A close-up, high-angle photograph of a typewriter's internal mechanism. The focus is on the typebars and the red ink ribbon. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows, creating a sense of depth and texture. The typewriter is primarily black and gold.

Light

...on a new world

VOLUME 29.2

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

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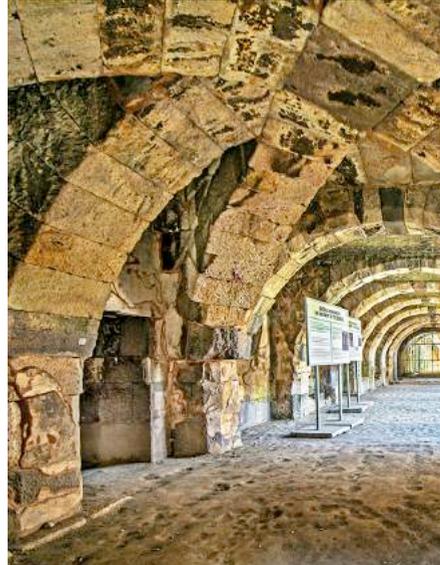
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Each of the 230 strings on this grand piano requires tuning by an expert tuner. Scientists now realise that our universe also required 'fine tuning' to exist and support life. See 'comment' article page 22.

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from the editor

purely secular in their outlook and at the other extreme the religious beliefs and practices of Orthodox Jews.

By the time this magazine has been printed, the State of Israel will have celebrated the 70th anniversary of its foundation on 14th May 1948.

Since that time this small nation at the Eastern end of the Mediterranean has certainly made its mark on the world's scene. We have witnessed the miracle of Israel's economic development and wondered at its survival as a nation. Its short history is a catalogue of wars with its neighbours, terrorist attacks, and of internal political and religious power struggles. Its Jewish population is divided between those who are

We live in a world where many people are subject to racial hatred and violence. But the Jews in particular are singled out and blamed for many of the world's problems. Anti-Semitism is the phrase used to describe this hatred of the Jews. Have you ever thought about the reasons for this?



ISRAEL AT 70

The answer is revealed in the Bible which contains a record of their origin and history over a period of around 4,000 years from the time of their ancestor Abraham. Many attempts have been made to destroy them during their long history. They have survived many persecutions culminating in what the Nazis called 'the final solution', the murder of 6 million European Jews between 1941 and 1945.

However, we see in the long history of the Jews, the hand of God in their affairs. The preservation of this remarkable people for 4,000 years is an astounding testimony to the existence of God. The words of one of their ancient prophets remind us of this: *'You are my witnesses, says the LORD, that I am God'* (Isaiah 43.12). The Bible tells us that God chose the Jews to be His special people and promised to give them the land of Canaan (now Israel), as

their leader Moses reminded them after they had escaped from slavery in Egypt (see Exodus 19.4-6). At the same time God expected them to *'love him and keep his commandments'*. Failure to do so would bring disaster on the nation (see Deuteronomy 7.6-11).

Their ancient capital city, Jerusalem, is truly a city of contention, as one of the prophets of Israel foretold (Zechariah 12.1-3). In the eyes of many, Israel has no right to call this ancient city their capital. Some say it belongs to the Palestinians, others say it's an international city to be thought of as belonging to the three major religious faiths, Judaism, Islam and Christianity.

The Bible tells us about the destiny of Jerusalem – the name means 'city of peace' which reminds us of its future as ordained by God. It will be restored to its former glory and



will be the focal point of worship of the one true God in the restored kingdom of God (Isaiah 2. 2,3). Its king will be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ in fulfilment of a Divine promise made 3,000 years ago to King David.

Although Israel is celebrating another milestone in its eventful history, the threat of war is ever present and we believe that war in Israel is again inevitable. However, the Bible links these events with the greatest event in the history of the human race. God will intervene to redeem His ancient people, to re-establish His Kingdom on earth and to bring lasting peace to the land and nation of Israel. At that time the whole world will share in those blessings that were promised to Abraham, the father of the Jewish race. (Genesis 12.1-3; Galatians 3.8). Truly this will be a time for celebration!

We sometimes hear the words used in the media 'it's a sign of the times'. This aptly sums up people's thoughts on the state of things in our so-called modern world. This includes the mindless violence and other crimes that afflict our society and the rising tide of terrorism. These things threaten our existence, but have you thought why they are

sometimes called 'signs of the times'?

Two thousand years ago the religious leaders of the Jews asked Jesus for a sign from heaven to prove his authority. His reply did not accede to their request. Instead, Jesus reminded them that they were good at forecasting the weather by observing the sky. He said: *'You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times'* (Matthew 16.3). The message of Jesus for these religious leaders was very clear. If they had been alert to *'the signs of the times'* they would have realised that their way of life and very existence as a nation was heading for disaster.

In this issue we commence a new series of articles entitled 'Signs of the Times' (see overleaf). Jesus urged his disciples to carefully observe the signs and to look for his return. His words are so relevant today: *'Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near'* (Luke 21.28). Will you be ready for that world-changing event?

Editor

For more about Israel, see back cover.



signs of the times

Is there a logical reason to be concerned about our times, or about the future? After all, the earth has been around for a long time and things seem to be alright. However, more and more people are concerned about mankind's future. Politics seems to have lost its way with sharply polarized views commonplace. A good example is Brexit. The result of the UK referendum in 2016 resulted in an almost 50/50 split on an issue with such complex and profound consequences.

Then we can think about the earth's environment. Is climate change real? There certainly seem to be extremes of weather and an increase in natural disasters. Can this be explained by natural variations, or is it something more

than that? And it's about much more than just the weather! There seems to be a general, though not universal, recognition that mankind is irreparably damaging the earth. Many experts believing we have already passed a tipping point anyway. Have we or haven't we passed that point? The confusion is in itself a symptom of the current state of humanity.

what do we mean by 'signs of the times'?

They are indicators found in the Bible that predict what will happen in the future. Our interest in current events, and how they intersect with and support what the Bible says about mankind and our future, is what we call 'signs of the times'. The most prominent example directly

relevant to our times is the nation of Israel. Israel is a constant reminder to us on two levels that God is at work in this earth.

The continued existence of Israel as a nation is beyond any reasonable explanation given the tortuous path their history has taken. That there is a thriving nation of Israel nearly 2,000 years after the total ruin of the original Jewish state, is astonishing and without any other parallel in history.

All this is predicted in unambiguous terms in the Bible. Two examples you can read about are in Ezekiel 11.17 and Isaiah 11.12. Also try comparing the history of Israel with what is predicted in Deuteronomy 28.15-68.

As a result of these predictions, Bible believers were for many years confident that the Jews would be re-established in their land. Christadelphians who were watching the 'signs of the times' in the 1930's and 1940's saw the disaster of the Holocaust overtake the Jews. At a time when the Jews of Europe faced total extinction by Hitler's genocide, we remained confident that Hitler would not succeed. And so it was after World War Two that the Jewish

state was established in 1948 following agreement at the United Nations General Assembly, with the notable exception of the surrounding Arab States. Since that time Israel has survived four wars and much other opposition. For such a tiny nation in the Middle East to be a focus in the media so often, is also truly extraordinary.

the importance of Bible prophecy

One major component of the Bible is prophecy. There are many prophecies, some clear, some more obscure, some fulfilled before our times and some still to be fulfilled. The main prophecies waiting to be fulfilled relate to the second coming of Jesus Christ. This is a vital part of our beliefs. The signs in our times point to the imminent return of Jesus as well as reinforcing why we want and need him to come soon.

