

“In the Beginning...”



Answers to Questions
from Genesis

Genesis is the “book of origins.” It constitutes that part of the Bible which is commonly called the introductory book of the Old Testament. The name Genesis is derived directly from the Greek translation of the Hebrew word *bereshith*, meaning “in the beginning.”

The book of Genesis starts with a brief statement about the pre-Adamic world and goes on to cover the first 2,000 years and more of man’s history, from the creation of Adam and Eve to the settlement of the children of Israel in Egypt. The highlights of the first eleven chapters are a description of creation; God’s instruction to the first man and woman; the account of their disobedience which cut them and their progeny off from God; man’s sinful degeneration which resulted in total destruction of life save Noah and his family by a Flood; and the disbursement of the races at the tower of Babel after the Flood.

Chapters 12 through 50 contain the account of Abraham’s calling and God’s promises to him due to his faithfulness; the story of Isaac and Jacob; and the account of Joseph and his family in Egypt.

Genesis can rightly be summed up in the following words: “The book of Genesis is the true and original birthplace of all theology. It contains those concepts of God and man, of righteousness and judgement, of responsibility and moral government, of failure and hope, which are presupposed through the rest of the Old Testament, and which prepare the way for the mission of Christ” (*The Foundations of the Bible*, page 155).

The record of Genesis is written in abbreviated form and certain questions, as a result, have been frequently asked about its content. It is the purpose of this reprint series to answer a number of these questions in the light of the entire Bible (Genesis to Revelation).

IN THE BEGINNING—

Answers to Questions from Genesis

• Can you tell me who wrote the book of Genesis? I have asked several people and no one can give me an answer.

The Jewish community, which has the responsibility of preserving the Hebrew Old Testament (Rom. 3:1-2) ascribes this book to Moses. There can be no doubt that Moses is the author of Genesis as well as the rest of the Pentateuch (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy).

Jesus said to certain religious leaders of His day, "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even *Moses* in whom ye trust. For had ye believed *Moses*, ye would have believed me: *for he wrote of me*. But if ye believe not his *writings*, how shall ye believe my works?" (John 5:45-57). Here is Jesus' own personal testimony that *Moses* wrote scripture.

But what part?

Jesus gave the division of the Old Testament in Luke 24:44: "... All things must be fulfilled, which were written in *the law of Moses*, and in the prophets, and in the psalms ... " A little earlier, Jesus, "*beginning at Moses* and all the prophets ... expounded unto them (the disciples) in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (verse 27). Jesus began with *Moses* because it was *Moses* who wrote the first five books of the Bible. This does not, however, preclude the fact that *Joshua* and later prophets added further comments to the law as *Moses* wrote it. See Deuteronomy 34:5-12 for the account of *Moses'* death. Also Genesis 14:14 where the later name *Dan* is used instead of *Laish* (Judg. 18:29).

• You say the English word "God" in Genesis 1:1 is translated from the Hebrew word *Elohim*. Could you tell me what the name *Elohim* means?

Elohim is a uniplural noun. It is similar to such English words as

group, church, crowd, family, or organization.

Take, for example, the word church. We find in I Corinthians 12:20 that there is only one church—the "one body" yet composed of "many members." Even though it takes many persons to constitute the church, it is not many churches—it is only the one church!

A family is made up of more than one person, yet only the one family. In like manner, God is not merely one person, but a family. God is the supreme divine family which rules the universe! The whole Gospel Jesus brought to mankind is, merely, the good news of the Kingdom of God. That Kingdom is a family—a ruling divine family into which humans may be born! For a detailed explanation on man's incredible potential, write for the booklet *Why Were You Born?*

• My granddaughter is eight years old and she wants to know "Where did God come from?" First, I would appreciate your giving me an answer.

We are used to living in a limited world. Everything around us has limitations—beginnings and endings. We are aware of infants being born. We are aware of grandparents dying. We observe animals, plants and insects beginning life. We see their lives come to an end. We speak of the birth and the death of civilizations, of storms, volcanoes and comets.

We are accustomed to seeing things get old. Clothing and furniture wear out. Automobiles fall apart. Buildings deteriorate. Our bodies become wrinkled and slow.

To mortal man everything has a beginning, a period of usefulness and an end. We mark this progression of events on our clocks and calendars. To us, only what is measurable by hours, days and years seems to have real significance.

So when we hear that God is eternal, that He always has been and always will be, our minds balk. The words tend to be meaningless because we have nothing familiar to relate them to.

And that is just the problem: we are trying to relate what cannot be related in physical terms. We are trying to apply the limitations of the *physical* existence we know to the unlimited *spiritual* plane on which God lives. The two cannot be compared.

Our minds can encompass an hour, a century, a millennium, but they cannot grasp eternity. They are not big enough to fully comprehend spiritual existence. We can't even fully comprehend the physical universe!

As an illustration, let's consider for a moment what God has created. Astronomers estimate that 100,000 million galaxies each with 100,000 million stars dot the universe. And who knows how many planets and moons? God says He counts and names them all (Ps. 147:4).

Now if we allow God one full second by our reckoning of time to count and name each star in the heavens, do you know how long it would take Him to name them all? Working nonstop, by our clocks and calendars, it would take more than 300,000 billion years just to count and name them. How long must it have taken Him to design and create all those stars?

To us these figures are inconceivable. But not to God. God is eternal. One of His names in Hebrew is *Yahweh*—the "Everliving One." The Creator is not bound by the laws of space and time as we are. While men are able to theorize about time warps and the relation of energy to the speed of light, God masters it all. To Him, according to His wishes, "one day ... is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (II Pet. 3:8).

God "inhabits eternity" (Isa. 57:11). That is to say He comfortably

dwells in what we might think of as beginningless and endless time. Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1 show that at whatever point in the past we wish to consider as the beginning—no matter how far back we try to stretch our finite minds—God already existed. “In the beginning God . . .”

Where did God come from? He didn’t “come from” anywhere. He was always there!

• **Many of your articles effectively refute evolution and support the Bible. Yet you seem to**

believe the earth is a lot older than the 6,000 years that the Bible indicates. Isn’t this a contradiction?

The Bible reveals that God is the creator of heaven and earth “and all that in them is” (Gen. 1:1; Ex. 20:11). The evidence from modern biology, geology, and paleontology supports a special creation. The theories of evolution or theistic evolution are based on erroneous interpretations of that evidence.

The Bible, however, does not say *when* the original creation of the

earth took place. Scientific evidence based on studies of radiometric dating, geological stratigraphy and ecological succession demonstrate the earth is not merely 6,000 years old, but very old indeed.

Some people have attempted to figure out the date of creation based on the biblical ages of the patriarchs (for example, the famous Usher dated creation at 4004 B.C.). But the date of the creation of man is not connected with the age of the earth. Adam was created nearly 6,000 years ago; the earth is much older. In fact, you may be surprised to learn that the pre-Adamic world was at one time inhabited by angelic beings! (See the next two questions.)

The exact age of the earth is not revealed in Scripture. When the Bible is correctly understood, there is nothing to keep one from accepting factual scientific evidence for determining the age of the earth.

