse and then embraced.

And here we are—only a year after the U.S. Supreme Court struck down all laws banning homosexual marriage, when five unelected judges forced a major cultural change on the

nation—in a place most Americans and most of the world couldn't imagine we'd be not long ago.

What should we make of the current transgender push, and where is it leading? And what insight does the Bible offer about this issue and a society's acceptance of it?

Reality check about a mental disorder

The media, news organizations and government push of the transgender agenda is promoted as simply a matter of human rights and fairness. But is that the real issue, or is something considerably different at work?

Dr. Paul McHugh, longtime chief psychiatrist at Johns Hopkins Hospital—which pioneered sex-change surgery until experience demonstrated it wasn't beneficial—states in a *Wall Street Journal* editorial that "policy makers and the media are doing no favors either to the public or the transgendered by treating their confusions as a right in need of defending rather than as a mental disorder that deserves understanding, treatment and prevention."

Cutting through the confusion and misinformation regarding the issue, he describes those feeling themselves of the opposite sex to be suffering "a mental disorder in two respects."

The first, he explains, "is that the idea of sex misalignment is simply mistaken—it does not correspond with physical reality." And the second "is that it can lead to grim psychological outcomes"—including, but not limited to, a dangerously high suicide rate ("Transgender Surgery Isn't The Solution," June 12, 2014, emphasis added throughout).

He describes the transgendered as suffering "a disorder of 'assumption' like those in other disorders familiar to psychiatrists," with the assumption being that "the individual differs from what seems given in nature—namely one's maleness or femaleness." He compares it to other kinds of disordered



assumptions such as “anorexia and bulimia nervosa, where the assumption that departs from physical reality is the belief by the dangerously thin that they are overweight.” And we don’t encourage these to lose more weight or get liposuction!

One thing that’s horrible about the widespread acceptance of transgender surgery, and advocating it for ever-younger people, is that “when children who reported transgender feelings were tracked without medical or surgical treatment at both Vanderbilt University and London’s Portman Clinic, 70%-80% of them spontaneously lost those feelings.”

In other words, 70 to 80 percent of those who at a young age inwardly believed themselves to be of the opposite sex saw those feelings vanish as they grew older!

Further, Johns Hopkins University’s tracking of those who underwent transgender surgery found that “their subsequent psycho-social adjustments were no better than those who didn’t have the surgery,” leading the institution to cease doing such procedures.

Dr. McHugh also cites a long-term study by Sweden’s Karolinska Institute that followed 324 patients who had undergone sex-reassignment surgery over years, sometimes decades.

“The study revealed that beginning about 10 years after having the surgery, the transgendered began to experience increasing mental difficulties. Most shockingly, their suicide mortality rose almost 20-fold above the comparable non-transgender population. This disturbing result has as yet no explanation but probably reflects the growing sense of isolation reported by the aging transgendered after surgery. The high suicide rate certainly challenges the surgery prescription” (ibid.).

Keep in mind that this horrific suicide rate was in Sweden, where transgendered persons have long been accepted in Swedish culture. And a recent report by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention stated that more than 4 in

“When the Binary Burns”

A sobering article at LifeSiteNews by Claire Chretien titled “Bathrooms Are Just the Beginning: A Scary Look Into the Trans Movement’s End Goals” (May 6, 2016) presents an eye-opening analysis of what’s going on.

Chretien writes: “The battle over men accessing women’s bathrooms and vice versa has little to do with bathrooms or even transgenderism, a well-known LGBT activist admitted . . . *It has everything to do with re-working society and getting rid of the ‘heterobinary structure’ in which we live—eliminating distinctions between ‘male’ and ‘female’ altogether.*”

“Riki Wilchins, who has undergone ‘sex change’ surgery and is a far-left social change activist, wrote in the gay publication *The Advocate* . . . that social conservatives and many LGBT activists are missing the point when it comes to the transgender bathroom debate. The title of Wilchins’ article makes the points succinctly: *‘We’ll Win the Bathroom Battle When the Binary Burns.’*”

“People should be able to enter whatever bathroom ‘fits their gender identity,’ Wilchins wrote, but the fact that we even have ‘male’ and ‘female’ bathrooms reflects something about society that needs to change. There are many ‘genderqueer’ or ‘non-binary’ people, Wilchins wrote . . .

“In the eyes of LGBT advocates, the notion of only two genders . . . is antiquated. But transgenderism inherently acknowledges and actually reinforces the binary nature of gender. Transgenderism presumes that a man can be ‘trapped’ inside a woman’s body and a woman can be ‘trapped’ inside a man’s body.”

Family Research Council Senior Fellow Peter Sprigg told LifeSiteNews, “The long-term goals of many LGBT activists are actually not just access to the restrooms of their preferred gender identity, but *actually destroying the concept of gender or the separation of the genders altogether.*”

Rob Dreher at *The American Conservative* website observes: “This is not simply about accommodating minors who think they are transgendered. *It is about radically changing the meaning of what it means to be a man, a woman, and a human being . . .* Transgenders and their advocates are getting out ahead of society now, and trying to alter the way we think about the meaning of gender, of human nature, indeed of reality itself.

“Transgenderism is far more radical than homosexuality. But it’s already passing into the culture very quickly, driven by federal courts, the Obama administration, and popular media . . . They want to destroy the concepts of male and female entirely. This is what they’re after, and they’re not going to stop until it is accomplished.”

Dreher warns that parents need to consider how much of the current culture they’re willing to subject their children to, deciding what the tipping point for them will be—the point at which they pull their children out of public schools to protect them from what’s happening.

Stella Morabito, senior contributor to *The Federalist*, told LifeSiteNews: “Once you basically redefine humanity as sexless you end up with a de-humanized society in which there can be no legal ‘mother’ or ‘father’ or ‘son’ or ‘daughter’ or ‘husband’ or ‘wife’ without permission from the State. *Government documents are already erasing the terms.* In such a society, the most intimate human relationships take a hit. *The family ends up abolished.*”

10 transgender Americans had attempted suicide. Obviously something is terribly wrong in their thinking!

Transgender advocates, so convinced of the rightness of their cause, have persuaded several liberal American states to pass laws banning psychiatrists, “*even with parental permission, from striving to restore natural gender feelings to a transgender minor.*” In other words, mental health professionals are forbidden by law from actually helping children afflicted with this disorder—they are only allowed to encourage them to remain in their conflicted state of mind!

This legal climate has led misguided physicians in some states to administer puberty-delaying hormones to gender-confused children to make later sex-change surgeries less traumatic.

But “*given that close to 80% of such children would abandon their confusion and grow naturally into adult life if untreated,*” explains Dr. McHugh, “*these medical interventions come close to child abuse.* A better way to help these children [is] *with devoted parenting.*”

“At the heart of the problem,” he concludes, “is confusion over the nature of the transgendered. ‘*Sex change*’ is *biologically impossible.* People who undergo sex-reassignment surgery *do not change from men to women or vice versa.* Rather, *they become feminized men or masculinized women.* Claiming that this is a civil-rights matter and encouraging surgical intervention is *in reality to collaborate with and promote a mental disorder*” (ibid.).

In fact, gender is written into our very DNA. If you have XX chromosomes, you are female. If XY, you are male. Even if anatomy is surgically altered, the fundamental genetic identify remains.

But this particular disorder has become a tool of those promoting “anything goes” when it comes to sex and sexual practices. And so it has increasingly been presented to the public as something to embrace and celebrate.

Our Creator God, however, has a distinctly different view. In Isaiah 5:20 He warns us, “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”

In defiance of the Creator of human sexuality

Moreover, it appears that the ultimate goal of many activists is to eliminate the concept of gender altogether (see “When the Binary Burns” on page 23).

Of course, this goes directly against God who created mankind. His Word, the Bible, tells us right up front: “*So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them . . . And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply . . .’*” (Genesis 1:27-28).