We see the world in dire need of reform at a number of levels - the environment, governmental failure, the wasteful nature of materialism and the social inequality that is everywhere; not to mention war, disease, famine and natural disasters. The list goes on and on. These major problems, despite the

optimism of some, cannot be fixed by mankind.

The Bible clearly tells us why. It's to do with our nature. We are capable of great good but we are also capable of great evil and selfishness. But the Bible describes a wonderful future. The signs are there in the Bible telling us what to look for. In some cases these signs are very specific. In others they are more general.

BAR members move the minute hand on the Doomsday Clock closer to 'midnight'

is the world heading for disaster?

Perhaps you think this assessment that human beings can't solve the array of problems facing us is seriously exaggerated. Consider this item from the BBC Online on 26th January this year with the title 'Doomsday Clock moved to just two minutes to 'apocalypse'...The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists (BAS) said it had acted because the world was becoming 'more dangerous.' The clock, created by the journal in 1947, is a metaphor for how close mankind is to destroying the Earth. It is now the



closest to the ‘apocalypse’ (an event involving destruction or damage on a catastrophic scale) than it has been since 1953 - the year when the US and the Soviet Union tested hydrogen bombs.

Announcing the move in Washington D.C., the BAS said the decision ‘wasn't easy’ and it was not based on a single factor. However, BAS President and CEO Rachel Bronson said that ‘in this year's discussions, nuclear issues took centre stage once again’. The team of scientists singled out a series of nuclear tests by North Korea. They dramatically escalated tensions on the Korean peninsula and led to a war of words between North Korea and the US.

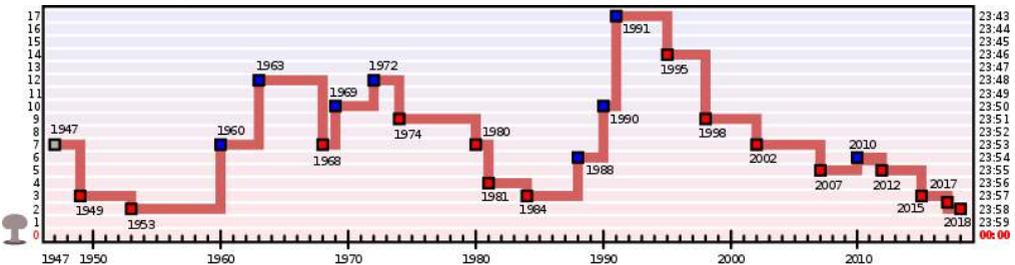
The BAS also referred to a new US nuclear strategy that was expected to call for more funding to expand the role of the country's nuclear arsenal. Rising tension between Russia and the West was also a

contributing factor. The ‘weakening of institutions’ around the world in dealing with major global threats, including climate change, was another major concern, the scientists said. They also mentioned US President Donald Trump's ‘unpredictability’, pointing to his often controversial tweets and statements.

Humanity left to its own devices, is on this assessment alone, in a lot of trouble. Any option that proposes a solution to these problems is surely worth a look, isn't it? So why not look at the Bible!

For the remainder of this article we want to draw your attention to a couple of things we've read about recently that have really struck a chord. We see them both as signs that show how much we need something drastic to solve the problems we face. We believe that the return of Jesus to the earth is that solution.

Graph tracing the movements of the Doomsday Clock 1947– 2018



ALERT

global environmental changes

First – the environment.

Its deterioration is to us a sign of the times, and the inability of man to stop the deterioration of the earth or even agree on the scope of the problem, is a reinforcement of this. The Bible says that ultimately the earth will not be destroyed. For example, the book of Ecclesiastes says this:

**‘One generation passes away,
and another generation comes;
but the earth abides forever’**

Ecclesiastes 1.4

Christadelphians therefore believe that something has to stop the current deterioration and we believe it will be the intervention of Jesus. You may be sceptical, but without drastic change, human life as we know it is likely to be severely compromised in the not too distant future.

We read some interesting views on the environment in the magazine ‘Rolling Stone Australia’. The author is Bill McKibben the founder of the climate action group called 350.org. The article is entitled ‘Winning Slowly Is The Same As Losing’ and subtitled ‘The technology exists to combat climate change - what will it



take to get our leaders to act?' Here are some of his words:

'IF WE DON'T WIN VERY QUICKLY ON CLIMATE CHANGE, then we will never win. That's the core truth about global warming. It's what makes it different from every other problem our political systems have faced. I wrote the first book for a general audience about climate change in 1989 – back when one had to search for examples to help people understand what the 'greenhouse effect' would feel like. We knew it was coming, but not how fast or how hard. And because no one wanted to over-estimate – because scientists by their nature are conservative – each of the changes we've observed has taken us somewhat by surprise. The surreal keeps becoming the commonplace: For instance, after Hurricane Harvey set a record for American rainstorms, and Hurricane Irma set a record for sustained wind speeds, and Hurricane Maria knocked Puerto Rico back a quarter-century, something even weirder happened. Hurricane Ophelia formed much farther to

the east than any hurricane on record, and proceeded to blow past Southern Europe (whipping up winds that fanned record forest fires in Portugal) before crashing into Ireland. Along the way, it produced an artifact for our age: The warning chart that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency issued shows Ophelia ending in a straight line at 60 degrees north latitude, because the computer program never imagined you'd see a hurricane up there. "When you set up a grid, you define boundaries of that grid," a slightly red-faced NOAA pro-grammer explained. "That's a pretty unusual place to have a tropical cyclone." The agency, he added, might have to "revisit" its mapping software. In fact, that's the problem with climate change. It won't stand still.'

'But with global warming, the fundamental equation is precisely what's shifting. And the remarkable changes we've seen so far – the thawed Arctic that makes the Earth look profoundly different from outer space; the planet's seawater turning 30 per cent more acidic – are just the beginning.'... By 2075 the world will be powered by solar panels and windmills –

LEFT: Hurricane Ophelia strikes the coast of Ireland (France and Spain bottom right)



free energy is a hard business proposition to beat. But on current trajectories, they'll light up a busted planet. The decisions we make in 2075 won't matter; indeed, the decisions we make in 2025 will matter much less than the ones we make in the next few years. The leverage is now.'

We should make it clear that Christadelphians are not advocating an active involvement in movements to achieve the necessary changes. We believe it's beyond man's capacity to solve the many problems we face. We simply watch and wait for Jesus' return, as did his early disciples who were told: *'...This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw him*

A marker in the Jasper National Park, Canada, showing the position of the end of a glacier in 1908. The present-day glacier can be seen in the background. Throughout the world glaciers and icecaps are retreating under the impact of global warming, with consequent rises in ocean levels that threaten millions of people.

go into heaven (Acts 1.11). We are waiting for the well-known words from the Lord's Prayer to become reality: *'Your kingdom come. your will be done on earth as it is in heaven'* (Matthew 6.10).

ALERT

Jerusalem and the Middle East

The second point that caught our special interest was an article late

last year in a Melbourne newspaper called 'The Age'. The headline was 'Thanks to Trump our world is less safe.' Before we quote from this article, it's important to note that Christadelphians are neither 'pro' nor 'anti' President Trump. Our stance is based on our understanding of the way in which God is working to bring about the fulfilment of his plan for the world. As one powerful ruler of the ancient world put it: *'He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth...'* (Daniel 4.35; see also verse 17).