• **It is my understanding that verses 1 and 2 of Genesis, chapter 1, explain the creation of the earth. Yet, you say these verses describe events which happened *before* the seven day “creation week.” Can you prove your belief from the Bible?**

Yes, we can! The Hebrew words for “without form and void” (Gen. 1:2) are *tohu* and *bohu*. Translated into English they mean chaotic, in confusion, waste, empty. Why would God create the earth in disorder and then have to straighten it out? That wouldn’t make sense! The Hebrew word for “created” used in Genesis 1:1 implies that the creation was a perfected work. It implies order and system, not chaos or confusion! We read in I Corinthians 14:33 that “God is *not* the author of confusion.” God is the author of peace. He is the author of law and order.

God told Job that the angels shouted for joy when the earth was created (Job 38:7). This is further indication that when God created the earth, He created it useful and beautiful.

Conclusive proof is found in Isaiah 45:18. Notice: “For thus saith the Eternal that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and

DOES GOD EXIST?

Can the existence of God be demonstrated to the rational mind? Is there any tangible evidence at all that a supreme Being really does sit at the controls of the Universe? Belief in the existence of a deity is the basic assumption upon which all religion is built—but what is the basis for such belief? Is it mere outmoded superstition to believe in God? These questions have troubled every generation of mankind. Our free booklet *Does God Exist?* will provide you with a solid basis for believing in the existence of a divine Creator God. Be sure to obtain your free copy by writing to one of the addresses listed on the back cover.

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made it; he hath established it, he created it *not* in vain . . .” “In vain” is an inappropriate translation. The original Hebrew word is *tohu*. This is the same identical Hebrew word used in Genesis 1:2 meaning “confusion” or “emptiness” or “waste”—a result of disorder, a result of violation of law. Thus, this verse is a plain statement that when God created the earth it was not *tohu*—in a state of confusion and disorder. It became that way long before the seven day “creation week,” which actually begins in verse 3.

An added point of evidence is verse 2 of Genesis 1. Here the English word translated “was” is from the Hebrew word *hayah*. This word is translated “became” in Genesis 2:7, 9:15 and 19:26. In the first three chapters of the Bible, and many other places where you find the Hebrew word *hayah*, it denotes a condition that was *different* from a former condition. In other words, the earth “became” chaotic. It had not always been that way. What caused it to become chaotic? See the next question.

• **In one of your publications, I read that the earth was originally inhabited by angels. Please explain.**

Consider John 1:1: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

That is the very earliest prehistoric record. It could have been millions or thousands of millions of years ago. The two eternally living Spirit Personages, who together constituted the ONE God, were ALONE in empty space. There was no physical universe—YET!

But, even as man thinks, and designs and plans before making—so did God conceive the plan and design to create angels—immortal spirit beings, composed wholly of spirit.

God created angels before creating the earth. We know they had been created prior to the earth because they sang together and shouted for joy at earth’s creation (Job 38:4-7).

Angels were the first thinking, reasoning, separate entities created by God. They were created with minds—ability to know, reason, make choices. But their creation

could not be a *finished* creation until CHARACTER—either good or evil—was developed in them.

God initially INSTRUCTED them in HIS WAY—that of righteous character. It was THE WAY of God’s spiritual law—the basis of God’s GOVERNMENT.

Apparently God placed a third of the angels He had created on earth. They were given opportunity to share in God’s creating activities by FINISHING the earth—working in and with its many elements, improving, beautifying, completing it.

Instead of improving, beautifying and completing the earth, however, the angels rebelled and brought it to desolation and ruin (Gen. 1:2).

• **Where did the devil and his demons come from?**

The third of the angels (Rev. 12:4) inhabiting the earth before man (see previous question) sinned (II Pet. 2:4). Their leader, the super-archangel Lucifer (Isa. 14:12-14) had been perfect in all his ways from the day of his initial creation, till iniquity—lawlessness—was found in him. “Thus saith the Lord God; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every previous stone was thy covering . . . in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. *Thou wast perfect* in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, *till* iniquity was found in thee” (Ezek. 28:12-15).

Lucifer was not satisfied with rule over only the one planet—as the testing ground to prepare him for *all* planets. He wanted to rule all at once. He said, “. . . I will exalt my throne above the stars of God . . .” (Isa. 14:13). He had been created with exceeding beauty, which “lifted up his heart” in vanity (Ezek. 28:17). He became lustful, jealous and envious of God, decided on a WAR of invasion, attempting to overthrow God on the heavenly throne of the universe. He led his angels into rebellion. These angels “kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation”—meaning this earth (Jude 6.)

But Lucifer and his angels were cast back to earth (Rev. 12:4). Lucifer’s name was changed to Satan the devil. His angels became demons. Their minds had become perverted for eternity.

(If you would like more information concerning the original destruction of the earth, write for our article entitled “Did God Create a Devil?”)

• **Could you explain how there could be light on the first day of creation when the sun, moon, and stars were not created until the fourth day?**

As explained in the last few answers, great destruction had occurred to the earth as pictured in Genesis 1:2. When God looked at the chaotic state before Him, He saw an atmosphere filled with thick clouds. If there had been a human being on the earth’s surface, he would have seen nothing—because no light penetrated the saturated atmosphere. God’s first act in recreating the earth’s surface, was to thin the clouds enough to let light from the sun filter to earth.

Then, on the fourth day of creation, God cleared the clouds away so that the sun, moon and stars could be clearly viewed. Verse 16 tells us that God “made” the sun and moon. The Hebrew word for “made” is *asah*. It could be translated as “made,” “had made,” or “will have made.” Any of these renderings could be correct. But the exact one would have to be

Is the Devil Making Us Do It?

Why does humanity suffer in a world full of violence and hate? Are we bringing it all on ourselves, or are outside influences shaping our destiny? For the answer to these and other questions affecting our very survival, send for your free copy of *Did God Create a Devil?* (See the back cover for the address of our office nearest you.)

determined from the context. By looking at the context, it is evident that God already “had made” the sun, moon and stars long before and set them in the sky.

Note what one well-known Old Testament introduction says on the subject: “In explaining this phenomenon it must first be noted that the standpoint of the first chapter of Genesis is an ideal geocentric one, as though the writer were actually upon the earth at that time and in a position to record the developing phases of created life as he experienced them. From such a standpoint the heavenly bodies would only become visible when the dense cloud-covering of the earth had dispersed to a large extent” (R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 554).

Therefore, the sun, moon and stars were created long before the fourth day of creation. They were made visible again on the fourth day of the week of re-creation of the earth’s surface.

• How can we be certain that the days mentioned in Genesis 1 are 24 hours in length? Some authorities claim these days are actually one thousand years or more in length.

Theistic evolutionists, even some theologians, make the claim to which you refer. Yet, a look at the account and a simple knowledge of nature clearly shows that each day was 24 hours in length—not an epoch of time!

Consider the plants which were created on the third day of this week of re-creation. The sun did not appear until the next day. If these “days” were one thousand years long, then the plants could not have survived, for they were without sunshine. Those who believe the days to have been long ages are faced with this impossible situation!

Also notice that the plants were made the third day, insects on the sixth. How did certain specialized plants continue to exist for ages without their insect partners? The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* states that two groups of insects which include bees and wasps, butterflies and moths could not have existed without the honey—or nectar-bearing plants.

Nor could these plants have existed without the insects. Those who claim creation days were one thousand or more years in length are faced with the conclusion that most plants would have had to live this period of time without producing seed—an impossibility!

