

UNDERSTAND WHY YOU BELIEVE

# The Apologetics Study Bible

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REAL QUESTIONS, STRAIGHT ANSWERS, STRONGER FAITH



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# PREFACE

The editors of the work in your hands are aware of the rich resources of the Christian faith. All too often, though, believers feel battered and helpless to answer skeptics and critics. Ironically, the Lord has been pleased to entrust the scholars of the church in our generation with the greatest wealth of biblical, theological, philosophical, historical, and scientific knowledge in history. Christian conviction, defense of the faith, and evangelization of unbelievers would profit vastly through exposure to this confirmation of biblical truth. Yet sadly, the church has had precious little contact with this treasure trove.

In response to this situation, *The Apologetics Study Bible* brings together in one resource the work of biblically faithful exegetes, historians, archaeologists, theologians, philosophers, and scientists—and all this work is wedded to the Bible. “Apologetics” comes from the Greek word *apologia*, meaning “defense” or “answer.” Accordingly, Christian apologetics is the practice of giving reasons that support the Christian faith and responding to objections raised against it. Apologetics contributes to the restoration of a view of the Bible as a source of *knowledge* of its subject matter as opposed to a source of true belief to be accepted by a blind act of the will. Christian apologetics strengthens the church by answering the critics of biblical doctrines and by encouraging the believer’s faith. *The Apologetics Study Bible* is designed to advance these ends by apologetics rooted in Holy Scripture.

The distinctiveness of *The Apologetics Study Bible* is its notes and articles appended to the biblical text at relevant points. Notes consist of commentary written by biblical scholars that relate specifically to apologetic issues raised by scriptural texts. Also related to specific biblical texts are over 50 examples of “Twisted Scripture.” These explanations treat those instances where portions of the Bible have been misused by various religious movements such as Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons. You will find 12 profiles of notable Christian apologists in history. In addition, over 125 articles treat broader apologetic matters such as “How should we handle unresolved questions about the Bible?” and “Evolution: fact or fantasy?” Though the notes and articles are not written for academicians, you can be confident they distill and present the very best of current Christian scholarship.

As 1 Peter 3:15 reminds us, our apologetic must be prayerfully presented, having set Christ apart as Lord in our hearts. Also, we must present our reasons for belief with gentleness and respect. So, to be most fruitful, our defense of the Christian faith must be offered under Christ’s Lordship, in humble dependence upon His Spirit, and in the context of loving and respectful personal relationships.

May it please the Lord, then, to exploit *The Apologetics Study Bible* in the service of His people’s promotion and confirmation of the truth of His Word.

The Editors





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How Does a Christian Converse with a Buddhist? . . . . .	Ravi Zacharias . . . . .	1915

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*(written by R. Alan Streett)*

Genesis 1:1-2	Matthew 11:14	Romans 1:25
Genesis 1:27	Matthew 17:1-13	Romans 1:26-27
Genesis 2:7	Matthew 27:50	Romans 16:16
Genesis 3:5	Mark 7:16	1 Corinthians 15:1-8, 14-18, 19
Genesis 3:15	Mark 16:18	1 Corinthians 15:29
Genesis 4:19	Luke 4:8	2 Corinthians 11:4
Genesis 12:10-20	Luke 11:35	2 Corinthians 12:2
Exodus 3:14	John 1:1-2, 14	Galatians 1:8-9
Exodus 31:12-17	John 3:3	Ephesians 2:8-9
Leviticus 16:4-10	John 3:16	Ephesians 5:19
Leviticus 17:10-14	John 9:2	Colossians 3:11
Leviticus 19:3	John 10:34	1 Timothy 4:1
Deuteronomy 18:10-12	John 18:20	1 Timothy 6:16
Deuteronomy 18:18	Acts 2:38	2 Timothy 4:4
1 Samuel 28:5-20	Acts 2:38-39	Hebrews 1:1-2
Psalms 119:15	Acts 5:3	Hebrews 9:27
Isaiah 47:13-14	Acts 10:10	Revelation 7:4
Jeremiah 14:14	Acts 19:19	Revelation 12:5
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# INTRODUCTION TO THE HOLMAN CHRISTIAN STANDARD BIBLE®

The Bible is God's revelation to man. It is the only book that gives us accurate information about God, man's need, and God's provision for that need. It provides us with guidance for life and tells us how to receive eternal life. The Bible can do these things because it is God's inspired Word, inerrant in the original manuscripts.