Our Creator is the One who established human beings as being either male or female—with an important reason for doing so being that they can reproduce and multiply those who are made in His image (compare Genesis 5:1-3). Moreover, He designed human family and marriage to represent an ultimate spiritual relationship (see our free study guide *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension* to learn more).

And God wants the male-female distinction to remain. In His inspired Word, He rebukes the blurring of gender lines, declaring: “A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman’s garment, for all who do so are

an abomination to the LORD your God” (Deuteronomy 22:5).

An “abomination” is something utterly reprehensible to God. Some have argued that mere transvestitism wouldn’t be loathsome to God—that this must be referring to a pagan worship practice. Yet there is no hint of this here, so it’s best that we take this instruction exactly as it’s stated. Still, there is a connection to paganism.

The beginning of the corruption

Idoltrous religion and many of the false philosophies we see today can be traced back to ancient Babylon and, even before that, to the lies of the serpent in the Garden of Eden—Satan (Revelation 12:9).

Satan misled Eve into eating the forbidden fruit, telling her she wouldn’t die as God said, and then Adam partook also (verses 1-6). They then became aware of their nakedness and sewed fig leaves to cover up (verse 7). God asked, “Who told you that you were naked?” (verses 10-11).

What had happened? When and how did the shame of nakedness enter? Realize that the passage is a very condensed account and much more is going on here than meets the eye. Considering the whole of pagan religion that began with Satan’s lies, his statement that Eve wouldn’t die and would be like God, and his being behind the shame of nakedness here, we get some indication of what was going on here and the implications.

It seems likely that here began the false concept of the dual nature of man as spiritual immortal soul imprisoned in corrupt material flesh (see our free study guide *What Happens After Death?* to better understand the truth about this). Satan wanted Adam and Eve to believe that their existence transcended their physical bodies, and that their bodies—especially the sexual organs of physical procreation—were in fact evil and something they should be ashamed of.

Satan, a former archangel in rebellion against God, hated these human beings God created to expand the divine family. He wanted to corrupt and destroy them. Moreover, as a spirit being Satan had no sexuality and no means of reproducing himself and may have been envious of these attributes bestowed on mankind.

This may be part of why Satan set about to discredit and corrupt sexuality. Yet he also may have been aiming to hinder human reproduction, with the desire of eradicating mankind. Later he would promote sexuality as an object of lust—and sexual fertility as pagan magical power. The corruption and destruction of the human race remains his goal.

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul and the baseness of the flesh was later part of the false religion of Babylon, the fountainhead of all idolatry. A powerful strain of this ideology, which developed into various forms, was gnosticism, which sought to transcend earthly reality and the corrupt physical existence through secret knowledge. The biblical writers Paul, John and Jude confronted those who were infiltrating the Church with such ideas.

Pagan dualism and gnosticism led to two extremes promoted by Satan—celibacy to the point of avoiding marriage on one hand and lustful abandon on the other. While some sought to deny the flesh through asceticism (Colossians 2:21), others indulged the flesh in every way, arguing that their real selves

were spiritual and transcending the flesh, so fleshly debasement did not matter. It became “a license for immorality” (Jude 4, New International Version).

Babylonian worship even included gender bending as part of transcending fleshly limitations (see “Gender Blurring in Pagan Worship” at right).

Where to now?

Think about all this in the context of the culture war being waged in the present time. Satan still has his unwitting worshippers today—those who would follow him in his quest to debase and destroy mankind through the elimination of heterosexual marriage, family roles and the concept of gender altogether.

The lie in Eden and Babylon is still with us today—in merely another form. There are even those who deny their fleshly reality to be something else. And there are others who want to live entirely in an unreal world of gender fluidity or as neither male nor female.

Our society tells people to be true to themselves and everything will be okay. But true compassion for individuals who feel like their body is the wrong sex is not to alter every cultural norm and offer them harmful and permanent body mutilations to affirm their psychological condition. True compassion would be to help them overcome their disorder.

Healing and relief are what they need most. Our Creator God understands that we each have struggles, human failings, and hardships to overcome. We are born into a world that does not reflect His compassionate love, but instead Satan’s twisted and destructive hatred. God sent His Son to die for us while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8), and His promise of help for those who accept His calling extends to everybody.

Those who follow God are to be lights to those in need of that healing force. Our response to those who are transgender should be an extended hand of compassion and a heartfelt prayer for healing. Jesus explained to the self-righteous Pharisees, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick” (Luke 5:31, New International Version 1984).

If you’ve supported this lie, God calls on you to repent. And He forgives. If you are one who actually struggles with gender identity, seek Him with your whole heart for the healing of your mind—and also seek out professional help from counselors who perceive this problem correctly.

The number of transgenders is relatively tiny, estimated at somewhere between 1.4 to 7.7 per 100,000 according to a U.S. Census Bureau study. But the number of those embracing and condoning this problem is increasing by leaps and bounds, as the culture pushes headlong away from God.

Where will the window of what’s acceptable shift to next? Things still unspeakable today may be the headlines of years soon ahead. Riki Wilchins, the transsexual activist quoted in the sidebar “When the Binary Burns,” sees the work of transgender advocates as important to the goal of eradicating the male-female structure of society, noting that they have “finally and perhaps unwittingly opened the gender Pandora’s Box, and over the next few years all sorts of unexpected non-binary things . . . are about to come popping out.”

May God through Jesus Christ “deliver us from this present evil age” (Galatians 1:4)—soon! 

Gender Blurring in Pagan Worship

Crossdressing existed in ancient pagan worship—prominent being that of the Babylonian Ishtar, goddess of love, war, fertility and sex, called Inanna in Sumerian. The Israelites in their apostasies worshipped this goddess under the name Ashtoreth and by the title “Queen of Heaven.”

Ishtar was the prototype for the Greek Aphrodite and Roman Venus and a host of other deities—and was identified with the planet Venus as the morning and evening star. The Bible equates the worship of pagan deities with the worship of demons (Deuteronomy 32:16-17; Psalm 106:35-38; 1 Corinthians 10:20). And it’s intriguing to see that Scripture refers to Satan in his rebellion as Lucifer, the morning star (Isaiah 14:12). The devil is the real personage behind the false deity.

The *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* mentions the androgyny or gender ambiguity of Ishtar in its note on Deuteronomy 22:5 (2009, Vol. 1, p. 493), citing an enlightening source we now turn to—*Gender and Aging in Mesopotamia: The Gilgamesh Epic and Other Ancient Literature* by Rivkah Harris (2000).

Ishtar, Harris explains, “is androgynous, marginal, ambiguous . . . She is betwixt and between . . . Central to the goddess as paradox is her well-attested psychological and physiological androgyny. Inanna-Ishtar is both female and male . . . [in one place stating] “Though I am a woman I am a noble young man” (pp. 160, 163).

She shattered all gender and socioeconomic distinctions—being both a royal queen and “the harlot of heaven . . . set out for the alehouse” (p. 166). And in all this she was the role model for her followers. Among her powers was this from a Sumerian poem: “To turn a man into a woman and a woman into a man are yours, Inanna” (p. 160).

In the *Descent of Ishtar* we are told of some participants in her cult: “The male prostitutes comb their hair before her . . . They decorate the napes of their necks with colored bands . . . They gird themselves with the sword belt . . . Their right side they adorn with women’s clothing . . . Their left side they cover with men’s clothing . . .” (p. 170). The revel and competition ended in a bloody spectacle of self-cutting (compare 1 Kings 18:28).

Harris states: “Their transvestitism simulated the androgyny of Inanna-Ishtar. It was perhaps the inversion of the male/female binary opposition that thereby neutralized this opposition. By emulating their goddess who was both female and male, they shattered the boundary between the sexes” (pp. 170-171). This was seen as a way of rising above the prison of the flesh.