The scripture plainly states: “In six days God made heaven and earth.” Each day of creation is not some long epoch but exactly what the scripture says, a day and night of twenty-four hours. Each day is an evening and morning—that is, nighttime and daytime. A more complete study of this subject is available in our free article “How Long Were the Days of Creation?”

• Genesis 2:2-3 states that God rested on the seventh day and sanctified it. You teach this day is Saturday. How can you be sure that the original seventh day is still Saturday? Haven’t there been changes in the calendar?

Over the millenia, mankind has used many methods to chronicle time. The Roman calendar now in use has undergone some changes, but the weekly cycle was not altered with those changes. The original Roman calendar, introduced during the days of Julius Caesar, 45 B.C., was imperfect since it was based on the premise that the year was exactly 365¼ days long. To maintain the pattern an addition of an extra day to the month of February was made every four years. However, it was later found that the year was 12 minutes and 14 seconds shorter than this. A correction was made during the time of Pope Gregory XIII in the 16th Century by dropping ten days from the calendar. Thus in 1582, Thursday, 4 October was followed by Friday, 15 October. Notice that the weekly cycle *was not* altered. For further details be sure to request the free booklet, “Has Time Been Lost?”

The Hebrew calendar used from the time of Christ till now preserved the same seventh day of the week (Friday sunset to Saturday sunset) as it was in Christ’s time. The Jewish people, through the centuries of migrations and persecutions, have never lost the Sabbath day. Nor do most

Christians doubt the fact that Sunday is the first day of the week. There is no real debate on this point. The problem is with whether or not we will follow the example of our Savior and keep the same Sabbath that He kept (Mark 2:28). (Additional information on the Sabbath can be had by requesting the booklet “Which Day is the Christian Sabbath?” and the article “The Origin of Sunday Worship.”)

• Where was the Garden of Eden located?

The Bible does not dogmatically say all traces of the Garden of Eden have been erased—but that is probably what occurred during the Flood in Noah’s day.

However, there is reason to believe that the Garden of Eden once existed in the Middle East. God has consistently used this area to work out His plan of salvation.

To this day two of the rivers which once flowed through Eden retain their names—the Tigris (Hiddekel), and the Euphrates. They flow from eastern Asia Minor to the Persian Gulf.

• I understand God made man in His own image after creating all the animals and other creatures. What does “in our image” mean (Gen. 1:26)?

First, notice that God created all life after its own *kind* (Gen. 1:19-25). The fish in the oceans, lakes, and streams, were created after the fish kind. The birds of the air after the bird kind. The land fowl after the fowl kind. The land animals, each after its *own* kind.

Then God said, “let us make man in *our* image after *our* likeness” (Gen. 1:26). God proposed to make man not after the animal kind, but after the *God kind*! Man, then, is not descended from an animal as evolutionists believe!

The word “likeness” in this verse refers primarily to facial appearance. The word “image” signifies not only form and shape as in other passages of the Bible, but “stamped with character.” The word “image” includes the potential of developing God-like character.

Adam was formed—shaped—out of material substance. In form and shape he bore God's likeness. (God reveals Himself as having face, hair, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, arms, and feet.) But Adam was made for the very purpose of *acquiring*—during his mortal lifetime—the character of God. Adam failed, choosing to follow the ways of Satan rather than the ways of God.

God is now fulfilling His purpose in those He has called and chosen through His son Jesus Christ. It is through Jesus Christ that Christians shall—by a resurrection to immortality (I Cor. 15:50-54)—bear the “image” of God. That is, be composed of God's very own character! This fantastic truth is thoroughly explained in the book *The Incredible Human Potential*, by Herbert W. Armstrong.

• Why do you teach that man does not have a soul when Genesis 2:7 states that man became a living soul?

This verse says exactly what we teach. It does not say man *has* a “soul” which resides in the body. It states that man *became* a living soul. Man *is* a soul; he does not have an immortal soul. There is a vast difference.

The Hebrew word for “soul” used in the above verse is *nephesh*. *Nephesh* can mean “a breathing creature, i.e., animal or vitality” and is also rendered in the English as “appetite, beast, body, breath, creature . . . man, mind, mortality.” This same Hebrew word is translated “creature” in Genesis 1:24; 2:19; 9:10, 12, 15 and 16.

Nephesh is used in many places where the translators supplied our English word “body.” Notice Leviticus 21:11. “Neither shall he go in to any dead body [*nephesh*], nor defile himself . . .” A *nephesh* is called a “body” in this scripture! In Numbers 9:6, 7, 10 and 19:13 the word *nephesh* is translated into English as “dead body.”

When God breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life, He started the process of the combining of oxygen with blood, which then carried the oxygen to all parts of the body, thereby imparting physical life. The life of a human being is in his bloodstream. God told Noah that the life of

every animal, or *nephesh*, was in the blood. “But flesh with the life [Hebrew, *nephesh*] thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat” (Gen. 9:4). Here the word “life” comes from the same Hebrew word, *nephesh*, which is elsewhere rendered “soul” or “body.” In verse 5 of Genesis, chapter 9, this same word *nephesh* is used for our English word “life.” This time the reference is to Noah and every man. Thus, the life of man and the life of animals is the same. Mortal life! The Bible nowhere substantiates the belief that man has an “immortal soul” residing in his body. The soul is mortal. It can die (Ezek. 18:4). For further information on this subject request the article entitled “What is Man?”

• My church teaches the fall of man. Did Adam and Eve “fall”, or what really happened when they ate of the forbidden fruit in Genesis 3:6-7?

The Bible nowhere teaches that Adam and Eve “fell.” To fall implies an accident. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, it was no accident! God clearly told them what would happen if they ate from the forbidden tree. The penalty was death!

When the devil (represented by the serpent) talked to Eve, he deceived her into eating the forbidden fruit by appealing to her five senses and to her vanity. However, Adam was *not* deceived. He ate of the forbidden fruit knowing better. He simply went along with his wife. This single act of disobedience on Adam's part cut him and all of his progeny off from God. His action, in essence, showed that he did not want to go God's way to eternal life (symbolized by the tree of life). Instead, he decided to determine for himself what was right and what was wrong—apart from God. Adam's progeny has followed in his footsteps ever since.

Adam did not “fall.” He disobeyed his maker. You can read of the one who “fell” in Luke 10:18. It is the devil—Satan—who fell when he was cast from heaven back to the earth prior to the week of re-creation. It was the fall of Satan that made the earth waste and in confusion (Gen. 1:2).

• What was the forbidden fruit? I have been told that it was sex.

There are all kinds of weird ideas concerning the forbidden fruit. Theologians have argued for centuries about the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Were they literal trees with literal fruit or simply symbolic of something else?

The Bible is very clear on this point.

Genesis 2, verses 8 and 9 states that God planted a garden in Eden and in the garden he caused to grow “every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (verse 9). Nothing could be plainer. The tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil were *literal* trees.

What type of fruit did these trees produce? The Bible simply does not say. The fable that the forbidden fruit was an apple that lodged in Adam's throat is just that—a fable!

Was the forbidden fruit symbolic of sex as you were told? Absolutely not! God is the creator of marriage and reproduction. Genesis 1:28 reads “and God *blessed them*, and God said unto them, Be *fruitful*, and *multiply*, and *replenish* the earth . . .” God would not have told Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply and then label the reproductive process sin! For God to do this does not make sense.