The Bible describes God's dealings with the ancient Jewish people and the early Christian church. It tells us about the great gift of God's Son, Jesus Christ, who fulfilled Jewish prophecies of the Messiah. It tells us about the salvation He accomplished through His death on the cross, His triumph over death in the resurrection, and His promised return to earth. It is the only book that gives us reliable information about the future, about what will happen to us when we die, and about where history is headed.

Bible translation is both a science and an art. It is a bridge that brings God's Word from the ancient world to the world today. In dependence on God to accomplish this sacred task, Holman Bible Publishers presents the Holman Christian Standard Bible, a new English translation of God's Word.

## Textual base of the Holman CSB®

The textual base for the New Testament [NT] is the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27th edition, and the United Bible Societies' *Greek New Testament*, 4th corrected edition. The text for the Old Testament [OT] is the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, 5th edition. At times, however, the translators have followed an alternative manuscript tradition, disagreeing with the editors of these texts about the original reading.

Where there are significant differences among Hebrew [Hb] and Aramaic [Aram] manuscripts of the OT or among Greek [Gk] manuscripts of the NT, the translators have followed what they believe is the original reading and have indicated the main alternative(s) in footnotes. In a few places in the NT, large square brackets indicate texts that the translation team and most biblical scholars today believe were not part of the original text. However, these texts have been retained in brackets in the Holman CSB because of their undeniable antiquity and their value for tradition and the history of NT interpretation in the church. The Holman CSB uses traditional verse divisions found in most Protestant Bibles.

## Goals of this translation

The goals of this translation are:

- to provide English-speaking people across the world with an accurate, readable Bible in contemporary English
- to equip serious Bible students with an accurate translation for personal study, private devotions, and memorization
- to give those who love God's Word a text that has numerous reader helps, is visually attractive on the page, and is appealing when heard
- to affirm the authority of Scripture as God's Word and to champion its absolute truth against social or cultural agendas that would compromise its accuracy

The name, Holman Christian Standard Bible, captures these goals: *Holman* Bible Publishers presents a new *Bible* translation, for *Christian* and English-speaking communities, which will be a *standard* in Bible translations for years to come.

## Why is there a need for another English translation of the Bible?

There are several good reasons why Holman Bible publishers invested its resources in a modern language translation of the Bible:

1. Each generation needs a fresh translation of the Bible in its own language.

The Bible is the world's most important book, confronting each individual and each culture with issues that affect life, both now and forever. Since each new generation must be introduced to God's Word in its own language, there will always be a need for new translations such as the Holman Christian Standard Bible. The majority of Bible translations on the market today are revisions of translations from previous generations. The Holman CSB is a new translation for today's generation.



**2. English, one of the world's greatest languages, is rapidly changing, and Bible translations must keep in step with those changes.**

English is the first truly global language in history. It is the language of education, business, medicine, travel, research, and the Internet. More than 1.3 billion people around the world speak or read English as a primary or secondary language. The Holman CSB seeks to serve many of those people with a translation they can easily use and understand.

English is also the world's most rapidly changing language. The Holman CSB seeks to reflect recent changes in English by using modern punctuation, formatting, and vocabulary, while avoiding slang, regionalisms, or changes made specifically for the sake of political or social agendas. Modern linguistic and semantic advances have been incorporated into the Holman CSB, including modern grammar.

**3. Rapid advances in biblical research provide new data for Bible translators.**

This has been called the “information age,” a term that accurately describes the field of biblical research. Never before in history has there been as much information about the Bible as there is today—from archaeological discoveries to analysis of ancient manuscripts to years of study and statistical research on individual Bible books. Translations made as recently as 10 or 20 years ago do not reflect many of these advances in biblical research. The translators have taken into consideration as much of this new data as possible.