LEARN MORE



Sadly, the United States of America has lost its way—terribly. Its highest court has banned God and prayer from its classrooms, while those same schools teach students that they’re the product of mindless evolution. Request or download our free study guide *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* to understand what’s going on in the light of Bible prophecy!

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My father often told the story of being introduced to someone from Australia. After talking for a few minutes, and mistaking his new friend's accent for a British one, my dad asked, "Are you from Great Britain?" With typical Australian humor, the man replied, "Great Britain ain't been great for years, mate!"

How true that is for those who have watched as Great Britain—formerly ruling the greatest empire the world had ever seen, on which the sun never set—declined in power, influence and internal stability in the 20th century and into the 21st.

A number of factors have contributed, including the toll of world wars, the welfare state, multiculturalism, integration into a hyper-regulated Europe and, above all, a slide into ever-worsening immorality. Now the nation faces an uncertain future following the vote on "Brexit," British exit from the European Union, in late June—the outcome unknown as of this writing. Whichever way the vote has gone when you read this, the nation no doubt remains quite divided on the matter—and on many other issues.

How did Great Britain become great in the first place? How did things change? And what should the individual citizen do?

"Such is the end of Empire"

At its peak in the years leading up to World War I, the British Empire was truly a world-dominating power, with territories, colonies and dependencies on all six of the earth's inhabited continents. In terms of military might, it was unchallenged by any one single opponent until the tremendous changes of the World War I era.

Two world wars later, the combined weight of the global conflicts drained the nation's economy as well as the willpower of its people. The next step was the dissolution of Britain's world-spanning empire over the half-century following World War II.

First the empire began its exit from Asia by granting India independence and pulling out of the Middle East in the deal that would lead to the formation of the state of Israel in 1948. Next came Britain's departure from Africa in the 1960s, led most notably by the independence of South Africa.

Britain's exit from colonialism and the final breath of its empire came on July 1, 1997, when the United Kingdom officially handed Hong Kong back to China. After the ceremony, on his return trip to England, Prince Charles wrote in his journal a succinct summary of what the handover meant: "Such is the end of Empire, I sighed to myself" ("Charles' Diary Lays Thoughts Bare," BBC News, Feb. 22, 2006).

Much has been written on the enduring impact of Britain's rise to greatness and its colonial legacy, both in admiration and in criticism. Human nature being what it is, her rule was at times marred by personal and national ambition and greed. Yet the British molded much of what we see in the world today in terms of national boundaries, the global balance of power and an enduring cultural legacy.

What Made BRITAIN GREAT?

And How Did It All Go Wrong?

by Milan Bizic

At one point the largest and most powerful empire known to man, the British Empire, ruled lands on all inhabited continents of the earth. Now Britain vies with other powers for world influence. What happened? Where do things stand? And what must be done?

Political author Fareed Zakaria commented on Britain's powerful cultural influence: "In fact, Britain has arguably been the most successful exporter of its culture in human history. Before the American dream, there was an 'English way of life'—one that was watched, admired and copied throughout the world. And also thanks to the British Empire, English spread as a global language, spoken from the Caribbean to Cape Town to Calcutta" ("The Future of American Power," *Foreign Affairs*, May-June 2008, p. 20).

God and His Word the source of greatness

Not mentioned by Zakaria is the single most important contribution the British Empire made to the far-flung regions of its dominion—the English-language King James Version of the Holy Bible.

In the year 1611, in the early stages of the British Empire's first great period of expansion and prosperity, the new translation of the Bible ordered by King James seven years earlier was

people are honest? Or what nation has ever been strengthened by murder?

How much more powerful the impact of the Bible's standards can be when it begins to take root in a society whose value system included polygamy, intertribal warfare or cannibalism. This was the depth of the impact the British Empire and its Bible-carrying citizens had on many of its colonies. In this way the British people, with their faith in God and conviction that the Bible was His very Word, were a blessing to millions around the world.

A cultural shift away from God's laws

How did such monumental national decline take place in such a short amount of time? What were the chief factors in the changes to British society and culture?

As we covered before, a nation that reads, believes and obeys the Word of God is blessed by virtue of the Bible's instructions and the natural positive effects of God's way. The other side of the equation is also true: A nation that rebels against God's way, especially after

"Such is the end of Empire, I sighed to myself."—Prince Charles, 1997

completed. With that, the Word of God became more widely available and understandable to more people than ever before.

Its widespread availability wasn't confined to the British Isles, either. As the British Empire spread its arms wide and began to encompass more and more of the world, missionaries followed, taking the Bible's message to millions of people in lands it had never reached before.

In this way, the British people delivered untold blessings to people around the world—blessings that stem from reading, believing and following the Word of God, a spiritual reality affirmed by Jesus Christ (Luke 11:28).

And the Bible's dissemination has made a big difference in the world (compare Isaiah 55:10-11). Basic Christian morals are a blessing to any society, especially as more and more citizens learn to faithfully abide by them and practice them. After all, who doesn't think a society is better served when its

having tasted the blessings that come from following Him, will soon find itself experiencing what the Bible calls "curses"—the opposite of blessings.

Deuteronomy 28 gives a list of blessings from obeying God as well as a chilling list of the curses that would come on a nation that rejected His authority. These curses aren't magic or mysticism. They're simply the logical outcomes of a society embracing sin.

The rapid decline and disassembling of the British Empire should come as no surprise if viewed as the natural next step in a nation that no longer views God's Word as its moral compass.

We should consider that Britain's highly socialized welfare system—which, as in many other countries, has the appearance of a godly system of helping others—is, in vital respects, actually contrary to God's law. While the Bible does advocate helping the poor (and spells out how to do so), the government has no right to confiscate income from some to redistribute that

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to others. This is a form of theft, a violation of the Eighth Commandment.

Socialist programs end up creating government dependency rather than promote industry, a high work ethic and charitable concern for others. This is not to say that people in need should not be helped economically, but the fruit of the social welfare state over generations shows that this is not the right or truly beneficial way to go about it.

Further burdening the welfare system today is mass immigration. The *Daily Express* reported: “The burden of public services, benefits and pensions for migrants and their families far outstrips the income from what they pay in taxes. Migrants contributed £89.7 billion in taxes but received £106.7 billion in public spending during 2014-15” (Macer Hall, “Migrants Cost Britain £17bn a Year,” May 17, 2016). The same report says that leaving the EU would cut this bill by £1.2 billion, but that is clearly not enough.

Abandonment of Christian values

Beyond this, other laws of God are also violated more and more at every level of society. To claim that the United Kingdom has suffered from a steep and drastic decline in the fundamental standards of Christian morality should not be at all surprising or shocking. Even observers a world away should see the signs of a nation that has lost its spiritual way.

Several years ago, Richard Chartres, the Anglican bishop of London, addressed the moral failings of the British people in regard to the decay of biblical family values. “Literally millions of children grow up without knowing a stable, loving, secure family life—and that is not to count the hundreds of thousands more who don’t even make it out of the womb each year,” he said, in a pointed reference to abortion.

“Promiscuity, separation and divorce have reached epidemic proportions in our society. Perhaps, then, we shouldn’t be surprised that depression and the prescription of anti-depressants has reached a similarly epidemic level” (quoted by Jerome Taylor, “Bishop Says Moral Decline Has Hit ‘Epidemic’ Levels,” *The Independent*, June 1, 2012).

As Christian morals and beliefs are increasingly passé, and fewer and fewer Brits identify as Christians (now down to about 42 percent), an increasing number of people, nearly half the British population, consider themselves to be entirely nonreligious (John Bingham, “Christians Now a Minority in UK as Half the Population Have No Religion,” *The Telegraph*, Sept. 10, 2013).

In the religious void left behind in Christianity’s decline, other religions, notably Islam, are growing. One factor in this is the mass immigration already noted, as this includes a huge influx of people from Muslim nations. And multiculturalism, wherein immigrants maintain their own culture rather than blending in to the general culture, is heavily promoted in Britain, causing societal fragmentation.