Marital sex is not evil or sinful. It is good (Gen. 1:31). In Hebrews 13:4 we are told “marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled . . .” This verse plainly refers to the sexual relationship within marriage.

The first sin was a matter of *disobedience* to God's instructions. God used two literal trees to *test* Adam to see whether or not he would obey his Creator. The tree of life which was freely offered to Adam and Eve symbolized the availability of God's Holy Spirit. If Adam and Eve would have eaten the fruit of this tree, God would have given them His Holy Spirit and ultimately eternal life. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil, on the other hand, symbolized disobedience. When Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of this tree, their disobedience cut them off from their Creator and they embarked on a course of false educa-

tion that produced sin and death.

After Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate of the forbidden fruit, “the eyes of them both were opened” and they became ashamed of their nakedness. But to assume sex was involved in the devil’s tempting is to read something into Genesis 3:7 which simply is not there! They were ashamed *mentally* because they had disobeyed their loving Creator. They now felt vulnerable, ashamed and sinful. They wanted to run and hide from God who had made them and given them life (Gen. 3:7-11).

They were also ashamed *physically* due to Satan’s doctrine that sex is shameful. It was Satan who had given Eve the idea that there was something shameful about their nakedness! Notice God said, “who *told* thee that thou wast naked? . . .” (verse 11). The only other “who” around at that time was Satan the devil! Our booklet entitled “Is Sex Sin?” explains the God ordained purpose of marriage and sex. Write for it.

• **Why did not Adam and Eve die the day they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as God had said they would (Gen. 2:17)?**

When God told Adam that he would die in the very day he ate of the forbidden fruit, he meant what he said. On that very day he was as good as dead because the penalty of death had fallen on him. The day Adam began on the path of sin the way of death was introduced to the world and would claim every life that ever lived except for those who would repent and turn to God.

Another way of looking at it is this: each day in God’s 7000 year Plan is 1000 years. Adam lived 930 years. He died on that first 1000-year day in God’s Plan of Salvation.

All mankind from Adam was cut off from access to the Holy Spirit except for a few prophets, priests, kings and judges till Christ made the Spirit available to those whom God now calls (those who repent, forsake the way of sin, and seek the way of God). By His death, Christ paid the penalty for sin in our stead, making it possible for us to be reconciled to God. Our article entitled “One Man’s Blood” explains the price Jesus

Christ had to pay to free mankind from sin and death. It’s free upon request.

• **Genesis 2:19 indicates that God created the beasts of the field after He created Adam. Doesn’t this contradict the account given in Genesis 1?**

There is no contradiction. Chapter 2 of Genesis does not give the time order of creation. The correct *chronological order* of creation is stated in chapter 1. It gives a day-by-day description of the first six days of creation week.

Genesis 2, which is sometimes called the “second account of creation,” is a reiteration—not in time order—of what God created. A close examination will show that there are frequent insets in the Bible, not only in this creation story, but in many other parts of the Bible, as well as in histories written by men.

Chapter two emphasizes the *reason* and purpose behind the creation of man. It points out Adam’s *responsibility* in caring for God’s creation (Adam was to dress and keep the garden, verse 15), as well as his responsibility in naming each kind of animal.

As an interesting sidelight, God used the naming of previously created animals as an opportunity to show Adam that he, unlike the animals, lacked a female counterpart. This is the reason verses 21 through 25 concern themselves with telling just why and how the woman was created.

The animals were indeed created prior to man as stated in chapter 1. Chapter two is a reiteration of what God created, not in time order, and emphasizes Adam’s responsibility in caring for his environment. When properly understood, the events described in Genesis 1 and 2 mutually amplify each other.

• **Please explain Genesis 3:15 about the promised seed.**

This scripture is the first recorded prophecy in the Bible about the coming Messiah. It has a dual application. The first and primary meaning is that Christ, born of a woman, would nullify Satan’s power

over mankind. Satan (symbolized as the serpent) bruised Christ’s heel (caused Him to be put to death to fulfill God’s purpose). However, through the resurrection Christ conquered sin and death and rendered the devil’s work of no effect (symbolized by bruising the serpent’s head, its most vulnerable place).

Hebrews 2:14-15 rightly translated says: “Since then the little children are sharers in blood and flesh, Himself [Christ] also in like manner partook of the same; that through death He might bring to naught [or “bruise his head”] him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all those who from fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

Genesis 3:15 also reveals the “woman” as the Church from whom Jesus Christ was born. A woman is symbolic of a Church (Eph. 5:31-32). Romans 16:20 tells us “And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your [the Church’s] feet shortly.”

Thus, the Church (the body of true believers), as well as Jesus Christ, has overcome Satan. Even so, there is enmity between Satan’s seed (non-Christians) and true Christians—the seed of the woman—just as prophesied in Genesis 3:15.

• **What is meant in Genesis 3:16? Here God told Eve that “in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children.”**

When Adam and Eve sinned, they cut themselves off from God and brought the entire creation under a curse. That curse affected Eve as well as Adam.

Eve’s punishment may well have included a significant amount of birth pain during delivery. Nevertheless, the greater part of her sorrow was the realization that she and her offspring would be cut off from God and His blessings.

Eve lived to see her children grow from bad to worse. Her first born son—Cain—killed his brother Abel. Violence and hatred became so rampant in the pre-flood world that God finally had to destroy all life, save Noah and his family. Eve lived to see her children and their children’s children living in a totally degenerate and

unhappy state. The mistake she made when she listened to the devil and disobeyed God must have weighed heavily on her mind for as long as she lived.

The curse of sin will be removed after Jesus Christ returns and establishes His kingdom on this earth.

• I understand that you teach that the 10 commandments were in force from creation and that the sin of Adam and Eve involved breaking several of them. Can you tell me which commandments Adam and Eve transgressed?

The first commandment states “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:3). When Adam and Eve listened to the devil (the god of this world) and sinned, they did, in actual fact, have another god (Satan) before the true God.

Adam was a son of God by creation. In that sense God was his father. When Adam and Eve disobeyed, they broke the fifth commandment by dishonoring their only parent—God.

When Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, they took spiritual poison which resulted in their deaths. They committed spiritual suicide—breaking the sixth commandment which forbids killing oneself or murdering others. Cain also murdered his brother Abel. His action also broke the sixth commandment.

When Eve listened to Satan and saw that the forbidden tree was good for food, pleasant to the eyes, able to make one wise, she coveted what was not hers. When she *took* the fruit she stole what was not hers and broke both the eighth and tenth commandment.