**4. Advances in computer technology have opened a new door for Bible translation.**

The Holman CSB has used computer technology and telecommunications in its creation perhaps more than any Bible translation in history. Electronic mail was used daily and sometimes hourly for communication and transmission of manuscripts. An advanced Bible software program, Accordance®, was used to create and revise the translation at each step in its production. A developmental copy of the translation itself was used within Accordance to facilitate cross-checking during the translation process—something never done before with a Bible translation.

## Translation Philosophy of the Holman CSB

Most discussions of Bible translations speak of two opposite approaches: formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. Although this terminology is meaningful, Bible translations cannot be neatly sorted into these two categories any more than people can be neatly sorted into two categories according to height or weight. Holman Bible Publishers is convinced there is room for another category of translation philosophies that capitalizes on the strengths of the other two.

### **1. Formal Equivalence:**

Often called “word-for-word” (or “literal”) translation, the principle of formal equivalence seeks as nearly as possible to preserve the structure of the original language. It seeks to represent each word of the original text with an exact equivalent word in the translation so that the reader can see word for word what the original human author wrote. The merits of this approach include its consistency with the conviction that the Holy Spirit did inspire the very words of Scripture in the original manuscripts. It also provides the English Bible student some access to the structure of the text in the original language. Formal equivalence can achieve accuracy to the degree that English has an exact equivalent for each word and that the grammatical patterns of the original language can be reproduced in understandable English. However, it can sometimes result in awkward, if not incomprehensible, English or in a misunderstanding of the author's intent. The literal rendering of ancient idioms is especially difficult.

### **2. Dynamic or Functional Equivalence:**

Often called “thought-for-thought” translation, the principle of dynamic equivalence rejects as misguided the desire to preserve the structure of the original language. It proceeds by distinguishing the meaning of a text from its form and then translating the meaning so that it makes the same impact on modern readers that the ancient text made on its original readers. Strengths of this approach include a high degree of clarity and readability, especially in places where the original is difficult to render word for word. It also acknowledges that accurate and effective translation requires interpretation. However, the meaning of a text cannot always be neatly separated from its form, nor can it always be precisely determined. A biblical author may have intended multiple meanings. In striving for readability, dynamic equivalence also sometimes overlooks some of the less prominent elements of meaning. Furthermore, lack of formal correspondence to the original makes it difficult to verify accuracy and thus can affect the usefulness of the translation for in-depth Bible study.

### **3. Optimal Equivalence:**

In practice, translations are seldom if ever purely formal or dynamic but favor one theory of Bible translation or the other to varying degrees. Optimal equivalence as a translation philosophy recognizes that form cannot

be neatly separated from meaning and should not be changed (for example, nouns to verbs or third person “they” to second person “you”) unless comprehension demands it. The primary goal of translation is to convey the sense of the original with as much clarity as the original text and the translation language permit. Optimal equivalence appreciates the goals of formal equivalence but also recognizes its limitations.

Optimal equivalence starts with an exhaustive analysis of the text at every level (word, phrase, clause, sentence, discourse) in the original language to determine its original meaning and intention (or purpose). Then relying on the latest and best language tools and experts, the nearest corresponding semantic and linguistic equivalents are used to convey as much of the information and intention of the original text with as much clarity and readability as possible. This process assures the maximum transfer of both the words and thoughts contained in the original.

The Holman CSB uses optimal equivalence as its translation philosophy. When a literal translation meets these criteria, it is used. When clarity and readability demand an idiomatic translation, the reader can still access the form of the original text by means of a footnote with the abbreviation “Lit.”

## The gender language policy in Bible translation

Some people today ignore the Bible's teachings on distinctive roles of men and women in family and church and have an agenda to eliminate those distinctions in every arena of life. These people have begun a program to engineer the removal of a perceived male bias in the English language. The targets of this program have been such traditional linguistic practices as the generic use of “man” or “men,” as well as “he,” “him,” and “his.”

A group of Bible scholars, translators, and other evangelical leaders met in 1997 to respond to this issue as it affects Bible translation. This group produced the “Guidelines for Translation of Gender-Related Language in Scripture” (adopted May 27, 1997 and revised Sept. 9, 1997). The Holman Christian Standard Bible was produced in accordance with these guidelines.