One result of this is many pockets throughout the country of Islamic fundamentalism and even extremism, wherein the West is viewed as an enemy, with these having high birth-rates—against the reduced birthrates of the native population. This was one of the curses God warned of: “The alien who is among you shall rise higher and higher and you shall come down lower and lower” (Deuteronomy 28:43). In Britain this

has led to homegrown terrorism through bombings and even beheadings on the street.

Perhaps of chief concern in Islam’s rise in the UK is the appearance of Sharia (Islamic law) “courts” in fundamentalist Muslim communities. While these institutions are not legal courts, per se, their existence has many in Britain concerned about the potential creation of an alternate legal system in the country.

“Over the years, we have witnessed with increasing alarm the influence of ‘Sharia courts’ over the lives of citizens of Muslim heritage,” nearly 200 women’s rights and secular campaigners said in a statement. “Though the ‘Sharia courts’ have been touted as people’s right to religion, they are in fact, effective tools of the far-right Islamist movement whose main aim is to restrict and deny rights, particularly those of women and children.” It has been reported that there are 85 such courts in Britain, but the number is unknown” (Emma Batha, “Britain Must Ban Sharia ‘Kangaroo Courts,’ Say Activists,” Reuters, July 15, 2015).

Yet despite the growing influence of right-wing Islam, the country’s moral underpinnings are tied most strongly to the secular humanist movement. This was displayed prominently recently when London’s new mayor Sadiq Khan, himself raised Muslim, flew the rainbow flag from city hall to honor the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (Donna Edmunds, “Muslim Mayor of London Flies Rainbow Flag From City Hall,” Breitbart, May 17, 2016).

Back to the Bible

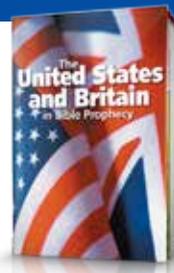
Britain is no different from other Western nations in forgetting the source of their incredible blessings and their national power—the Almighty Creator God and His Word, the Bible.

While the future of nations and the balance of world power is solely the purview of God, He does allow us as individuals the opportunity to know Him and follow Him. How do we know God and follow His will? The answer to personal success is the same as the answer to national success—God’s holy Word.

It’s difficult to see our nations, our neighbors and, in some cases, even our families forget God and walk their own way. But Christians must follow God’s lead, not society’s. Commit yourself to reading His Word each day. It is a wellspring that truly brings blessings: “Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD! Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways!” (Psalm 119:1-2, English Standard Version).

That’s a lesson all the British—and all people everywhere—desperately need to learn. **BT**

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Britain has a remarkable story. It rose from a tiny nation to become the greatest empire the world has known. But now it’s a shadow of its former greatness. To learn the remarkable story as revealed in Bible prophecy, download or request our free study guide *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.

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Thankful for *Beyond Today* magazine

My husband and I have been following you, studying with you and checking all your teachings out in the Word of God. We have started a small Bible study group where we teach what we are learning to others. What a shock after being lied to for all our lives and our family's lives! We meet every Sabbath.

From the Internet

I am a longtime avid reader of the *Beyond Today* magazine and booklets. It is one of the best publications in this ever-confusing and troubling world. Thank you so very much.

Reader in Simbu, Papua New Guinea

I would like to thank the magazine for helping me understand more about the Word of God and about the real truth of God's Word. It's good to know that there are special people that God uses to help others. I really thank God for the United Church of God. I watch your *Beyond Today* program, and it's helping me so very much.

Subscriber in Alabama

My husband and I want to thank you so very much for our first issue of *Beyond Today*! We are truly enjoying it! I was reading in it today and you wouldn't believe how much it helped me! I also like the way it explains things because I need help in knowing exactly what Scripture means.

Subscriber in North Carolina

Beyond Today magazine is the most brilliant evangelistic magazine I have read for a long time. The articles are short and to the point, and cover the most important topics.

Reader in Australia

Thankful for publications

Thank you for providing such enlightening and comprehensive literature. I was raised without religion and, now in my 50s, I feel the void. I am reading the Bible for the first time, and your literature is wonderful in helping to read the message and the meaning, not just the words. I am receiving a much richer understanding with your help. Thank you so much.

Reader in Maryland

I'm one of those people who have read a study guide from your association. I would just like to say thank you for your efforts and determination on writing your publications. Thank you for letting God use you as a channel of blessings. Your study guides really help a lot in the development of a Christian's understanding about the Word of God. God bless you all. Please continue doing good deeds for God!

Reader in Quezon City, Philippines

Enjoys *Beyond Today* television

I love *Beyond Today*. It's just a straightforward show that reminds us of the importance of constant contact with God through discipline.

Viewer in Australia

Thank you very much for your ministry. When I moved in with my mother to care for her, I stopped going to church and began looking for Christian services on TV to substitute. I watched some and felt satisfied

until I saw your program. I was amazed and excited to hear your message and to realize that I have been deceived about so much all my life.

Your programs have been such a blessing, and I am sharing as much as possible with my mom. She reads the literature I receive from you. I am so grateful for your ministry and thank you for giving me the truth and informing me of how the current events and activities around the world are right out of prophecy. May God continue to bless you and be with us until Christ returns.

Viewer in Baltimore, Maryland

Looking for a congregation of worshipers

Your magazine really inspires my husband and me, and we are trying to tell everyone about the magazine. I no longer celebrate any of the pagan holidays that were programmed into me and which I always loved. For years we just carried on with those traditions, not paying attention to what the Bible really says by reading it for ourselves. I would appreciate you letting us know where we can go to church near us. I am not perfect, but I keep learning every day that the practices I thought were so important really mean nothing of value in the end.

Subscriber in Kentucky

We are reading through all your study guides, listening to your sermons and sermonettes and watching your service online. We too believe that we should obey all God's commandments and teachings. But most churches do not obey them all, observing holidays that are pagan instead of the Holy Days that God commanded us to keep. We have a small gathering on the Sabbath, and we have been meeting for two years now. We would very much like to be a part of your gathering. Thank you for hearing us and helping us.

Readers in Maine

We invite readers who are in areas where we have no congregation to watch our weekly Sabbath services webcast at ucg.org/webcast. You may also wish to watch our midweek Bible study at ucg.org/beyond-today/webcast. To find the location of our congregation nearest you, go to ucg.org/congregations.

I am a Pakistani Christian keeping all of the Almighty's commandments—the Ten Commandments, high Sabbaths, avoiding unclean meats, etc.—for the last two years. In Pakistan, sadly I have not come across any church or even a single soul that observes what the Almighty's commands. So unfortunately I have no church to attend, and was wondering if you have any churches in Karachi, Pakistan. I pray that the Almighty would broaden your ministry to reach the lost sheep of Christ all over the world. I am keen to make a donation, but have no means to send you a gift from my country.

Reader in Pakistan

You can find the closest local congregation at ucg.org/congregations. As for a church in Pakistan, sadly we do not have one, but are thrilled that the gospel of Jesus Christ is reaching people all over the world and changing lives.

Published letters may be edited for clarity and space. Address your letters to Beyond Today, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A., or e-mail BTinfo@ucg.org (please be sure to include your full name, city, state or province, and country).



The Cup and the Dish

Washing dishes either by hand or with a dishwasher is a routine chore. Even Jesus Christ used washing dishes as a metaphor when speaking to religious teachers of His day about their need for spiritual cleanliness. Discover how His vital words apply to us all.

by John LaBissoniere

Although washing dishes, cups, pots and pans is a necessary duty, it's one that many people don't enjoy. In the early 1880s this included Josephine Cochran (later Cochrane), wife of businessman William Cochran of Shelbyville, Illinois. However, Josephine had an advantage others didn't in that she employed servants to handle the task.

Nevertheless, she often discovered small chips on the edges of her chinaware resulting from the washing and handling process. This concerned her so much that she began thinking that perhaps some type of mechanical method could be employed to wash her cups and dishes without damaging them.