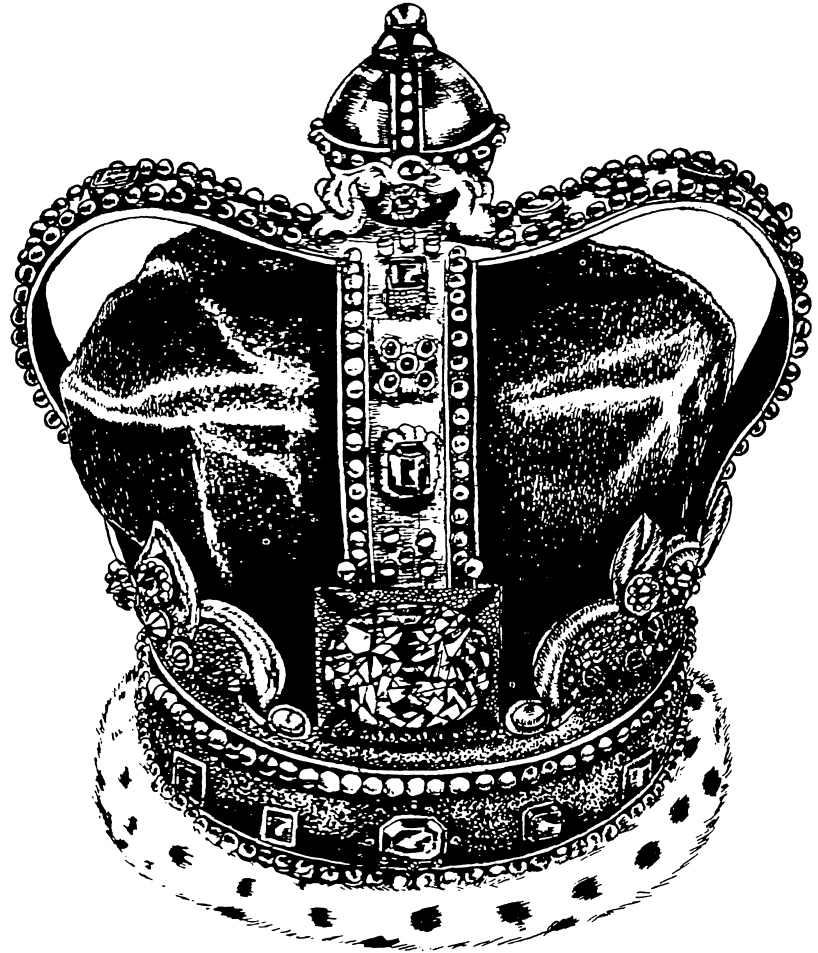
God’s ten commandment law is a *spiritual* law and was in force from the very beginning. Our article entitled “Were The Ten Commandments In Force Before Moses?” proves beyond doubt that the ten commandments were in existence since Adam.

• Can you tell me who or what the cherubim are as mentioned in Genesis 3:24?

Cherubim are angelic beings. The best description of them is found in the book of Ezekiel. They certainly don’t look like babies with wings as the artists in the Middle Ages painted them. Instead, they appear as large, powerful, man-, lion-, eagle-, ox- and dragon-like creatures.

The cherubim are associated with God’s throne either transporting it about (II Sam. 22:11; Ps. 18:10; 80:1;

Ezek. 1:5-25; 9:3; 10:4; 11:22), or carrying out important responsibilities, such as guarding the tree of life. The one whom we know as Lucifer, before his name was changed to Satan, was called “the anointed cherub that covereth” in Ezekiel 28:14. He was one of the two cherubs whose wings covered God’s throne. For additional information concerning angels, cherubim, and seraphim, write



What is a kingdom?

Specifically, what is the Kingdom of God? Is it just an inspirational idea? A church? Or is it a literal kingdom? If it is literal, where is it ruling, what are its laws, and how may you enter it? Be sure to request your free copy of the vitally important booklet What Is the Kingdom of God? (See back page for address.)

for the article, "Angels, Servants of God."

• **Why did God reject Cain's offering (Gen. 4:5)?**

Cain's attitude and approach to life was not right with God. Verse 7 of Genesis 4 reads: "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, *sin* lieth at the door . . ." Cain was living a sinful life and he knew it!

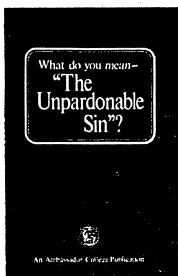
Because Cain was in a rebellious state of mind, God would not have accepted his sacrifice even if he had offered an animal. Proverbs 15:8 states: "The sacrifice of the wicked is an *abomination* to the LORD; but the prayer of the upright is his delight."

What was the difference between Cain and Abel? Abel was upright in heart. He was a man of faith (Heb. 11:4).

Cain, on the other hand, rejected God and His instructions and led an evil life. Notice: "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him?"

A SPIRITUAL "POINT OF NO RETURN"?

Can a person ever reach a "point of no return" in his relationship with God? Is there an unpardonable sin? The booklet, *What Is The Unpardonable Sin?* explains the Biblical answers to these questions. For your free copy, write to *The Plain Truth*, Pasadena, CA 91123. Or, if you live outside the United States, see back page for the address nearest you.



Because his *own works were evil*, and his brother's righteous" (I John 3:12). God admonished Cain to overcome the sin which permeated his life (Gen. 4:7, last part). However, Cain did not heed this admonition and his way of life went from bad to worse. He ultimately murdered his brother, Abel, and founded a society which completely rejected God and his laws. Mankind, in general, has followed in Cain's footsteps ever since!

• **Can you tell me where Cain got his wife?**

Yes, we can. Cain married one of his sisters. There simply wasn't any other female for him to marry. In Genesis 5:4-5 we read: "And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years: and *he begat sons and daughters*: and all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died."

Jewish tradition recorded by Josephus, says that Adam and Eve had 33 sons and 23 daughters. These brothers and sisters would have had to marry each other in order to obey God's command to propagate the human race (Gen. 1:28).

Today, there are biblical laws which forbid marriage between those who are closely related. But, it was *not* wrong for brothers and sisters to marry at that early time in human history. However, in Abraham's day it was permissible to marry only one's half sister. Abram married his half-sister, Sarai (Gen. 20:12). Nahor married his brother Haran's daughter (Gen. 11:29). There was then no genetic harm to the children. When men and women over the centuries continued in sin, it became genetically harmful for close blood relatives to marry (see Leviticus 18), and for the sake of future generations it is forbidden.

• **What was the "mark" God put on Cain (Gen. 4:15)?**

The Bible does not specifically say what this "mark" was. According to *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, the Hebrew word *owth* may be rendered "mark," or "signal, flag, monument, sign, or beacon." *Young's Analytical Concordance*

renders this word "sign." *The Critical and Experimental Commentary* by Jamieson, Fausset and Brown shows that this word can be translated "sign," "token" or "pledge."

The Hebrew word *owth* could also indicate a boundary marker that God set up to separate or segregate Cain and his descendants from the rest of mankind. Genesis 4:12, 16 shows that God banished Cain to the land of Nod—meaning land of "wandering"—east of Eden. The *owth*—mark or sign—that God made for Cain could also have been something to carry on his person, perhaps around his neck—from which the ancient and modern custom of wearing a charm or talisman—or cross—for protection may be derived.

Some have thought that Cain's mark involved skin color. Cain's mark was not the changing of his skin from one color to another. Cain, in accordance with certain West African traditions, may well have been dark, but his sin was lack of character. Thus, his "mark" was either carried on his person, or a sign set up to segregate him from others—or both.

• **Where is the land of Nod mentioned in Genesis 4:16?**

The only information the Bible gives concerning this land is that it was east of Eden (Gen. 4:16). The Hebrew word for "Nod" means "wandering." Cain's punishment for murdering his brother, Abel, was that of being a wanderer and vagabond in a land apart from his kinsman.