The goal of the translators has not been to promote a cultural ideology but to faithfully translate the Bible. While the Holman CSB avoids using “man” or “he” unnecessarily, the translation does not restructure sentences to avoid them when they are in the text. For example, the translators have not changed “him” to “you” or to “them,” neither have they avoided other masculine words such as “father” or “son” by translating them in generic terms such as “parent” or “child.”

## History of the Holman Christian Standard Bible

After several years of preliminary development, Holman Bible Publishers, the oldest Bible publisher in America, assembled an international, interdenominational team of 100 scholars, editors, stylists, and proofreaders, all of whom were committed to biblical inerrancy. Outside consultants and reviewers contributed valuable suggestions from their areas of expertise. An executive team then edited, polished, and reviewed the final manuscripts.

## Traditional features found in the Holman CSB

In keeping with a long line of Bible publications, the Holman Christian Standard Bible has retained a number of features found in traditional Bibles:

1. Traditional theological vocabulary (such as *justification*, *sanctification*, *redemption*, etc.) has been retained since such terms have no translation equivalent that adequately communicates their exact meaning.
2. Traditional spellings of names and places found in most Bibles have been used to make the Holman CSB compatible with most Bible study tools.
3. Some editions of the Holman CSB will print the words of Christ in red letters to help readers easily locate the spoken words of the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. Nouns and personal pronouns that clearly refer to any person of the Trinity are capitalized.
5. Descriptive headings, printed above each section of Scripture, help readers quickly identify the contents of that section.
6. Small lower corner brackets: ⌋ indicate words supplied for clarity by the translators (but see below, under Substitution of words in sentences, for supplied words that are *not* bracketed).

- Two common forms of punctuation are used in the Holman CSB to help with clarity and ease of reading: em dashes (a long dash —) are used to indicate sudden breaks in thought or to help clarify long or difficult sentences. Parentheses are used infrequently to indicate words that are parenthetical in the original languages.

## How certain names and terms are translated

### The names of God

The Holman Christian Standard Bible OT consistently translates the Hebrew names for God as follows:

<b>Holman CSB English:</b>	<b>Hebrew original:</b>
God	<i>Elohim</i>
LORD	<i>YHWH (Yahweh)</i>
Lord	<i>Adonai</i>
Lord GOD	<i>Adonai Yahweh</i>
LORD of Hosts	<i>Yahweh Sabaoth</i>
God Almighty	<i>El Shaddai</i>

However, the Holman CSB OT uses Yahweh, the personal name of God in Hebrew, when a biblical text emphasizes Yahweh as a name: “His name is Yahweh” (Ps 68:4). Yahweh is used more often in the Holman CSB than in most Bible translations because the word LORD in English is a title of God and does not accurately convey to modern readers the emphasis on God’s name in the original Hebrew.

### The uses of Christ and Messiah

The Holman CSB translates the Greek word *Christos* (“anointed one”) as either “Christ” or “Messiah” based on its use in different NT contexts. Where the NT emphasizes *Christos* as a name of our Lord or has a Gentile context, “Christ” is used (Eph 1:1 “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus...”). Where the NT *Christos* has a Jewish context, the title “Messiah” is used (Eph 1:12 “...we who had already put our hope in the Messiah”). The first use of “Messiah” in each chapter is also marked with a bullet referring readers to the Bullet Note at the back of most editions.

### Place-names

In the original text of the Bible, particularly in the OT, a number of well-known places have names different from the ones familiar to contemporary readers. For example, “the Euphrates” often appears in the original text simply as “the River.” In cases like this, the Holman Christian Standard Bible uses the modern name, “the Euphrates River,” in the text without a footnote or lower corner brackets.

### Substitution of words in sentences

A literal translation of the biblical text sometimes violates standard rules of English grammar, such as the agreement of subject and verb or person and number. In order to conform to standard usage, the Holman CSB has often made these kinds of grammatical constructions agree in English without footnotes or lower corner brackets.

In addition, the Greek or Hebrew texts sometimes seem redundant or ambiguous by repeating nouns where modern writing substitutes pronouns or by using pronouns where we would supply nouns for clarity and good style. When a literal translation of the original would make the English unclear, the Holman CSB sometimes changes a pronoun to its corresponding noun or a noun to its corresponding pronoun without a footnote or lower corner brackets. For example, Jn 1:42 reads: “And he brought Simon to Jesus . . .” The original Greek of this sentence reads: “And he brought him to Jesus.”