The points that the article reinforces for us are firstly, that the US under Trump is rapidly changing the role it has played in international affairs since World War Two. Secondly the writer focuses on Jerusalem and the Middle East. This is what she wrote:



'...Donald Trump made the controversial decision about Jerusalem earlier this month, reversing four decades of US policy and bucking the UN's own determination that the control of Jerusalem must be decided as part of an agreement between the Israeli government and Palestinian Authority.'

The writer went on to suggest that the decision on Jerusalem was made more to satisfy influence groups and supporters in the US than any cohesive plan for how the US interacts with other countries. The writer concludes her article: 'With the Trump administration, the country has got not a set of principles but a set of impulses, ones that have made the world even less safe than it was when he took office.'

It's a great relief to be able to see in the state of our world the signs that tell us Jesus is coming soon!

David Gamble and Robin Snelling
Melbourne, Australia

US President Donald Trump

The search for **SODOM**

The destruction of Sodom is described graphically in the Bible as follows:

‘Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD. Then he looked towards Sodom and Gomorrah, and towards all the land of the plain; and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace.’

Genesis 19.24,27,28

The Bible records that Sodom was one of ‘the cities of the plain’ and was the place where Lot, Abraham’s nephew, chose to live. He was saved from the destruction of the city by two men who were in fact angels. Sodom was a prosperous place to live, where food and goods were in abundance, but it was a very undesirable place to live for anyone wanting to follow Yahweh, the God of Abraham.



The English painter John Martin recreates the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

1852 The Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle on Tyne, UK

The whole environment was evil, immoral and godless. Nevertheless, Lot was a righteous man (see New Testament comment in 2 Peter 2.7), and became an important official, as he ‘sat in the gate’ as an elder (Genesis 19.1). However, the time

STANDS THE TEST OF TIME



came for Sodom's destruction and Lot, his wife and two daughters were rescued by the two angels before the city was destroyed (see Genesis 19.15-29).

myth, guesswork and speculation

For generations, many people have come to believe that the accounts in Genesis are just mythical stories, with no historical basis to support

them. But is that true? Readers of this magazine most probably have a respect for the Scriptures or are prepared to be persuaded by the evidence!

Bible commentators and scholars have speculated that Sodom may now be buried beneath the southern waters of the Dead Sea, though with no factual or Scriptural basis for this assumption. However, recent discoveries concerning the ancient city of Sodom are amazing. Evidence has been unearthed which demonstrates that such a city did exist, where its likely location can be found and its destruction by fire. Yet there are even more archaeological discoveries to show that the Bible is accurate in its descriptions of historic places and events.

the clues in Genesis chapter 13

Dr Steven Collins is a Biblical archaeologist and professor with the College of Archaeology at the Trinity Southwest University in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He is the man who, after years of searching, has established a Biblical basis for Sodom's existence. He

used the geographical clues given in Genesis 13 as a basis for his search.

Dr Collins knew from the Bible that when Abraham and Lot parted company they were between Bethel and Ai, the locations of which have also been identified by archaeologists. They are north of Jerusalem, and on the western side of the Jordan valley on high ground, with spectacular views to the east. Lot left his uncle Abraham and chose the fertile Jordan River valley, rather than the rugged Judean hills. There was, however, a major spiritual problem with this choice as the record in Genesis shows.

Abraham stayed in the land God had promised to him, whilst Lot chose what looked like the good life. Genesis chapter 13 tells us:

'And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar. Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other. Abram dwelt in the land of

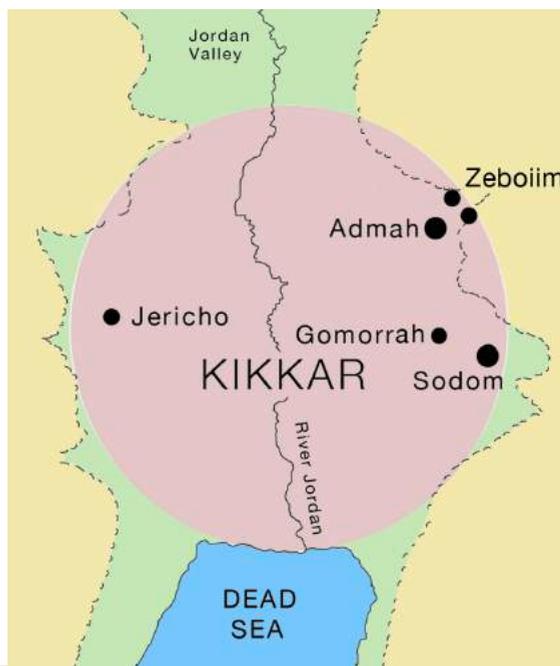
Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent even as far as Sodom. But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the LORD.’ Genesis 13.10-13

the location of the kikkar

Travelling to the east, Lot would have descended into the Jordan valley, and the phrase ‘even as far as Sodom’ indicates that city was on the far side of that plain. The word for ‘plain’ in the original Hebrew is kikkar, meaning a circle or disc. It can be used to describe anything flat and circular e.g. a metal talent weight or a flat round loaf. In the context of the Jordan valley it applies to the widening, roughly circular area of about 18 miles (30 km) in diameter. This area was clearly visible to Lot. A flat fertile land to the north of the Dead Sea where the Jordan valley widens out from a narrower valley. Genesis 13 calls it ‘the plain (kikkar) of Jordan’.

In ancient times the ‘kikkar’ had natural springs and wadis, and benefited from the fertile soils produced by alluvial silt deposited in the annual floods of the Jordan river. The record states that Lot liked the look of it and travelled east

to the far side. This is where Dr Collins started looking for the city of Sodom. Mounds of eleven ancient settlements had already been excavated in this area, so Dr Collins’ team was able to weed out those which did not relate to around 2,000 BC by using data already known. At length he was able to identify five likely candidates for Sodom. This is remarkable because the Bible refers to the five cities of the plain (see map below) the others being, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim and lastly Zoar, the place where Lot fled to before Sodom’s destruction. All apart from Zoar were destroyed with Sodom.



excavation at Tall el-Hammam

The largest of the mounds was Tall el-Hammam. Eight years of excavations to 2012 revealed this city to have been the chief of the surrounding settlements, going back to the Bronze Age. With its impressive towered walls and massive ramparts, the city would have exercised rulership over the satellite settlements. In 2012 a large gateway building with four towers was unearthed leading through the city wall to an inner plaza (see opposite). If this was Sodom, then Genesis 19 verse 1 tells us that Lot sat here!

A very large temple complex was uncovered in the city centre measuring 328 feet (100m) by 328 feet (100m) surrounded by courtyards and administrative buildings, together with the remains of open air altars.

the fiery destruction of Sodom

Then Dr Collins's team found that life in this city had stopped abruptly, together with that in nearby settlements, and was not re-occupied for around six to seven hundred years. There was evidence



Pottery fragments on the site show the effects of extreme heat

of a huge and sudden fiery destruction, exactly at the right era for the events recorded in Genesis. Huge amounts of ash were mixed with the stratum. The inferno had produced melted pottery, scorched foundation stones, together with ash and dark grey debris between 18 and 36 inches (45-90cm) thick. Many pottery fragments of this era were spread over the site having had their surfaces melted into glass, or 'bubbled up like frothy magma', which was evidence of heat exceeding 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit. Dr Leen Ritmeyer (below with Dr Collins on right) who has worked with Dr Collins, has commented: 'Many other exciting finds were



made, such as melted potsherds and burnt skeletons, which testify to a terrible and fiery destruction, reminiscent of that described in Genesis 19'.