• **Can you tell me how the different races originated?**

The Bible tells us that Eve was the mother of all living (Gen. 3:20). It also plainly teaches that God made of one blood all nations of man that dwell on the face of the earth (Acts 17:26).

Therefore, it is evident that God created in the ovaries of Eve the capacity to produce children with different racial characteristics. There must have been great diversity in her offspring.

Normally, individuals of similar characteristics are attracted to each other. Thus, children and grand-

children of Adam and Eve would be naturally separated into families of racially similar people, and as they continued to marry in their own groups, distinct racial traits would have been established. As migration took place, natural barriers such as mountain ranges and oceans would have also served to maintain the characteristics of the “different” racial families.

• **Why did God create different races?**

God created different races for the same reason that He created different kinds of birds, animals, flowers, etc. God appreciates variety and each race has a special beauty, usefulness and contribution to make in the world.

God created the various races, each having their special abilities, because He wanted variety (not only skin color but abilities, accomplishments, etc.) in the human family.

• **The first account of a polygamist marriage is in Genesis 4:19. Did God approve of men having more than one wife?**

No, God never approved or sanctioned the practice of polygamy. He did permit it in the law of Moses—just as He allowed divorce because of the hardness of man’s heart (Matt. 19:8). Nevertheless, according to the Bible, the ideal marital state is one husband and one wife who become one flesh in marriage for life. God gave Adam *one* wife (Gen. 2:24). Jesus also said that from the beginning it was God’s will that a man leave his parents and cleave to his wife—not wives—and the two of them would become one flesh (Matt. 19:4-9).

In the New Testament, a minister or a spiritual leader is to set the right example and have only one wife (I Tim. 3:2). In addition to the scriptural admonition, polygamy is against the laws of the United States and most other countries. Romans 13:1-7 states that Christians are to obey the laws of the land. Our booklet entitled “Why Marriage! Soon Obsolete?” explains the purpose and sanctity of marriage. Write for it.

• **Genesis 6:4 seems to indicate that angels (sons of God)**

married women prior to Noah’s flood. Is this true?

Not true! The Bible reveals that angels are created spirits (Heb. 1:14). They are not mortal flesh like humans. As created spirits, angels do not reproduce sexually or by any other means. Jesus Christ said so. Notice Luke 20:34-36; Matthew 22:30; Mark 12:25.

Who then were these “sons of God”? They were male human beings. Adam was a son of God by creation (Luke 3:38). In like manner, all of Adam’s male descendants are by God’s act of creation physical sons of God.

The context of Genesis, chapter 6 concerns physical human beings—not angels. Notice: “And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with *man* . . .” and “I will destroy *man* whom I have created from the face of the earth” (verses 3 and 7). It was sinful man that God had determined to destroy—not angels (their time of final judgement is yet to come). Angels are spirit and cannot be destroyed by water. With the outpouring of the deluge “all flesh died . . . and every man . . .” (Gen. 7:21-23).

• **Can you tell me how the various races came through the flood since only Noah and his family were saved?**

The Bible does not specifically say. However, since Noah, his wife, and his three sons and their wives were the only ones who survived, the obvious answer is that the racial strains were perpetuated through the wives of Noah’s sons.

Ham is the father of the black race

because he married a black woman. Shem and his wife perpetuated the white race. Japheth, who married an oriental woman, perpetuated the yellow race. Thus, the three primary races were preserved through the flood in this manner. No distinct races have ever developed since then, only variations within these races.

It should be noted that some of Ham’s sons are brunet whites because the sons of Noah were white. Some sons of Japheth are white Eurasian types because Japheth, like Ham, was white. But, through later marriages with children of Ham some of the children of Shem are brown-skinned. An example is Ishmael (father of Arabs), whose father was Abram (son of Shem) and whose mother was Hagar (daughter of Mizraim, a son of Ham).

• **I read in Genesis 6:6 that God “repented.” How can God repent? He has not sinned.**

The Hebrew word translated “repent” in English is *nacham*. It has the connotation of “being made sorry” or “saddened.” Genesis 6:6 could actually be translated “and the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at his heart.”

Why was God expressing this kind of emotion? Because He saw the depth of evil into which man had degenerated (verse 5). God had not made a mistake in creating mankind. Instead, he was sorry and very grieved at the wretched state man had achieved by the time of Noah. Therefore, He decided to put mankind out of its misery and carry on the human family through Noah and his descendants.

• **Isn’t it unrealistic and unscientific to believe that Noah could have saved *all* the animals in the ark?**

Traditional images and popular literature picture the Ark as scarcely larger than an ordinary fishing smack. But the Bible paints a far different picture of the Ark than most realize. Genesis 6:15 gives the Ark’s dimensions: “The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits [450 ft.—based on an 18-in. cubit, its com-

LIFE AFTER DEATH?

YES, there is life after death. But it's not at all like the "heaven" and "hell" concepts commonly believed. If you'd like to have a better understanding of what the Bible says about the next life, why not request two free booklets *What Will You Be Doing in the Next Life?* and *Just What Do You Mean . . . Salvation?* Simply send your request to one of the addresses on the back cover.

monly accepted length], the breadth of it fifty cubits [75 ft.] and the height of it thirty cubits [45 ft.]"

Based on the 18-in. cubit, the figures show that the box-shaped Ark ("ark" means "box" or "chest" in the Hebrew) was ocean-liner size in cubic capacity.

It had a volume of about 1.5 million cubic feet, and virtually the entire capacity of the Ark could be used for storage. (It had no engine room or fuel tanks!) The Ark had a capacity equal to more than 500 standard American railroad freight cars!

Still, could Noah get all those animals into the Ark?

First of all, God specifically instructed Noah to select one pair of every "kind" of unclean animal and seven pairs of every "kind" of clean animal. The Bible term "kind" refers generally to a group of creatures, all of which interbreed. The horse kind could be represented, therefore, by one pair of animals having the genetic potential to produce after the Flood all varieties we have today. The same would be true also for dogs, cats, etc.

Second, only air-breathing, terrestrial animals were included in the Ark. Genesis 7:22 states: "All in whose nostrils was the breath of life." This excludes all sea creatures and simple forms of life which could survive the deluge.

Now consider this. Only 40 percent of the animal kingdom lives on land, and 70 percent of all species of land animals are insects. The remaining 30 percent of the terrestrial ani-

mal kingdom are on a mean average the size of a rhesus monkey.

Most animals can be maintained in small confinement for long periods and remain healthy. A rhesus monkey, for example, can be maintained in a cage about 2 ft., 6 in. cubed (15.6 cu. ft.).

Estimates of the number of land mammal, bird, reptile, and amphibian species on earth today total about 18,000. Recognizing that only kinds, not species, were included, it would have been necessary to have far fewer than 18,000 animals on the Ark. Most animals are "unclean" (Lev. 11), so most animal kinds would have been represented by one pair. But let's be liberal and say 40,000 animals, whose average size is that of a rhesus monkey, were on the Ark. How much room in the Ark would be needed for all these animals? About 40 percent of the Ark's 1.5 million cubic feet would suffice!

What about insects? Remember, the Ark had a storage capacity of 500 freight cars. Two hundred cars would be occupied by mammals, birds and reptiles. Giving every pair of known species of insects 16 cubic inches of space, another 21 such freight cars would be required. (Counting Genesis kinds only, the required space would be far less.)