## Special Formatting Features

The Holman Christian Standard Bible has several distinctive formatting features:

- OT passages quoted in the NT are set in boldface type. OT quotes consisting of two or more lines are block indented.
- In dialogue, a new paragraph is used for each new speaker as in most modern publications.
- Many passages, such as 1 Co 13, have been formatted as dynamic prose (separate block-indented lines like poetry) for ease in reading and comprehension. Special block-indented formatting has also been used extensively in both the OT and NT to increase readability and clarity in lists, series, genealogies and other parallel or repetitive texts.



4. Almost every Bible breaks lines in poetry using automatic typesetting programs with the result that words are haphazardly turned over to the next line. In the Holman CSB, special attention has been given to break every line in poetry and dynamic prose so that awkward or unsightly word wraps are avoided and complete units of thought turn over to the next line. The result is a Bible page that is much more readable and pleasing to the eye.
5. Certain foreign, geographical, cultural, or ancient words are preceded by a superscripted bullet (\**Abba*) at their first occurrence in each chapter. These words are listed in alphabetical order at the back of the Bible under the heading **Holman CSB Bullet Notes**. A few important or frequently misunderstood words (\*slaves) are marked with a bullet more than one time per chapter.
6. Italics are used in the text for a transliteration of Greek and Hebrew words ("*Hosanna*" in Jn 12:13) and in footnotes for direct quotations from the biblical text and for words in the original languages (the footnote at Jn 1:1 reads: "The *Word* (Gk *Logos*) is a title for Jesus...").
7. Since the majority of English readers do not need to have numbers and fractions spelled out in the text, the Holman CSB uses a similar style to that of modern newspapers in using Arabic numerals for the numbers 10 and above and in fractions, except in a small number of cases, such as when a number begins a sentence.

## Footnotes

Footnotes are used to show readers how the original biblical language has been understood in the Holman Christian Standard Bible.

### NT Textual Footnotes

NT textual notes indicate significant differences among Greek manuscripts (mss) and are normally indicated in one of three ways:

- Other mss read \_\_\_\_\_
- Other mss add \_\_\_\_\_
- Other mss omit \_\_\_\_\_

In the NT, some textual footnotes that use the word "add" or "omit" also have square brackets before and after the corresponding verses in the biblical text (see the discussion above in the paragraph entitled "Textual base of the Holman CSB"). Examples of this use of square brackets are Mk 16:9-20, Jn 5:3-4, and Jn 7:53-8:11.

### OT Textual Footnotes

OT textual notes show important differences among Hebrew manuscripts and among ancient OT versions, such as the Septuagint and the Vulgate. See the list of abbreviations on page xxiii for a list of other ancient versions used.

Some OT textual notes (like NT textual notes) give only an alternate textual reading. However, other OT textual notes also give the support for the reading chosen by the editors as well as for the alternate textual reading. For example, the Holman CSB text of Ps 12:7 reads:

You will protect us<sup>a</sup> from this generation forever.

The textual footnote for this verse reads:

<sup>a</sup>12:7 Some Hb mss, LXX; other Hb mss read *him*

The textual note in this example means that there are two different readings found in the Hebrew manuscripts: some manuscripts read *us* and others read *him*. The Holman CSB translators chose the reading *us*, which is also found in the Septuagint (LXX), and placed the other Hebrew reading *him* in the footnote.

Two other OT textual notes are:

Alt Hb tradition reads \_\_\_\_\_

a variation given by scribes in the Hebrew manuscript tradition (known as *Kethiv/Qere* readings)

Hb uncertain

when it is uncertain what the original Hebrew text was

Other Kinds of Footnotes

Lit _____	a more literal rendering in English of the Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek text
Or _____	an alternate or less likely English translation of the same Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek text
=	an abbreviation for “it means” or “it is equivalent to”
Hb, Aram, Gk	the actual Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek word is given using English letters
Hb obscure	the existing Hebrew text is especially difficult to translate
emend(ed) to _____	the original Hebrew text is so difficult to translate that competent scholars have conjectured or inferred a restoration of the original text based on the context, probable root meanings of the words, and uses in comparative languages

In some editions of the Holman Christian Standard Bible, additional footnotes clarify the meaning of certain biblical texts or explain biblical history, persons, customs, places, activities, and measurements. Cross-references are given for parallel passages or passages with similar wording, and in the NT, for passages quoted from the OT.