To examine the prospect of creating a dishwashing machine, Josephine began sketching designs on paper.

But then on Oct. 20, 1883, only two weeks after establishing the concept, her husband died unexpectedly after a short illness. Besides this loss that left her a widow at age 44, Josephine now needed a means to support herself. Therefore the idea of building a dishwasher became not only a convenience, but an economic necessity.

Josephine's work and resolve

To develop the appliance, she enlisted the help of a skilled local mechanic. In a shed behind her home they built the first practical dishwasher. Josephine obtained a U.S. patent and soon began manufacturing the machines in a small factory. Although she had originally designed the dishwasher for home use, she found it was too expensive for that purpose. It was, however, perfectly suited for hotels and other institu-



Josephine Cochrane

hotels and hospitals.

Her company grew steadily for 30 years, propelled by her hard work and resolve. She died in 1913 at age 74. In 1926 her business was purchased by the Hobart Manufacturing Company, which introduced dishwashers for home use in 1949. Today, dishwashers are standard features in houses and apartments around the world.

While we can appreciate Josephine Cochrane's labors in bringing convenience and hygiene to cleaning dishes, there is a significantly greater *spiritual* cleansing effort the Eternal God is offering to all humanity.

Jesus Christ spoke about this urgent need with several religious teachers of His day. His message to them involved some bad news—which in fact applies in principal to *you, me and all people*. Beyond that, however, is tremendous good news offering abundant opportunity and hope for every person!

First, the bad news

Before describing that good news, let's

corrupt men, His words actually apply to the disquieting spiritual condition of people today. If we are sincerely seeking divine truth, all of us must face some painful scriptural facts *about ourselves*. For instance, Jesus said, "For it is from *within*, out of a person's *heart*, that evil thoughts come" (Mark 7:21, New International Version).

Also, Jeremiah wrote, "The *heart* is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). Furthermore Isaiah said: "We are *all* infected and impure with sin. When we display *our righteous deeds*, they are nothing but *filthy rags*" (Isaiah 64:6, NLT).

As hard as it may be to accept, these passages pertain to what *we* are really like (1 John 1:8). Indeed, *all* of us have broken God's laws, which define what sin is (Romans 3:23; 1 John 3:4).

But even now, when we may think we have heard the worst, there is more to learn about our unsatisfactory spiritual state. What is this last bit of bad news? It's that *our sins have cut us off from our Creator* (Isaiah 59:2).

Let's employ an analogy to help grasp this troubling situation. Imagine a huge pile of dirty cups, plates and pans stacked on a kitchen counter. Some food remnants have become hardened nearly like concrete. An obnoxious odor fills the kitchen. Plus, this heap of filthy dinnerware is growing mold and attracting ants, cockroaches and flies.

If this disgusting image of a grimy, foul-smelling kitchen repulses you, imagine if it represented people smeared with sin. In doing so we can understand just how *our sins* appear to God. Sin is disgusting to Him. It's like a repugnant odor in His nostrils (Isaiah 65:5).

Now, the good news

We have covered much bad news about our internal spiritual makeup. But thanks to God, there is excellent *good news* available. It shows how our awful circumstance can be corrected so we can ultimately become God's cherished sons and daughters in His coming Kingdom (2 Corinthians 6:18).

But before discussing that, we need to return briefly to the image of the dirty kitchen. What should be done to clean it up? To begin, the fouled dishes and pans should be immersed in hot water and

Jesus used the metaphor of cleaning dishes: "First wash the inside of the cup and the dish, and then the outside will become clean, too."

tions serving many meals daily.

Selling her unique product was Josephine's next challenge. In describing her feelings after making her first "cold-call" sales appointment at the elegant Sherman House hotel in Chicago, she recalled: "That was almost the hardest thing I ever did, I think, crossing the great lobby of the Sherman House alone. You cannot imagine what it was like in those days . . . for a woman to cross a hotel lobby alone. I had never been anywhere without my husband or father—the lobby seemed a mile wide. I thought I should faint at every step, but I didn't—and I got an \$800 order as my reward."

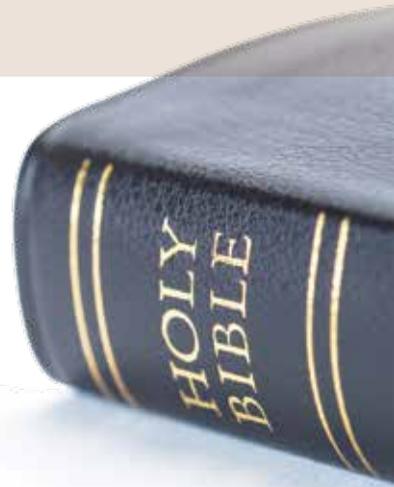
A major breakthrough for Josephine occurred in 1893 at the Chicago World's Fair. After exhibiting her dishwasher in the hall of machinery, it won first prize for "best mechanical construction, durability and adaptation to its line of work." That recognition soon found Josephine obtaining orders from many restaurants,

first examine the bad news Jesus delivered to the religious instructors. He told them: "What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are so careful to clean the *outside* of the cup and the dish, but *inside* you are filthy—full of greed and self-indulgence" (Matthew 23:25, New Living Translation 2015, emphasis added throughout).

Of course Christ's focus wasn't on cleaning dishes, but He used this metaphor to illuminate a deeper spiritual issue. The religious leaders He addressed were diligent in observing washings and obligations demanded by their traditions. Yet they completely missed the mark regarding what was truly important (Mark 7:3-4). Jesus rebuked them further by stating: "You blind Pharisee! First wash the *inside* of the cup and the dish, and *then* the outside will become clean, too" (Matthew 23:26, NLT).

Although Christ addressed those

Following repentance, baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit, we need to make spiritual progress so we can become increasingly like Jesus Christ. We do this by immersing ourselves in regular study and diligent application of God's Word.



allowed to soak so as to loosen the encrusted, hardened food. Afterwards, each item needs to be scrubbed in hot, soapy water or placed in a dishwasher, which typically operates at 130-170 degrees (55-75°C).

With that in mind let's revisit our spiritual state, which includes our sinful conduct and the woeful nature of our minds and hearts. Just as soiled kitchen items need to be cleaned, God desires to spiritually sanitize us (Ezekiel 36:25).

He begins by opening our minds so we can see ourselves and our sins for what they really are—similar to that mound of filthy dinnerware. After this we must choose whether we will cooperate with Him or reject His help. God won't force us to comply but will work with us *only* if we have humble, willing hearts (James 4:8).

We need to admit we have sinned and deeply repent of those transgressions (1 John 1:9). We must accept the suffering and death of Jesus Christ as full payment for our sins (Colossians 1:22).

Following this we need to take another crucial action. We must *be baptized*. Through baptism we make the commitment to obey God's commandments and surrender our lives to His service (Romans 6:13; Matthew 19:17). Baptism symbolizes the washing away of *all* our former sins so we can move forward with a clean conscience (Acts 22:16).

After baptism we need to receive God's gift of His Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands by His ministry (Hebrews 6:2). Obtaining God's Spirit is of key importance so that we can fulfill the promise we made at baptism to keep God's laws (Titus 3:5-6). Through the Holy Spirit, we are empowered to build a profound, personal relationship with God and to truly love and care for other people (Romans 5:5; 1 Peter 1:22).

Following repentance, baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit, we need to make spiritual progress so we can become increasingly like Jesus Christ (John 13:15). We do this by immersing ourselves in regular study and diligent application of God's Word (2 Timothy 2:15).

The Bible's insights provide us the continual divine cleansing we need (John 15:3; Ephesians 5:26-27). When we spend time each day studying the Scriptures and practicing their admonitions, we will be better able to resist temptation that can lead to sin (Matthew 26:41).