And so, viewed from the perspective of simple arithmetic, only about half of the space on the three decks would have provided plenty of room to accommodate all those animals. That left for the other half of the ship

for food and supplies and for Noah and his family.

So perhaps a better question would be: What did Noah ever do with all the extra space?

• How did animals become distributed after the Flood?

Each isolated land mass or continent has animals or birds not found elsewhere. Australia has its kangaroo, koala bear, duckbilled platypus and Tasmanian devil. North America boasts the beaver, rattlesnake, raccoon, turkey and opossum. South America offers the llama, capybara, and sloth. Asia has its peafowl and panda bear. Africa has the giraffe, hippopotamus and zebra. Certain island groups also have kinds of animals not found elsewhere. How did all these animals become segregated after leaving Noah's Ark?

Consider that God—not Noah—brought the animals to the Ark (Gen. 6:20). It would not have been a difficult matter for Him to see to it that they also redistributed themselves after the Flood. God is the Originator of animal migration. It was His will that the animals—as well as mankind—replenish and repopulate limited geographical areas after the Flood (Gen. 9:1; 10:5; 11:8-9). It should be no surprise to see both men and animals even today basically segregated around the world. Forms of life exist in the specific land areas where they can best flourish.

The major land masses of the earth are not as isolated as one might suppose. Witness the existing land bridge between Asia and Africa—the Sinai Peninsula—and Central America between the North and South American continents.

As men travel and migrate, they traditionally take with them familiar plants and animals. Some go with them accidentally. Many animals have spread to new areas in this manner—the rabbit to Australia, the English sparrow and European corn borer to the Americas, etc. Did Noah also settle different creatures as he settled his children in different lands?

It has also been demonstrated that animals have reached isolated islands on floating masses of vegetation or on storm and flood debris. This has been

What is FAITH?

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pointed out by such authors as Rachel Carson in her book *The Sea Around Us*. Never has an island emerged from the sea through volcanic activity but that it soon became the home of various sorts of animals and plants.

• **Has Noah's Ark been found?**

There have been a number of individuals over the past one hundred years who have claimed to have found fragments of the Ark. Some have returned from Mount Ararat with photos of a "boat-shaped" object nestled in the craggy mountain side. Others lay claim to pieces of lumber supposedly taken from high up Mount Ararat. So called "eye-witness" accounts of seeing the Ark have been recorded. However, not enough factual evidence has yet come forth to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt the present location of the Ark. Radiocarbon dates of wood from high up Mount Ararat are all more recent than the time of Noah.

If any significant findings come about in the future, they will undoubtedly be presented in the news media as well as in the pages of *The Plain Truth* magazine.

• **Why was Canaan cursed for an act apparently committed by Ham (Genesis 9:24)?**

The difficulty in understanding this account is purely grammatical. Notice a similar grammatical problem in Exodus 34:28. "And he [Moses] was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights: he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments." It appears the "he wrote" could refer to Moses, but from Deuteronomy 10:4 it is absolutely proved that God wrote the Ten Commandments mentioned in Exodus 34:28.

With this example in mind, the problem in Genesis 9 is easily solved. Beginning in verse 22: "And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren . . . And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his [Ham's] younger son [some Bible versions have "youngest son"] had done unto

him [an illicit sexual act is indicated]. And he [Noah] said, Cursed be Canaan . . ."

Notice how Canaan is mentioned twice in the account. The pronoun "his" properly refers back to Ham, not Noah. Was Canaan really the "youngest son" of Ham? The answer is found in Genesis 10:6, "And the sons of Ham, Cush, and Mizraim, and Phut, and Canaan." Canaan is put *last* in time order of birth. That is, Canaan was the youngest son of Ham. Thus, Canaan was not punished for something Ham did. He was punished for his own sin!

• **The Bible gives very little information about Nimrod (Gen. 10:8-12). Could you recommend any books concerning his life and accomplishments in addition to the Genesis account?**

The eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, and most Bible dictionaries contain brief write-ups on him.

• **I understand you teach that God's promises to Abraham were two-fold—race and grace. Would you explain what these promises mean?**

Many fail to comprehend the underlying dual nature of God's promise. Abraham and his seed were promised not only great material blessings, but ultimately salvation as well. Unfortunately, the latter promise—which is by far more important—is misunderstood by many.

After Abraham proved that he would obey God unconditionally, even to the point of willing to sacrifice his beloved son, Isaac, God promised "That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; *And* in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Gen. 22:17-18).

The physical, material, national (RACE) blessings are included in what the Bible terms as "the birthright." A "birthright" is something which is one's right by virtue of birth. The

seed or the children of Abraham were guaranteed by God a multitudinous population, untold wealth and material resources, national greatness and world power. This "birthright" was passed on from Abraham to Isaac, to Jacob, and would have then gone to his firstborn son, Reuben. But Reuben fell prey to his human weakness as he "defiled his father's bed." Because of this sin "his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel . . ." (I Chron. 5:1). Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph, became the rightful heirs of God's material, national blessings. Together they received the right of, and inherited, the name "Israel." They received the "birthright" and became "a nation and a company of nations" (Gen. 35:11). Read also Genesis 49:22-26 for a more detailed account of their national blessings.

But what of the second half of the original promise to Abraham?

The spiritual promise—the promise of the "One seed," the Messiah, and of the salvation through Him? This the Bible calls the "Sceptre" promise—the promise of GRACE. The "Sceptre"

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promise of the kingly line culminating in Christ, and of grace through Him, was handed not to Joseph but to Judah, the son of Jacob and the father of the Jewish people. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh (Christ) come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen. 49:10). Yes, as Jesus later said, "salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22).

The promise of salvation—of GRACE—was handed down through Judah but it comes, not as a birth-right, but by GRACE. It is an unmerited gift, God's pardon of sins through Jesus Christ the Messiah, who was of the tribe of Judah. Though salvation cannot be earned, it is conditional. The condition being that we must repent, believe Jesus and His message, be baptized (immersed) and let God rule our lives.

If, like Abraham, we will obey God, we too can become recipients of God's promises. The Word of God says that if we will submit to God and accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour "then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29). The covenant made with Abraham has the dual promise, of RACE and GRACE. But no matter what our physical genealogy may be, we can become "Abraham's seed" and receive God's great blessings. For more information about God's covenant promises, please request your free copy of Herbert W. Armstrong's book *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*. It is a vital key to understanding the Bible and the wonderful plan of salvation.

• Abraham is called the father of the faithful. Yet, the Scriptures record that he lied on at least two occasions (Gen. 12:18-20; 20:2). Doesn't this show a lack of faith on Abraham's part?

God called Abraham a "friend" (Isa. 41:8), yet Abraham was only human and on occasion, under duress, stumbled spiritually (I John 1:8). But throughout his long life while undergoing many severe tests, the one dominant characteristic that motivated Abraham was his absolute faith in God. Hebrews 11 is a perpetual testimony to his resounding faith. Yes, in faith Abraham "obeyed my

[God's] voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Gen. 26:5). What a tremendous example!