# COMMONLY USED ABBREVIATIONS IN THE HOLMAN CSB

A.D.	in the year of our Lord
alt	alternate
a.m.	from midnight until noon
Aq	Aquila
Aram	Aramaic
B.C.	before Christ
c.	circa
chap	chapter
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
Eng	English
Gk	Greek
Hb	Hebrew
Jer	Latin translation of Psalms by Jerome
Lat	Latin
Lit	Literally
LXX	Septuagint—an ancient translation of the Old Testament into Greek
MT	Masoretic Text
NT	New Testament
ms(s)	manuscript(s)
OT	Old Testament
p.m.	from noon until midnight
pl	plural
Ps(s)	psalm(s)
Sam	Samaritan Pentateuch
sg	singular
syn.	synonym
Sym	Symmachus
Syr	Syriac
Tg	Targum
Theod	Theodotian
v., vv.	verse, verses
Vg	Vulgate—an ancient translation of the Bible into Latin
vol(s).	volume(s)

# PLAN OF SALVATION

What do you understand it takes for a person to go to Heaven?

Consider how the Bible answers this question: It's a matter of FAITH.

## ***F is for FORGIVENESS***

We cannot have eternal life and heaven without God's forgiveness.

—Read Ephesians 1:7a.

## ***A is for AVAILABLE***

Forgiveness is available. It is—

- Available for all.
- But not automatic.

—Read John 3:16.

—Read Matthew 7:21a.

## ***I is for IMPOSSIBLE***

It is impossible for God to allow sin into heaven.

- Because of who He is:  
God is loving and just. His judgment is against sin.
- Because of who we are:  
Every person is a sinner.

—Read James 2:13a.

—Read Romans 3:23.

But how can a sinful person enter heaven, when God allows no sin?

## ***T is for TURN***

Turn means to repent.

- Turn from something:  
sin and self.
- Turn to Someone:  
trust Christ only.

—Read Luke 13:3b.

—Read Romans 10:9.

## ***H is for HEAVEN***

Heaven is eternal life.

- Here.
- Hereafter.

—Read John 10:10b.

—Read John 14:3.

How can a person have God's forgiveness, heaven and eternal life, and Jesus as personal Savior and Lord? By trusting in Christ and asking Him for forgiveness. Take the step of faith described by another meaning of FAITH: Forsaking All I Trust Him.

## ***Prayer:***

Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner and have displeased You in many ways. I believe You died for my sin and only through faith in Your death and resurrection can I be forgiven. I want to turn from my sin and ask You to come into my life as my Savior and Lord. From this day on, I will follow You by living a life that pleases You. Thank You, Lord Jesus for saving me. Amen.

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a Christian friend about this important decision you have made. Follow Christ in believer's baptism and church membership. Grow in your faith and enjoy new friends in Christ by becoming part of His church. There, you'll find others who will love and support you.

# WHAT IS APOLOGETICS?

by Kenneth D. Boa

Apologetics may be simply defined as the defense of the Christian faith. The simplicity of this definition, however, masks the complexity of the problem of defining apologetics. It turns out that a diversity of approaches has been taken in defining the meaning, scope, and purpose of apologetics.

The word “apologetics” derives from the Greek word *apologia*, which was originally used as a speech of defense. In ancient Athens it referred to a defense made in the courtroom as part of the normal judicial procedure. After the accusation, the defendant was allowed to refute the charges with a defense (*apologia*). The classic example of an *apologia* was Socrates’s defense against the charge of preaching strange gods, a defense retold by his most famous pupil, Plato, in a dialogue called *The Apology*.

The word *apologia* appears 17 times in noun or verb form in the NT, and can be translated “defense” or “vindication” in every case. The idea of offering a reasoned defense of the faith is evident in Php 1:7,16; and especially 1 Pt 3:15, but no specific theory of apologetics is outlined in the NT.