God's Word cleanses and purifies

Learning and applying God's Word requires diligent personal effort. Unlike a dishwasher, we can't simply push a

button and put our spiritual lives on an "automatic" setting. Rather, we must employ God's mighty help to overthrow sinful habits while "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). Doing this takes diligent, tenacious exertion since we are still subject to corrupt human nature after baptism. Because of this it's inevitable that we will fail to obey God at times.

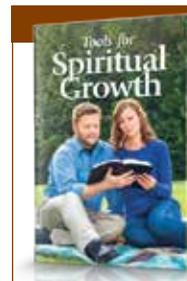
To help us know what to do when this occurs, let's examine another dish-cleaning illustration. It's often good to wash dirty table items by hand or put them in the dishwasher and run it as soon as possible after a meal. By doing so there is less chance that food fragments will dry and solidify, becoming more difficult to remove later.

Similarly, when we sin after baptism, we must repent and seek God's forgiveness immediately through prayer. This is essential so that we don't become hardened or indifferent to that sin.

To perhaps better grasp this concept, let's examine one additional analogy. Many modern dishwashers are equipped with sensors that assess soil residue in the water. These appliances will operate for two or more hours if necessary until they "sense" that the water is free of food fragments. They stop only when the dinnerware is thoroughly cleaned.

Likewise we should, in effect, employ the "sensor" of God's Holy Spirit to inspect ourselves continually for sinful thoughts and actions (2 Corinthians 13:5). We need to be highly sensitive to the dirt of sin by allowing the Bible's words to purify our minds and hearts (Romans 12:2).

Finally, let's remember the effort Josephine Cochrane expended for 30 years to bring people the ease and hygiene of the dishwasher. Yet more importantly, let's dedicate ourselves to becoming spiritually clean as we work closely with our Heavenly Father to cleanse the inside of *our* "cup and dish." If we do, we will become His deeply loved and cherished sons and daughters in His coming Kingdom. Now, are you ready to take action? 



LEARN MORE

How can we clean up our lives and become the kind of spiritually vibrant people God wants us to be? Request or download your free copy of our study guide *Tools for Spiritual Growth* to help you discover the answers in the pages of your Bible!

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Visiting Widows and Widowers in Their Affliction

What can we do to help someone who has lost a loved one?

Here are some practical and biblical solutions.

by Janet Treadway

Recently a neighbor, Ann, was found dead in her condo above us. Her husband had died six months earlier. I knew that she had taken it very hard, but she seemed so strong and was going on with her life.

I would see her in passing when she was out walking her dog. I remember her mentioning to me that she hoped she did not disturb me while she was crying so hard the night before. After she was found dead, I was laden with guilt. I had been too busy to take the time to chat more with her and find out how she was really doing. Now she was gone. Could a little of my time with her have prevented her death?

Ann was not very old and seemed to me to be a picture of good health, so her passing took me by surprise. Her daughter lived about four hours away, so it was hard for her to check in on her. Ann seemed to be busy working at what she loved doing, which was singing. In fact, that was how she met her husband—they were both in a jazz singing group here in our city. She was scheduled to sing on the day she was found dead. Sadly, even her singing didn't take away the hidden pain she was going through.

Losing a spouse can be devastating. A study has found that when a husband or wife dies, the remaining spouse's risk of dying is 66 percent higher in the three months afterward. Grief can even affect the immune system. There can even be what's called "Sudden Adult Death Syndrome," a cardiac condition that can be triggered by emotional stress.

How can we help those who've lost the love of their life, their life's partner, their spouse? People may seem okay on the outside, just as Ann did to me for the most part, but on the inside grief has overtaken and overwhelmed them.

Here are some positive steps you can take to help:

- **Reach out!** Call, text or e-mail them often—even if they don't respond. Let them know you are there for them. This is especially important after the funeral when other people return to their normal routines and aren't there to provide support. Stay involved!

- **Include them in your family's activities.** As time permits, make sure they are not spending their days alone.

- **Listen, and don't try to "fix" their feelings.** They will need a listening ear so they can vent their emotions. Some of the most common feelings and concerns after the loss of a spouse are reflected in statements like these:

"I've lost my best friend."

"I'm angry."

"I feel guilty I didn't do enough for him [or her]."

"I'm afraid."

"I worry about lots of things, especially money."

"I suddenly feel very old."

"I feel sick all the time."

"I think about my own death more."

"I seem to be going through an identity crisis."

"I feel relieved that his [or her] suffering is over, then immediately guilty for feeling that way."

Widows and widowers need your time so they can express all of these confusing emotions. Through this they can begin to heal and move forward. Studies clearly show that mortality rates are higher among those who don't articulate their grief; this is especially true with men. Always ask God to help you say and do the right thing to help them.

- **Offer to help with paperwork, housework and grocery shopping.** This is especially true for a widower whose wife might have done all those things. On top of the death, these day-to-day chores can be overwhelming. Bring frozen meals. Just make yourself available and offer support, stating directly, "Please tell me what I can do for you."

The Bible says much about caring for widows, but the need is also there for widowers. New research has found that a grieving husband is more likely to die shortly after losing his wife, while a widowed woman is more able to carry on with life.

Professor Javier Espinosa, who led a study at the Rochester Institute of Technology, said: "When a wife dies, men are often unprepared. They have often lost their caregiver, someone who cares for them physically and emotionally, and the loss directly impacts the husband's health. This same mechanism is likely weaker for most women when a husband dies" (quoted in *The Telegraph*, Oct. 22, 2012).

If you are going through a loss or know someone who is, remember Psalm 34:18: "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit" (New International Version). Always ask God to encourage those who are going through loss.

Never take for granted that people are doing okay by the brave face they put on, as I did with Ann. Be involved, take their hand, and encourage them through this. Don't forget widows and widowers in their time of need! **BT**



A Promise Is a Promise!

We can trust in God and Christ to lead and help us on the path of life—through the Holy Spirit.

by Robin Webber

There's a story about an old Scottish woman who traveled around the countryside selling housewares. Whenever she came to a fork in the road, she would throw a straw in the air, and when it dropped to the ground she would proceed in the direction it indicated.

The residents of the area knew her strange custom, but one day a friend saw her tossing the straw several times before choosing a path. He inquired, "Why do you do that more than once?" "Oh," she replied, "it kept pointing to the road on the left, and I wanted to go the other way because it appeared smoother." She proceeded to toss the straw to the wind until she got the direction she wanted.

Let's all recognize that Scots and women are not alone in exercising such techniques. We all too often do our own mental form of tossing straw to guide our decisions with matters far more serious than selling housewares. Yes, even Christians get stuck when confronted with our personal forks in the road and humanly seek that smoother path.

"I will come to you"

What does this mean for us? In extending His invitation of "Follow Me," Jesus Christ boldly proclaimed, "*I am the Way*" (John 14:6, emphasis added throughout). And He is the singular *Way* at that!

In so doing, He made specific promises to inform and

encourage those sincerely following Him: "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper . . . the Spirit of Truth . . . I will not leave you orphans: I will come to you (verses 16-18).

But a condition for us is that we must be willing to let go of our self-made bundle of security straws.

Humanly, therein lies the challenge. Any reading of Scripture informs us about Jesus Christ's invitation to those seeking after Him. He plainly stated in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12) that we could be incredibly happy without the trappings of happiness. We can be fearless even when our knees are shaking and we live in constant trouble in a world that relies on wind and straw rather than eternal truths.

What do I mean? Let's consider for a moment:

In one day, the disciples went from experiencing a vision of Christ transfigured in glory to not being able to battle the demons down here below (Matthew 17:1-21).

Within 24 hours, Christ went from precious moments of washing others' feet to having His hands nailed to a wooden beam.

The joy of Pentecost that year was short-lived as apostles were jailed and Stephen, one of the first deacons in the Church, was martyred.

The road is not always smooth, but we must keep in mind the destination and realize that it's worth every step to get there.