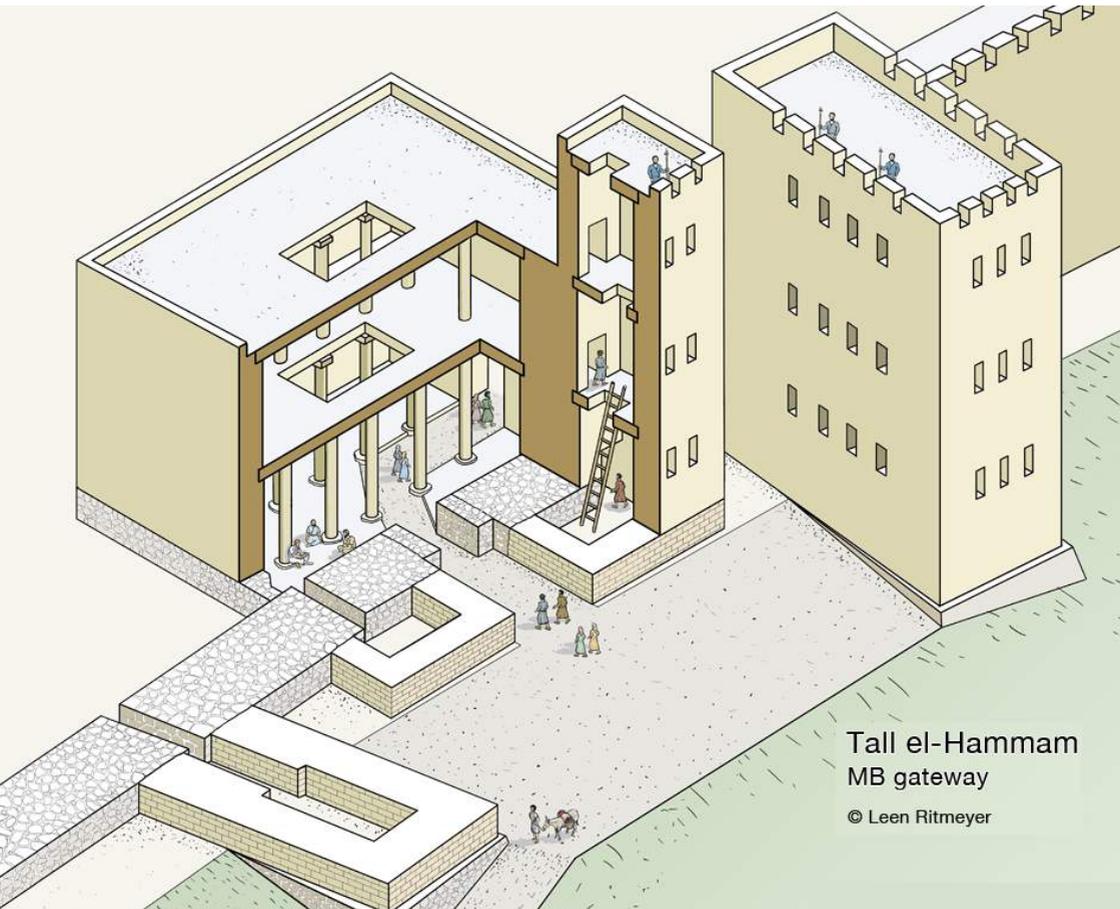
Dr Collins is convinced he has found the site of ancient Sodom, destroyed abruptly by fire in the middle Bronze Age. Sodom is mentioned nowhere else in history, only in the Bible, where it is proverbial and infamous! Now in the 21st century evidence is still being uncovered confirming the

essential truth of Biblical recorded history.

Large scale excavations are ongoing at this site, and the work of many seasons has been published. You can learn more about the on-going excavations at Tall el-Hammam at

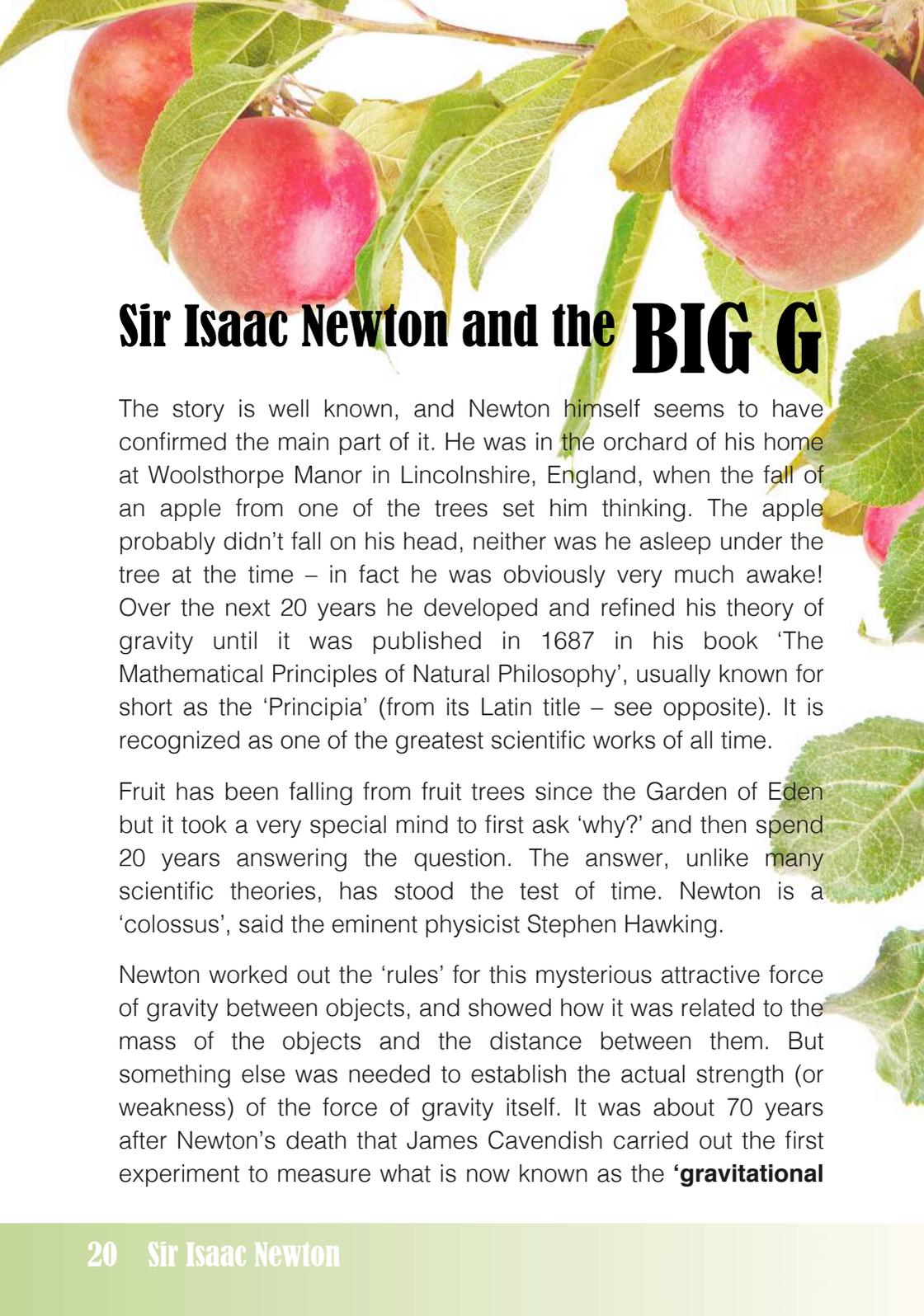
<http://www.tallelhammam.com/home.html>

Justin Giles
London UK



Tall el-Hammam
MB gateway

© Leen Ritmeyer



Sir Isaac Newton and the **BIG G**

The story is well known, and Newton himself seems to have confirmed the main part of it. He was in the orchard of his home at Woolsthorpe Manor in Lincolnshire, England, when the fall of an apple from one of the trees set him thinking. The apple probably didn't fall on his head, neither was he asleep under the tree at the time – in fact he was obviously very much awake! Over the next 20 years he developed and refined his theory of gravity until it was published in 1687 in his book 'The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy', usually known for short as the 'Principia' (from its Latin title – see opposite). It is recognized as one of the greatest scientific works of all time.