In the second century this general word for “defense” began taking on a narrower sense to refer to a group of writers who defended the beliefs and practices of Christianity against various attacks. These men were known the *apologists* because of the titles of some of their treatises, but apparently not until 1794 was *apologetics* used to designate a specific theological discipline.

It has become customary to use the term *apology* to refer to a specific effort or work in defense of the faith. An apology might be a written document, a speech, or even a film. Apologists develop their defenses of the Christian faith in relation to scientific, historical, philosophical, ethical, religious, theological, or cultural issues.

We may distinguish four functions of apologetics, though not everyone agrees that apologetics involves all four. Such opinions notwithstanding, all four functions have historically been important in apologetics, and each has been championed by great Christian apologists throughout church history.

The first function may be called *vindication* or *proof*, and involves marshaling philosophical arguments as well as scientific and historical evidences for the Christian faith. The goal of this function is to develop a positive case for Christianity as a belief system that should be accepted. Philosophically, this means drawing out the logical implications of the Christian worldview so that they can be clearly seen and contrasted with alternate worldviews.

The second function is *defense*. This function is closest to the NT and early Christian use of the word *apologia*, defending Christianity against the plethora of attacks made against it in every generation by critics of varying belief systems. This function involves clarifying the Christian position in light of misunderstandings and misrepresentations; answering objections, criticisms, or questions from non-Christians; and in general clearing away any intellectual difficulties that nonbelievers claim stand in the way of their coming to faith.

The third function is *refutation* of opposing beliefs. This function focuses on answering the arguments non-Christians give in support of their own beliefs. Most apologists agree that refutation cannot stand alone, since proving a non-Christian religion or philosophy to be false does not prove that Christianity is true. Nevertheless, it is an essential function of apologetics.

The fourth function is *persuasion*. By this we do not mean merely convincing people that Christianity is true, but persuading them to apply its truth to their life. This function focuses on bringing non-Christians to the point of commitment. The apologist’s intent is not merely to win an intellectual argument, but to persuade people to commit their lives and eternal futures into the trust of the Son of God who died for them.

# HOW APOLOGETICS CHANGED MY LIFE!

by Lee Strobel

Author, *The Case for Christ* and *The Case for the Real Jesus*

Skepticism is part of my DNA. That's probably why I ended up combining the study of law and journalism to become the legal editor of *The Chicago Tribune*—a career in which I relentlessly pursued hard facts in my investigations. And that's undoubtedly why I was later attracted to a thorough examination of the evidence—whether it proved to be positive or negative—as a way to probe the legitimacy of the Christian faith.

A spiritual cynic, I became an atheist in high school. To me the mere concept of an all-loving, all-knowing, all-powerful creator of the universe was so absurd on the surface that it didn't even warrant serious consideration. I believed that God didn't create people, but that people created God out of their fear of death and their desire to live forever in a utopia they called heaven.

I married an agnostic named Leslie. Several years later she came to me with the worst news I thought I could ever get: She had decided to become a follower of Jesus. My initial thought was that she was going to turn into an irrational holy roller who would waste all of her time serving the poor in a soup kitchen somewhere. Divorce, I figured, was inevitable.

Then something amazing occurred. During the ensuing months, I began to see positive changes in her character, her values, and the way she related to me and to the children. The transformation was winsome and attractive. So one day when she invited me to go to church with her, I decided to comply.

The pastor gave a talk called “Basic Christianity” in which he clearly spelled out the essentials of the faith. Did he shake me out of my atheism that day? No, not by a long shot. Still, I concluded that if what he was saying was true, it would have huge implications for my life.

That's when I decided to apply my experience as a journalist to investigating whether there is any credibility to Christianity or any other faith system. I resolved to keep an open mind and follow the evidence wherever it pointed—even if it took me to some uncomfortable conclusions. In a sense, I was checking out the biggest story of my career.

At first, I thought my investigation would be short-lived. In my opinion, having “faith” meant you believed something even though you knew in your heart that it couldn't be true. I anticipated that I would very quickly uncover facts that would devastate Christianity. Yet as I devoured books by atheists and Christians, interviewed scientists and theologians, and studied archaeology, ancient history, and world religions, I was stunned to find that Christianity's factual foundation was a lot firmer than I had once believed.