Exactly what did Christ promise would come? Are His promises really better than our human premises of straw?

Multiple promises given by Christ

To people of Christ's day, the Spirit of God was perhaps considered by some as awesome yet impersonal and involved in the lives of select people for certain periods of time.

Yet Christ, the Word and voice of God on earth, declared incredible aspects of a new relationship with the many and not just the few.

Jesus stated:

- The Spirit would be with us forever (John 14:16) and not merely temporarily.
- It would be given to those whom the Father called and who responded to that selection and not given to the world at large at this time (John 14:17).
- It would not come and go as before, but would—notice—*live with us and even in us* (John 14:17).
- While not a person as many claim (see our free study guide *Is God a Trinity?*) the Spirit would have qualities that literally could teach us, guide us and remind us of Christ's words (John 14:26).
- It would convince (convict) us of sin, show us God's righteousness, and even declare God's judgment regarding evil (John 16:8).
- It would even guide us and grant us insight towards future happenings—and all to give due glory to the One sent by our Heavenly Father (John 16:13-14).

Exactly what did Christ promise would come? Are His promises really better than our human premises of straw?

With this all promised, when Pentecost came that year the disciples were praying and obedient but, perhaps equally important, they were expectant and believed Christ's promises (Acts 1:12-14).

But why? They had spent much time with the Son of God who was *filled* with the Spirit of God—Jesus of Nazareth. They had witnessed that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among them and that the Spirit descended from heaven and rested on Him (John 1:14, 32).

They had real-life experience with this One who was full of the Spirit (Luke 4:1), who avoided sin in the wilderness, where He exercised the wisdom of God in remembering and declaring Scripture to avoid evil and remain righteous and give God glory in stating, "For it is written, you shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve" (Matthew 4:10).

It was He who was the embodiment of the messianic prophecy that "the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD" (Isaiah 11:2).

Again, they did not know what was to come, but they knew they had to use the promised Spirit fully—to rely on it and be guided by God through it in all of life's challenges.

Promises you can trust

They came to fully grasp and understand that their Master and Lord, the Christ, and His Father would fulfill what was promised and would come to dwell in them by the Holy Spirit—it being the Spirit of the Father and Christ, both of whom are Holy and Spirit (Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:16; John 4:24).

The apostle Paul makes this incredible truth extremely plain in Romans 8:9: "But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed *the Spirit of God* dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have *the Spirit of Christ*, he is not His." It is the same Spirit, the one Spirit that makes us all one (Ephesians 4:4; Hebrews 2:10-11).

The Holy Spirit is not simply a spiritual bulldozer, hammer, or screwdriver to reach for, but is literally the indwelling essence of God the Father and Christ in us through which we can live a daily life of worship, glorify Them in all we do, and be a blessing to others.

As the apostle Paul came to confess and understand: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, *but Christ liveth in me*: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by *the faith of the Son of God*, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20, King James Version).

There truly is a difference between walking with Christ and allowing Him to walk in us and draw on His Spirit. Just ask the disciples who had the experience of walking with Jesus Christ during His ministry, followed by His death and resurrection before that eventful Pentecost. Talk about a

before-and-after snapshot comparison of hearts and minds!

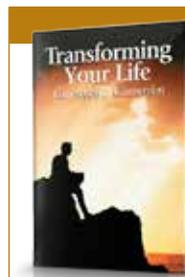
It's the same faithful Spirit that enabled Jesus in the flesh to seek God's will and not His own in every thought, word and deed even when smoother roads lay in front of Him. Christ never twirled a piece of straw hoping for a different path other than the

one the Father set before Him. He believed God and did what He said.

When we truly grasp and believe Jesus Christ meant what He said and keeps His promises, it doesn't mean that life necessarily becomes humanly easier. But it becomes eternally rewarding, as we come to the forks in the roads of our life's journey and toss our self-made straw aside.

For we have chosen to exist beyond the moment, and we thank our Heavenly Father every day that we not only believe in His Son, but know that He exists within us and within all those who have heeded the call of "*Follow Me.*"

Now it's time to walk in the Spirit by faith as He did! **BT**



LEARN MORE

How does the Holy Spirit work in the lives of believers? What does it do for them, and how? Learn what the Bible really says in our free study guide *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*. A free copy is waiting for you!

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How You Can Correctly Understand **GOD'S PROPHECIES AND PROMISES**

Welcome to the fourth study in the “Bible Prophecy and You” series. The better we can *understand* Bible prophecies, the more we will feel inspired by their amazing *accuracy and reliability*. The prophecies that have not *already* been fulfilled *will be fulfilled perfectly*.

The next step is to learn how to correctly interpret and understand God’s prophecies. In today’s media circus, one can hear countless nonbiblical predictions plus countless *misinterpretations* of Bible prophecies. Jesus Christ and many of the prophets and apostles warned us to be *very careful* that we *not be deceived*. Remember that just as a counterfeit dollar bill is worthless even though it closely resembles a real dollar bill, counterfeit prophecies are likewise worthless and can even lead you in a wrong direction! In this study we’ll look at some valuable keys for correctly understanding Bible prophecy.

A person in the state of Washington who now embraces the Bible in its entirety tells this story:

“As a child, I faithfully attended church services every Sunday with my parents and siblings. We were taught many of God’s truths, and I tried to obey them and my parents.

“When I was 15 years old, I developed rheumatic fever, and it required many weeks of bed rest and medication to regain my health. During this time, I read many books, one of which was the Bible. One day, as I was reading

the book of Isaiah, I realized that my church never had studies or sermons to explain how these wonderful and beautiful words applied to all of us.

“I wondered, when would the world be such a wonderful place when all people would dwell safely together in peace and the wild animals would be tamed and all diseases would be healed? I felt I wasn’t being taught the ‘whole story’ of the Bible.

“Answers to these questions did not come until I was 28 years old and married with four young children. Through much study and repentance and baptism, I finally understood that the whole Bible needs to be accepted as God’s truth and that I cannot just believe and accept what feels convenient to me or limit the truth to what I was taught as a child.

“Only then did I begin to understand the promises and prophecies of Isaiah and other prophetic books of the Bible. Finally, I knew that God has wonderful promises that He will keep, prophecies that tell of Christ’s return to earth, when He will begin a time of restoration and peace and healing and set up His Kingdom on this earth! Then, at last, I finally knew the ‘whole story’!”

Let the Bible interpret the Bible!

One awesome proof that the Bible is divinely inspired is its perfect *harmony* and *consistency* all the way through, even though it was penned by about 40 different

Photo illustration by Shaun Venish/Thinkstock

writers over a span of 1,500 years! *The Bible never contradicts itself*. Even passages that at first glance appear to contradict others are found, through more thorough study, to not be contradictory after all.

Many people dismiss most prophecy as being merely allegorical or symbolic. An important general rule is to take everything the Bible says as literally true except where it is clearly symbolic. And remember that everything in the Bible is important. When you encounter a symbol, try to determine what it is symbolizing.

These days you can hear many people quoting Bible verses in espousing certain points of view, but often they are twisting the meaning as people did even in Peter and Paul's day (see 2 Peter 3:15-16). Instead, when we are trying to understand

God has wonderful promises that He will keep, prophecies that tell of Christ's return to this earth, when He will begin a time of restoration and peace and healing.

a prophetic scripture, we should look for the same subject or similar wording in other parts of the Bible and never accept an interpretation that is contradictory.

For example, we are able to understand much about the book of Revelation by comparing it with the book of Daniel, Jesus' Olivet Prophecy and other parts of the Bible.

You've probably heard the saying, "History tends to repeat itself." That's true partly because human nature stays the same and partly because God chooses to repeat His actions in the ways He deals with mankind.

Thus Bible prophecy is often *dual*. A prophecy could have been fulfilled to a certain degree in the *past* and still await a *more complete* fulfillment in the *latter days*. And studying the Bible and history to see how God fulfilled a prophecy in the past can give us a better understanding of how He will likely fulfill it in the future.