Fruit has been falling from fruit trees since the Garden of Eden but it took a very special mind to first ask 'why?' and then spend 20 years answering the question. The answer, unlike many scientific theories, has stood the test of time. Newton is a 'colossus', said the eminent physicist Stephen Hawking.

Newton worked out the 'rules' for this mysterious attractive force of gravity between objects, and showed how it was related to the mass of the objects and the distance between them. But something else was needed to establish the actual strength (or weakness) of the force of gravity itself. It was about 70 years after Newton's death that James Cavendish carried out the first experiment to measure what is now known as the **'gravitational**

constant' – the **big G** as some would call it (as opposed to **little g** which is something else!).

what is the big G?

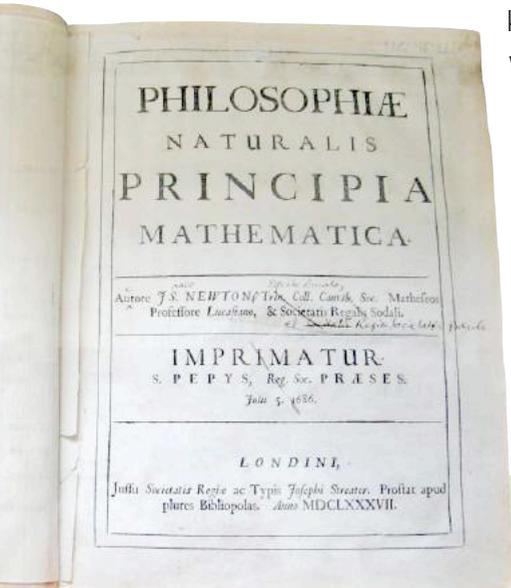
It is a unique number which defines just how strong or weak the force of gravity is. It is called a 'constant' because it never changes, and it is the same throughout the entire universe.

It is a very small number indeed, because the force of gravity is a very weak force – the weakest of the fundamental forces of the natural world. Because it is so small it is very difficult to measure accurately; the latest accepted value is 0.0000000000067384. So far from being big, the big G is in fact almost unbelievably small.

so where did this number come from?

It is built into the structure of our universe: all we can do is measure it to the best of our ability. If you believe that all space and time and our universe began in a huge inexplicable explosion known as 'the Big Bang', then this number is just an unplanned, accidental product of a massive uncontrolled explosion and it has no special meaning whatever. But the value of this number is critical to the whole fabric of the universe as we

know it. If this gravitational constant was just the slightest bit different, a tiny fraction larger or smaller, the universe would be very different and we would not be here at all. On the face of it, it looks as if this number has been carefully calculated to ensure we are here, living on an earth and in a solar system which is friendly to our existence.



It is not the only important number that gives this impression, this appearance of being 'tweaked' or 'finely tuned', to make life possible. Gravity is just one of the four fundamental forces in our universe. Two of the others operate within the atom: the 'strong' nuclear force and the 'weak' nuclear force. The fourth is the electrical force that drives all chemical and biological actions and reactions. All these forces are defined by numbers set to specific values (constants) that make all matter and life possible.

There are many others – up to 30 or so 'constants' of this sort. This appearance of 'fine-tuning' is inescapable and scientists in general have had to accept it, no matter how reluctantly. Sir Fred Hoyle, one time Astronomer Royal in the UK, said:

'A commonsense interpretation of the facts suggest that a super-intellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature. The numbers one calculates from the facts seem to me so overwhelming as to put this conclusion almost beyond question.'

Stephen Hawking took over a position which had once been occupied by Newton himself, Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge, England. He makes the same comment:

'The laws of science, as we know them at present, contain many fundamental numbers, like the size of the electric charge of the electron and the ratio of the masses of the proton and the electron... The remarkable fact is that the values of these numbers seem to have been very finely adjusted to make possible the development of life.'

So who or what 'monkeyed with the physics', and 'finely adjusted' the numbers?

can you have fine tuning without a tuner?

Isaac Newton himself knew exactly where this precision control came from. At the end of his famous book 'Principia' he wrote:

'This most elegant system of the sun, planets and comets could not have arisen without the design and dominion of an intelligent and powerful being.'

To Richard Bentley, an eminent seventeenth century scholar, he wrote:

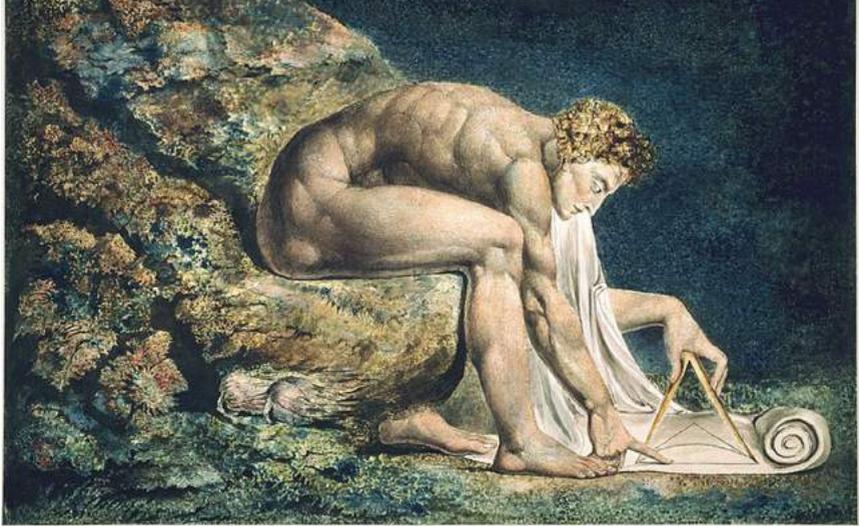
'When I wrote my treatise about our System I had an eye upon such Principles as might work with considering men for the belief of a Deity and nothing can rejoice me more than to find it useful for that purpose'.

Newton believed in the existence of God. His private writings, virtually unknown since his death, have now become widely

accessible and it is very clear that he was not a nominal adherent of the established church, but an ardent reader and student of the Scriptures and his studies led him to some very unorthodox views on Christian doctrine. He rejected the doctrine of the Trinity as a late philosophical corruption of original Christianity. He rejected the doctrine of the immortal soul as a Greek-inspired departure from the truth.

His devotion to the Bible permeates his private diaries and his study of Bible prophecy was a lifelong preoccupation. He





William Blake painted Newton as a heroic figure measuring out the heavens

believed in the return of Jesus Christ to the earth to establish God's kingdom, and he believed the Jews would return to the Holy Land before this happened. All this is highly embarrassing to the atheistic superstars of today's scientific establishment, but greatly encouraging to genuine Bible believers.