But there were times when Abraham was unduly influenced by circumstances, by foolish counsel of others, and by his own fear of man. Under pressures of the moment, Abraham at times yielded to human reason—and sinned (Prov. 14:12). He was not always at his best spiritually. He, too, had his moments of weakness and lessons to learn. But, though Abraham was not exempt from human error, God forgave him and looked upon his life in its totality and judged him faithful and righteous—worthy of eternal life. "And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God" (James 2:23). Unlike most people, when Abraham heard the voice of God, he listened and obeyed. He indeed is "the father of all them that believe" (Romans 4:11). For more information on the meaning of faith, request our booklet *What Is Faith?*

• I was surprised to learn Abraham and Jacob paid tithes (Gen. 14:20; 28:22). I was always taught that tithing did not originate until Moses, and was part of the Mosaic law. How did Abraham and Jacob know about tithing?

Abraham knew the importance of tithing because God taught him His statutes and laws. Notice: "Because that Abraham obeyed *my voice*, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Gen. 26:5).

Abraham, in turn, instructed Isaac who instructed his son, Jacob, concerning tithing (Gen. 18:19).

The English word "tithe" simply means "tenth." Therefore, when Abraham and his descendants "tithed" they gave the tenth of their increase to God's representative at the time. This individual happened to be Melchizedek who was the priest of the most high God (Gen. 14:18).

After God delivered the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage,

He chose the tribe of Levi and established the priesthood through them. The children of Israel continued to pay God's tithe and God in turn directed the Levites, who functioned as God's representatives, to collect the tithe as their wages from God.

With the coming of Christ and the establishment of the New Testament Church, God has ordained that His tithe be paid to His true ministers. It is used to finance God's Work today. Mr. Armstrong's booklets entitled *Ending Your Financial Worries* and *Where is the True Church?* explain God's tithing law as well as how to identify God's Work today. Both are free upon request. Also be sure to request Mr. Armstrong's free article entitled "The Mystery of MELCHIZEDEK Solved!"

• Would you explain the 400 years mentioned in Genesis 15:13 and the 430 years given in Exodus 12:40? Why is there a thirty year difference between the two?

The 430 years mentioned in Exodus 12:40 began with the *confirming* of the covenant God made with Abram. Notice Genesis 17:1-10. "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect . . . and Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold my *covenant is with thee*, and thou shalt be a father of many nations . . . and I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee . . ."

Genesis, chapter 21, continues the story. Sarah finally became pregnant at the "set time" (verse 2). This physical evidence fully confirmed the covenant, and Isaac, the son of the promise, was born when Abraham was 100 (verse 5). Since Galatians 3:17 states that the law was given 430 years after the covenant was made, it is evident that the 430 years began when Abraham was ninety-nine years old and ended the year of the exodus of his descendants out of Egypt and their appearance at Sinai.

Concerning the 400-year period, Genesis 15:13 states that Abraham's *seed*—not Abraham—was to be a stranger in a land not theirs and to be afflicted for 400 years. This would be the length of time from the *death* of Abraham (76 years after the covenant was made—compare Genesis 25:7 with 17:1) through the 40 years' wandering to the division of the land when the children of Israel received their inheritance under the direction of Joshua. This occurred six years after they entered the land of Canaan (see Joshua 13:7-33).

• **Genesis 17:10 commands circumcision as the sign of the covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants. Is the act of circumcision necessary today?**

No, it is not necessary as a religious requirement for salvation.

Under the new covenant, God is calling a spiritual nation composed of individuals converted and begotten by His Holy Spirit. True Christians are now all to be "circumcised" spiritually.

Physical circumcision was only a forerunner or type of circumcision of the heart (Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4). Notice also Romans 2:28-29: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter . . ."

Spiritual circumcision is a process of conversion. It is Jesus Christ who circumcises one's heart—spiritually. "And ye are complete in him [Christ] . . . in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (Col. 2:10-11). This is why God inspired the apostles and elders of the New Testament church to decree that physical circumcision was no longer necessary for salvation (Acts 15:24, 28).

Our literature entitled "What Do You Mean—Conversion?" and "Just What Do You Mean—Christian?" explains the process of conversion and living a Christian life.

• **I would like to know why God would "tempt" Abraham by or-**

dering him to sacrifice his son, Isaac (Gen. 22), while James 1:13 says that God "cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." Please explain this apparent contradiction.

The word "tempt" in Genesis 22:1 is translated from the Hebrew word *batham* and means "to test, to try, to prove." The "tempting" of Abraham should better have been translated the "testing" of Abraham.

Abraham proved his faithfulness by his willingness to obey God and sacrifice his only son, Isaac. Hebrews 11:17-19 states that Abraham believed God could raise up Isaac from the dead if need be, to fulfill his promises. It is because of this kind of faith that Abraham became known as "the father of the faithful."

Abraham's willingness to offer up Isaac was a type, answering to God the Father who willingly gave up His Son, Jesus Christ, as a sacrifice for the sins of all mankind (John 3:16). Isaac, too, was a type of Jesus Christ who willingly gave himself to be sacrificed just as Christ willingly gave Himself to do His Father's will so that He could become the propitiation and atonement for the sins of all mankind (I John 4:10; Gal. 1:3-4; Rom. 5:8).

God did not require Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Instead, God provided a ram which, by analogy, foreshadowed Jesus Christ—the lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29) by His death on the cross.

James 1:13 does not in any way, detract from or contradict God's testing of Abraham. Rather, when we look carefully at verse 13 of James 1, we find that God never tempts men *with sin*.

Satan the devil does tempt men with every kind of sin (I Thess. 3:5); but, God never does. God only tries and tests us to see if we will obey. If we put our trust in Him, He will never fail or forsake us (I Cor. 10:13; Rom. 8:28; Heb. 13:5-6). For a greater understanding of the meaning of faith and why God permits trials, write for the booklet *What is Faith?* and the reprint series "Why Does God Permit Christians to Suffer?"

• **Genesis 32:30 says that Jacob saw God face to face, yet I John 4:12 declares that no man has seen God at any time. I know the Bible does not contradict itself, but how can this be explained?**

The context of I John 4 shows that John was speaking of the Father (notice verse 10). No man has seen the Father in person except Jesus.

Therefore, when Jacob explained, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved," he could not have meant the Father. The One whom Jacob saw face to face—the One with whom he wrestled all night long—the One who blessed him and changed his name to "Israel" which means "preserver—or prevailer—with God" was that member of the God Kingdom who became Jesus Christ. It was He that was "in the beginning . . ." with God, and ". . . was God." For a detailed explanation of who was the God of the Old Testament who appeared to the Prophets and to Moses and Jacob, write for the article entitled "Is Jesus God?"

• **Can you tell me which nations are identified as the tribes of Israel today? (Gen. 49.)**

The tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim are identified in Mr. Armstrong's book *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*. Manasseh is the United States and Ephraim basically constitutes the English-speaking member countries of the British Commonwealth.

The tribe of Judah (the Jews) is scattered among many nations with a large number living in the modern nation of Israel. Levi and Simeon were to be scattered among Israel; Reuben is France.

Putting together the information available from Biblical history and prophecy, the other tribes may be located in Ireland, Norway and Iceland, Finland, Sweden, Holland (the Netherlands), Belgium and Luxembourg, and Switzerland.

Some Gentiles live in these nations and certainly some Israelites, as well as Jews, live in several Gentile lands.