Now let's take a look at some other keys for understanding Bible prophecy.

► What is the number one focus of Bible prophecy?

"Then He [the risen Jesus] said to them [His disciples], 'These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.' And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures" (Luke 24:44-45).

"All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.' Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, 'Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it'" (Luke 10:22-24).

The focus of Bible prophecy is Jesus the Christ (the Messiah). The Bible has many prophecies of His first appearance to

become our Savior and His second coming as glorified King of Kings (1 Timothy 6:15). During His earthly ministry, His example and His message also revealed what God the Father is like.

► When Jesus preached about prophecy, what was His number one focus?

"Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel'" (Mark 1:14-15).

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness . . ." (Matthew 6:33).

" . . . to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3).

The word *gospel* means "good news." The primary message that Jesus and the apostles preached was "the gospel of the kingdom of God." That included God's offer of eternal

life so that we can "inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 15:50). The entire Bible ultimately points toward the Kingdom of God that would come through Christ.

► Can we determine exactly when prophesied events will happen?

"Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?' . . .

"Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Matthew 24:3, 32-36).

Jesus Himself plainly tells us that we cannot know in advance exactly when prophesied events will take place. Trying to predict exactly *when* prophetic events will happen is not a productive use of time. Instead we are to focus on *what* and *why* more than *when*. We live in a dangerous and unpredictable world, so we need to always focus on being *spiritually ready* to meet our Maker, whether at our death or at His coming (Matthew 24:44).

► Do we need to learn about the origins and identities of major nations?

"And Jacob called his sons and said, 'Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days. Reuben . . . unstable as water, you shall not excel . . . The scepter shall not depart from Judah . . . Zebulun shall . . . become a haven for ships . . . Dan shall be a serpent by the way . . . Joseph is a fruitful bough . . . his branches run over the wall . . . The blessings of your father . . . shall be on the head of Joseph . . .' All these

are the twelve tribes of Israel” (Genesis 49:1-28).

“Understand, son of man, that the vision refers to the time of the end . . . The male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king. As for the broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power. And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their fullness, a king shall arise, having fierce features, who understands sinister schemes” (Daniel 8:17-23).

“For they have consulted together with one consent; they form a confederacy against You: the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites; Moab and the Hagrites; Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek; Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assyria also has joined with them; they have helped the children of Lot” (Psalm 83:5-8).

Yes, to understand what is being talked about here, we do need to know about the historical and prophetic identities of various peoples. End-time Bible prophecy refers to nations by their ancient and tribal names that are seldom or never used today. There is great value in learning history, especially *Bible* history. We soon learn that tribes of people that are assumed to be “lost” are not really lost! Paul and James knew where “the twelve tribes” of Israel were located (see Acts 26:7; James 1:1). Jesus even made it clear that they will have a prominent role after He returns (Matthew 19:28).

Bible prophecy is largely focused on the end time, so we should expect the Bible to have prophecies of past and present superpowers like Britain and the United States. Our well-researched free study guide *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* traces the biblical and historical origins of these important modern nations.

► Are prophecies often conditional?

“Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings [that follow in the prophecy] shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God . . .

“But it shall come to pass, if you do *not* obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these *curse*s [that follow] will come upon you and overtake you” (Deuteronomy 28:1-2, 15, emphasis added throughout).

“The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it. And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it” (Jeremiah 18:7-10; compare Jonah 3).

Yes, what happens to nations, and to each of us personally, depends on whether we choose to obey or disobey God. God said, “I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore *choose life*” (Deuteronomy 30:19). It’s a matter of cause and effect. God lets us choose what to sow, but we will reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7-8).

► What necessary change in the nature of man does prophecy point to?

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them” (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

By nature we have a “heart of stone.” We tend to be hard-hearted, stubborn and “stiff-necked” (Deuteronomy 9:6). Indeed, “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9). That has to change. Once God has opened our minds, He helps us with His Spirit to see ourselves as we really are.

He leads us to repent of our sins so He can forgive us. He helps us to become spiritually converted. After conversion, a person begins to have a “heart of flesh”—a soft, humble and teachable heart. Then God’s promise is fulfilled: “I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts” (Jeremiah 31:33).

► What are some things to consider to have a spiritually balanced interest in prophecy?

“But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand” (Mark 13:23).

“Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said to him, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:35-40).

Many people mostly ignore Bible prophecy and miss out on its benefits—the biblical worldview, the motivation and the comfort it can give us. Concerning His prophetic teaching, Jesus said to “take heed.” On the other hand, some dwell far too much on the technical aspects of Bible prophecy, such as trying to figure out exact dates, while neglecting matters much more important, like loving God and loving other people.

When you are reading prophetic sections of the Bible, be sure to meditate on the spiritual lessons they convey. For example, many people assume that the book of Revelation is all predictions. In actuality, it is full of valuable spiritual teaching.

Apply now

For a good introduction to the book of Revelation, read Revelation 1:3. People will be blessed if they *read* this book, if they *hear* and pay attention to it and if they *keep* (obey) its spiritual directives! If you have a red-letter Bible, you will notice that much of the first three chapters of this book is direct quotation from Jesus Christ.

Then read Revelation 22:12-14 in the King James or New King James Version. This very last chapter of the Bible gives a grand overview. Think of how simple and clear this is. The Bible is consistent all the way through. God wants His people to show their love by obeying Him—for our own good!

What will you do today to show God that you love and obey Him? Will you search His Word to learn what He wants you to do and then begin doing it? 

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San Diego	ch. 18, 19, 23, Mon 5 p.m.
San Francisco	ch. 29, Sun 6:30 p.m.
North Carolina	
Durham	ch. 18, 97-3 Wed 7:30 a.m.
Ohio	
Toledo	ch. 69, Sun 5 p.m.
Oregon	
Gresham/East Portland	ch. 22/23, Sun 7:30 p.m.
Milwaukee	ch. 23, Sun 6 a.m.; Mon 11:30 p.m., Wed 4:30 p.m.; Thu 7 a.m.; Fri 5:30 a.m.; Sat 8:30 a.m. & 4:30 p.m.

Oregon City ch. 23, Sun 2:30 p.m.; Thu 10:30 a.m. & 2:30 p.m.; Fri 4:30 a.m.; Sat 3 a.m. & 4 p.m.

Washington
Everett ch. 77, Wed 5 p.m.

Wisconsin
Kenosha ch. 14, Sun 7:30 p.m.; Mon 7:30 p.m.
Milwaukee ch. 96, Mon 2 p.m.; Tue 7 p.m.;
Wed 2 p.m. ch. 55, Sun 8 a.m.

CANADA NATIONWIDE CABLE TV

Vision TV Sun 6 p.m. ET
Hope TV Sun 1 p.m. ET
See local listing for the channel in your area.

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Ch. 4ME—Digital 74 Metro, Digital 64 Regional

Sat & Sun 8:00 a.m. (NSW, VIC, ACT, QLD)
Sat & Sun 7:30 a.m. (SA)
Sat & Sun 6:00 a.m. (WA)

NEW ZEALAND

Prime Television
(simulcast on Sky satellite platform) Sun 7 a.m.

SOUTH AFRICA

Cape Town DSTV
Sun 8:30 a.m. ch. 263 and open ch. 32, 67

ST. LUCIA

Sun 9 a.m. ch. DBS

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

2nd, 4th Sundays CCN TV6 at 9:00 a.m.

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Does God Exist?

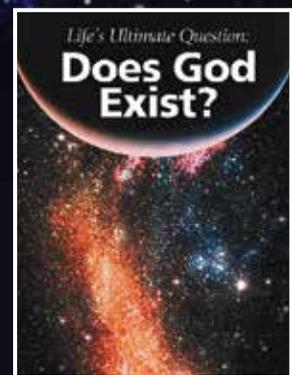
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