This great man believed exactly what the Old Testament prophet wrote:

'For the LORD is God, and he created the heavens and earth and put everything in place. He made the world to be lived in, not to be a place of empty chaos. "I am the LORD," he says, "and there is no other"' .

Isaiah 45.18 New Living Translation

One writer describes Newton's work as 'one grand project of uncovering God's Truth' (Dr Stephen Snobelen). Let us make our quest the same as his.

Roy Toms Norfolk UK

OBSERVATIONS
UPON THE
PROPHECIES
OF
DANIEL,
AND THE
APOCALYPSE
OF
St. ꝑ O H N.

IN TWO PARTS.

By Sir ISAAC NEWTON.

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M.DCC.XXXIII.

what did Jesus mean?

**‘Suffer little children,
and forbid them not, to come
unto me: for of such is the
kingdom of heaven’**

Matthew 19.14 KJV

This is a strange statement which Jesus made if we take it in isolation from the rest of his teaching. Here is the record of the same incident from the same gospel record but from the more recent New King James version:

‘Then little children were brought to him that he might put his hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them;

for of such is the kingdom of heaven." And he laid his hands on them, and departed from there.’

Matthew 19.13-15

the background to Jesus’ words

It may seem strange to us that the disciples of Jesus would attempt to turn away children from experiencing the words of such a great teacher, and especially the Son of God. But if we look at the events leading up to this, we see that Jesus had been working tirelessly in his ministry to preach the gospel. In Matthew 19 verse 1 we note that he had travelled around 100 miles



(160km) and that, having done so, he was then dealing with crowds of people and performing miraculous works of healing. In addition, he was then tested by the Pharisees, the religious leaders, concerning marriage laws.

Let us pause here to consider the personal impact of this on Jesus. A journey of 100 miles in our times can be achieved relatively easily if we have access to a vehicle or public transport. Jesus had to travel this distance on foot. The later account of him borrowing a donkey to ride into Jerusalem, suggests Jesus didn't normally have access to this mode of transport. So, after walking 100 miles, probably already tired, he began interacting with crowds of people and healing some of them.

At the same time he had to be alert to the trickery of the Pharisees, who should themselves have been teaching the people about God. Perhaps then, by this point, the disciples of Jesus being aware that their master was exhausted, felt that the children being brought to him was a step too far at this exhausting time for him, and tried to turn them away. This puts the event in context, but it is of more importance to note

and understand the response from Jesus.

Jesus was 'displeased'

The record of the same event in Mark 10.14 tells us that Jesus was '*greatly displeased*' by this attempt to turn the children away. We might ask 'why'? The answer comes from looking at the time a little later in his life when he appeared before the Roman governor Pilate, having been accused by the Jewish leaders. He responded to the question of his sovereignty in this way:

'...You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice.'

John 18.37

Jesus declared here that his reason to be on earth was to proclaim the truth about God's plan for the world to any who would listen and that included children. So the disciples were wrong on that account, to be turning away children who wanted to come to Jesus.

But the record of this incident has another interesting fact for us. Jesus corrected his disciples but also provided an explanation:

'... for of such is the kingdom of heaven' (Matthew 19.14). What did he mean by that? We need to look at another event to see what Jesus was driving at when he said this:

'Then Jesus called a little child to him, set him in the midst of them, and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven".'

Matthew 18.2-4

We see from this then, that it is not being like a little child that qualifies a person for the kingdom of heaven, but rather being as humble and trusting as a child. Jesus was drawing on common knowledge of both his day and through all ages to our day, that a little child is totally reliant on its parent to provide all things: food, shelter and life instruction. If it ever entered a little child's head to say 'I don't need my parent', disaster would probably come on him or her quite quickly. But that doesn't happen and the child quietly accepts all that is given to it in love from the parent, both in terms of sustenance and instruction. It is also true that children are

essentially and naturally humble about what they are told. If you tell a little child that something is a fact, they believe it unquestioningly. A really good example of this in the 'Christian' western world is the myth of 'Father Christmas'. Leaving aside the history and heresy associated with this character, we find that, when told about this, little children just accept that 'Father Christmas' exists. Children simply



don't question it until they begin to discern and rationalise the world around them.

the need for a child-like faith

We might also cite things like the theory of evolution. This is taught in western schools to children from a very young age as a fact, before they are able to discern or question the topic. Children have a kind of

humble, unquestioning and accepting faith about what they are told. So Jesus was saying that in order for us to understand and be 'of the kingdom of God', we need to have complete faith in what God has left on record in the Holy Scriptures and what Jesus, His son, taught about God's kingdom.

We can understand from his words that Jesus used the analogy of a child to instruct adults during his time. Through the pages of the Bible, we too are instructed to accept his teaching about God's purpose with the Earth and mankind, with trust and humility, just as a child would. This isn't the only place in Scripture where such a message is delivered. God declared the same thing through the prophet Isaiah: *'Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?' declares the LORD. 'This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word'* (Isaiah 66.2 NIV).

what is the kingdom of heaven?

Before we turn away from this topic let us reflect for a few moments and consider just what Jesus was wanting his hearers and readers to accept like little children. *'Of such*

is the kingdom of heaven' is what he is recorded as saying in Matthew 19.14. Luke puts it like this: *'...of such is the kingdom of God'* (Luke 18.16). It seems to be very safe to say that these two passages are a record of the same event. We can learn from this that the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are interchangeable terms for the same thing. Attaining a place in the kingdom of God is the single objective of all true Christians. Jesus gave his disciples a model prayer which begins like this:

'...When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven...' Luke 11.2

The essence of God's plan is to establish His kingdom as a literal, physical kingdom on Earth. A kingdom needs a king and the divinely appointed king is Jesus Christ. Jesus will return from heaven at God's appointed time (Acts 17.31) and it is in this sense that Jesus described it as *'the kingdom of heaven'*. The teaching of the Bible throughout its 66 books, and the message it contains for us, is that the kingdom will be

established on Earth and it will last forever.

This theme runs throughout the Old Testament and is endorsed by Jesus Christ himself. The apostles in their writings preached this same message. In the letter to the Hebrews chapter 11, the writer confirms the promises made to men and women who put their trust in God, including men like Abraham (see Genesis 12.1-3; 13.14,15) and David (see 2 Samuel 7.1-17). The chapter ends with words that include those who choose to follow Christ's teaching. Speaking of all the faithful people listed, the writer concludes with these words:

'And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us that they should not be made perfect apart from us.'

Hebrews 11.39,40

trusting as a child

You might be reading this article and thinking that I have strayed a long way from the words of Jesus to his disciples: *'Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God'*. Does all this seem to be

rather unlikely, hard to accept and implausible? To a twenty-first century adult mind it might easily seem like that.

However, Jesus was making it clear that no matter how implausible these things seem to be, we need to have a child-like frame of mind when we consider his words. Jesus doesn't want us to rule out the promise of the kingdom of God being established on this Earth, just because as adults we reason that it seems highly unlikely. This is exactly what is meant by faith and what is looked on positively and rewarded by God.

The lesson for us in these words of Jesus in Matthew chapter 19 can be paraphrased as follows: 'let everyone come to me and let them hear my words with the accepting, humble and trusting mind of a child, because from such a position comes the opportunity of being granted a place in the kingdom of God.'

Pete Meadows,
Birmingham UK

Editor's note: For further information send for the free special issue of Light magazine: 'The last great chapter of the human story' which focuses on the coming kingdom of God on earth.

a brief overview of THE

- Ancient books originally written in Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic.
- A library of 66 separate books. The word 'Bible' comes from the Greek word 'biblios' meaning a collection of books. 'Holy' means 'dedicated, set apart or consecrated to God'.
- 40 different writers covering a period of about 1,500 years from 1400 BC to AD 100. The 40 writers wrote their books in various locations such as Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), Greece, Egypt, Italy and Israel.
- The writers were 'divinely inspired':
'...holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit'
(2 Peter 1.21).
'All scripture is given by inspiration of God' (2 Timothy 3.16).
- Divided into 2 sections: The Old Testament (**OT**) written originally in Hebrew (one portion in Aramaic) and the New Testament (**NT**) written originally in Greek.

How did 66 separate books, written over such a long period of time, across such a wide geographical area, end up being bound together?

Old Testament: Jewish scribes in Alexandria, Egypt, produced the 'Greek Septuagint' a translation from Hebrew into Greek: Ptolemy's Alexandrian Library/collection: 250 BC.

New Testament: all either written in, or translated into Greek by AD 100. All books (OT & NT) translated into the Latin 'Vulgate' AD 400; into Anglo Saxon AD 700; into English AD 1384.

HOLY BIBLE

Books of the Bible

Old Testament

- God's people and 'The Law': 5 books.
- History of the Jews – God's people: 12 books.
- Poetic writings: 5 books. – e.g. Psalms, Ecclesiastes.
- The prophets: 17 books – e.g. Isaiah, Daniel, Amos, Obadiah.

New Testament:

- The Gospels: 4 books – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
- Record of the Acts of the Apostles: 1 book.
- Apostle Paul to groups: 9 letters – e.g. Romans, Corinthians.
- Apostle Paul to individuals: 4 letters – e.g. Timothy, Titus.
- Eight other letters: e.g. Hebrews, Jude.
- The Book of Revelation called 'The Apocalypse'.

A modern miracle

The existence of the Holy Bible today, in almost all languages, with its world-wide availability, and thanks to modern data transmission and printing systems, is a modern miracle. The Holy Bible is unique in its diverse origins: widespread geographically, large number of writers and long timespan of writing. Most importantly, its content is unique in that the whole volume, across all 66 books, has a powerful message from Almighty God to mankind.

Free download or printed copy available to you:

Light Magazine special edition 'Opening up the Bible' is found at: http://www.bexleychristadelphian.org/LightOnTheBible_v3.pdf. If you would like a printed copy of this special edition posted free of charge, send to Light Bible Publications, or email us, addresses on page 39.

so what has gone wrong with the world ?

In the first chapter of the first book of the Bible, there is an account of the creation of the world and at the end of that chapter we read these words: *'...God saw everything that he had made, and indeed it was very good'* (Genesis 1.31). If we accept the Biblical account of creation there is this very perplexing question to answer.

The human race is certainly a bewildering mixture of good and bad as it has always been, but we now live in a world which is increasingly beset by evil. We are bombarded with it by the news media. If they had to rely on good news for their stories, the newspapers would not be around for very long, for good news does not sell newspapers. Every day we hear about untold human suffering as a result of war, terrorism, murder, muggings, rape, brutality and child abuse. Man's inhumanity to man seems limitless – but why? Are we just animals in the process of evolving into something better as some would have us believe? Or is

there another answer? Is it the work of the devil? Or is it ourselves who are to blame?

When we study the Bible with an open mind, we shall find the answers to these questions. The Bible predicted long ago the evil state of the world which we see around us today. The words may be unpalatable, but the prophet Jeremiah gives us the Divine assessment of humanity in general: *'The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?'* (Jeremiah 17.9 NIV).

3,000 years ago, the wise man Solomon made an assessment of the human race in these words:

'So I turned my mind to understand, to investigate and to search out wisdom and the scheme of things and to understand the stupidity of wickedness and the madness of folly... "Look", says the Teacher, "this is what I have discovered: adding one thing to another to

discover the scheme of things – while I was still searching but not finding – I found one upright man among a thousand, but not one upright woman among them all. This only have I found: God made mankind upright, but men have gone in search of many schemes”

Ecclesiastes 7.25–29 NIV

Those who leave God out of account and tell us that we are gradually evolving into something better will be disappointed – the trend is leading us in the opposite direction! The ‘schemes’ which Solomon referred to have resulted in a world today that fears the results of mankind’s ‘progress’. The phrase ‘weapons of mass destruction’ has been used a lot in recent years and these are a result of the human mind that has turned away from God.

the teaching of Jesus

In Mark’s Gospel record there are some words of Jesus about the state of humanity. The religious leaders had accused his disciples of not carrying out the ritual washing required by their traditions before eating food. Jesus used this to draw a very important lesson: ‘

‘...What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man’

Mark 7.20-23

The point is that no amount of washing can cleanse us from sin – for this is part of our very nature. Jesus tells us that sin comes from within and prompts us to carry out evil of every kind. These evil characteristics come from the heart of man and from nowhere else. Note how specific Jesus is on this point. Do you think he would have told his disciples this if ‘the devil’ was to blame?

The way to overcome these tendencies is by cleansing the heart – not by ritual washing of the hands as those religious leaders of the Jews often did. Cleansing the heart is achieved by following the commandments given in God’s Word the greatest of which are to ‘love the LORD your God’ and to ‘love your neighbour as yourself’ (Mark 12.30, 31). Putting these

words into action involves a struggle with ourselves and is an overriding part of the true Christian's life – to overcome those characteristics which Jesus said come from within. What a different place the world would be if everyone was motivated in this way.

a personal struggle

The Apostle Paul wrote a letter to the 1st century Christians in Rome and in chapter seven he describes the struggle which he had against sin. Paul would have mentioned it if 'the devil' is the one who prompts us to do evil but he wrote this:

'So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?'

Romans 7.21-24 NIV

Paul's words underline the teaching of Jesus in Mark chapter seven and no-one is exempt from what he describes as the 'law of sin'.

the teaching of James

Before we examine specific Bible verses which mention the word 'devil', it is important to first establish that evil thoughts and actions come from within us. The Bible tells us that '*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*' (Romans 3.23). To confirm this point beyond a shadow of doubt, James goes on to describe the process that leads us to commit sin: '*But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed*' (James 1.14).

James is very emphatic – temptation and sin come from within the evil heart of man – this is the consistent teaching of God's Word. The apostle then goes on to use a figure which everyone will understand – he likens sin and its consequences to the every-day process of conception, birth, life and death: '*Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death*' (James 1.15).

Old Testament references to the devil and satan

There are just four passages in the Old Testament which refer to devils. In each case it is clear from the



3,400 year old stone figurine of a Canaanite goddess found at Tel Rehov in Israel in 2016.

context that these references are about the pagan gods of the nations which surrounded Israel – in other words, gods of wood and stone, or idols as we would call them (see for example Leviticus 17.7 KJV; Psalm 106.37 KJV).

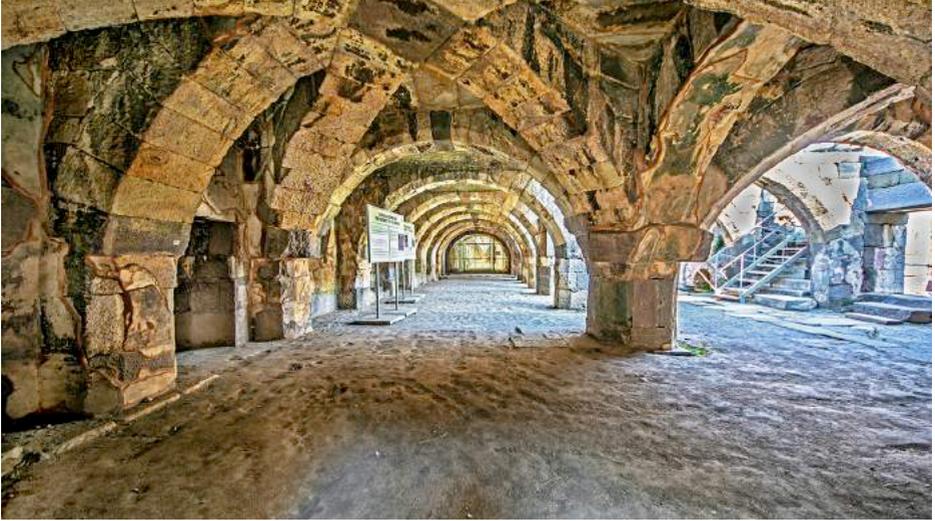
There are a number of references to the word *satan* in the Old Testament which are again used by some to support the idea of a personal devil. *Satan* is a Hebrew word – a word that simply means adversary. The English translators of the Bible have sometimes translated it by the word *adversary* and sometimes they have transposed the original Hebrew word *satan* into the English text. There is nothing to support this approach, apart from the obvious bias of the translators

of the Bible, who believed in a personal devil.

the serpent in Eden

Many Christians believe the serpent that tempted our first parents in Eden was, in reality, a fallen angel called the devil or *satan*. They say it was the devil who brought sin into the world. This unscriptural teaching is apparently supported by some words of Jesus in confrontation with the Jews in Jerusalem. He accused them of perverting the truth in some very strong words: *'You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do'* (John 8.44).

Remember the teaching of Scripture elsewhere – the Bible does not contradict itself. Here the word devil is used by Jesus to represent the serpent which had the power of speech. By a clever deception and a lie the serpent caused our first parents to sin. Afterwards this reptile was cursed by God, its creator, but the damage had been done. The serpent was the tempter who counselled our first parents to believe a lie rather than obey the command of God. In the same way Jesus likened the religious leaders of the Jews to the serpent which said to Adam and Eve *'You will not*



surely die' (Genesis 3.4) or in the words of Jesus *'he is a liar and the father of it'* (John 8.44).

Our first parents ate the forbidden fruit and, because of their disobedience, they and all their descendants became subject to what the Bible calls *'the law of sin and death'*. The world is populated at this present time by billions of dying sinners, demonstrating the fulfilment of God's words to Adam: *'In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return'* (Genesis 3.19).

New Testament references to the devil and satan

The New Testament was written in Greek and consequently the word devil is usually a translation from

the Greek word *diabolos*. This word simply means someone who is a false accuser – literally it means to strike through as with a dart or other sharp object. The meaning in Scripture is to strike through with sharp words, and so it means a false accuser or slanderer.

The Apostle John records some telling words of Jesus addressed to his twelve disciples: *'Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?'* (John 6.70). Jesus was referring to that man who would betray him with a false accusation – Judas Iscariot was a devil! There is no suggestion of anything here other than the straightforward facts concerning Judas. This is the principle we must apply when looking at all Bible references to the devil.

LEFT: the remains of the agora or marketplace at Smyrna in Turkey. Nearly 2,000 years ago Jesus wrote a letter to the believers here (see below)

Christ's messages to the seven churches of Asia Minor (now Turkey) are recorded in the last book of the Bible. The message to Smyrna (now Izmir) contains these encouraging words: *'Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested...'* (Revelation 2.10). In this passage we see another use of the Greek word *diabolos*. In this case it simply refers to the Roman authorities in the first Century, who, as we know from history, persecuted the Christians and falsely accused them, committing many of them to prison for their beliefs. They were the slanderers or false accusers of Christ's brethren – the 'devil' referred to in Christ's message.

If we can understand the origin of sin, we will see that there is no room at all in the teaching of God's Word for a personal devil. The Apostle Paul tells us in his letter to the Romans:

'Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man (Adam),

and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.' Romans 5.12 NIV

To sum up, the Scriptural principles are very clear in both the Old and New Testaments. There is nothing in Scripture to support the idea that a personal devil exists as a force for evil. The Bible clearly demonstrates that evil thoughts come from within and prompt us to sin. The devil and satan are Bible terms used to personify the evil promptings of the human mind. We have inherited these characteristics from our first parents, which, if not checked, cause us to sin.

a personal message

The world at present is in a sorry state as a result of sin – a small word with huge implications. It's the answer to the question posed by the title of this article – 'So what has gone wrong with the world?' We live in '*perilous times*' (see article on Signs of the Times page 6) as Paul predicted in his letter to Timothy (2 Timothy 3.1). But there is hope for the future – God has promised to make great changes which will eventually result in the complete elimination of sin and its consequences – for death itself will



eventually be destroyed (1 Corinthians 15.26). God's plan for the world is summed up in these words addressed to his servant Moses: *'but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD'* (Numbers 14.21).

On a personal level the message of the Bible is all about the hope of being saved from death. You too can become related to this hope for the future, if you are prepared to acknowledge your present sinful state and follow God's way. This will give you assurance, and a life with new meaning, in a world full of evil and uncertainty.

The Apostle Paul describes our present state as being like the relationship between an employee (sinner) and his or her employer (sin). Death is our wages for committing sin, but there is a way out of this cycle and it's been made possible through the saving work of Jesus as Paul explained:

**'...the wages of sin is death,
but the gift of God is eternal
life in Christ Jesus our Lord.'**

Romans 6.23

Colin Dryland
London, UK

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

All Bible quotations in this magazine are taken from the New King James Version (NKJV) except where another version is indicated after the text.

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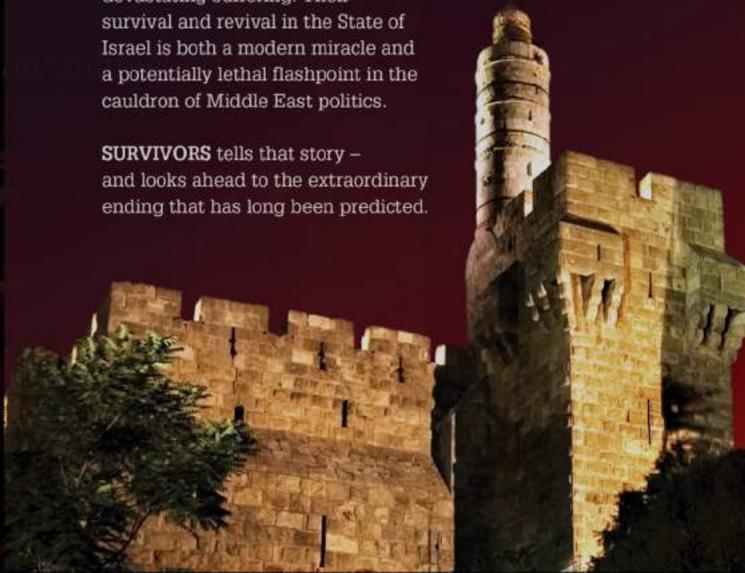
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"If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
may my right hand forget its skill.
May my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth
if I do not remember you..."

PSALM 137

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