Much of my investigation focused on science, where more recent discoveries have only further cemented the conclusions that I drew in those studies. For instance, cosmologists now agree that the universe and time itself came into existence at some point in the finite past. The logic is inexorable: Whatever begins to exist has a cause, the universe began to exist, and therefore the universe has a cause. It makes sense that this cause must be immaterial, timeless, powerful, and intelligent.

What's more, physicists have discovered over the last 50 years that many of the laws and constants of the universe—such as the force of gravity and the cosmological constant—are finely tuned to an incomprehensible precision in order for life to exist. This exactitude is so incredible that it defies the explanation of mere chance.

The existence of biological information in DNA also points toward a Creator. Each of our cells contains the precise assembly instructions for every protein out of which our bodies are made, all spelled out in a four-letter chemical alphabet. Nature can produce patterns, but whenever we see information—whether it's in a book or a computer program—we know there's intelligence behind

it. Furthermore, scientists are finding complex biological machines on the cellular level that defy a Darwinian explanation and instead are better explained as the work of an Intelligent Designer.

To my great astonishment, I became convinced *by the evidence* that science supports the belief in a Creator who looks suspiciously like the God of the Bible. Spurred on by my discoveries, I then turned my attention to history.

I found that Jesus, and Jesus alone, fulfilled ancient messianic prophecies against all mathematical odds. I concluded that the New Testament is rooted in eyewitness testimony and that it passes the tests that historians routinely use to determine reliability. I learned that the Bible has been passed down through the ages with remarkable fidelity.

However, the pivotal issue for me was the resurrection of Jesus. Anyone can claim to be the Son of God, as Jesus clearly did. The question was whether Jesus could back up that assertion by miraculously returning from the dead.

One by one, the facts built a convincing and compelling case. Jesus' death by crucifixion is as certain as anything in the ancient world. The accounts of His resurrection are too early to be the product of legendary development. Even the enemies of Jesus conceded that His tomb was empty on Easter morning. And the eyewitness encounters with the risen Jesus cannot be explained away as mere hallucinations or wishful thinking.

All of this just scratches the surface of what I uncovered in my nearly two-year investigation. Frankly, I was completely surprised by the depth and breadth of the case for Christianity. And as someone trained in journalism and law, I felt I had no choice but to respond to the facts.

So on November 8, 1981, I took a step of faith in the same direction that the evidence was pointing—which is utterly rational to do—and became a follower of Jesus. And just like the experience of my wife, over time my character, values, and priorities began to change—for the good.

For me, apologetics proved to be the turning point of my life and eternity. I'm thankful for the scholars who so passionately and effectively defend the truth of Christianity—and today my life's goal is to do my part in helping others get answers to the questions that are blocking them in their spiritual journey toward Christ.

# CHRIST: THE FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY

by D. James Kennedy

Some time ago I had the opportunity to speak to a man who had no belief whatsoever in the Scriptures as any sort of divine revelation from God. He was a writer who was articulate and well-educated. While he was well-read, he was completely ignorant of any evidences for the truthfulness of the Christian faith and the Scriptures which reveal it. He said the Bible was simply a book written by men, just like any other book. I said, "That's very interesting. I would like to read some statements to you about someone and have you tell me, assuredly, without question, about whom I am reading."

He agreed and I began to read:

- "Those who hate me without cause are more numerous than the hairs of my head" (Ps 69:4).
- "The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers conspire together against the LORD and His Anointed One" (Ps 2:2).
- "Even my friend in whom I trusted, one who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me" (Ps 41:9).
- "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered" (Zch 13:7).
- "Then I said to them, 'If it seems right to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them.' So they weighed my wages, 30 pieces of silver. 'Throw it to the potter,' the LORD said to me—this magnificent price I was valued by them. So I took the 30 pieces of silver and threw it into the house of the LORD, to the potter" (Zch 11:12-13).
- "They are striking the judge of Israel on the cheek with a rod" (Mc 5:1).
- "I gave My back to those who beat Me, and My cheeks to those who tore out My beard. I did not hide My face from scorn and spitting" (Is 50:6).
- "They pierced my hands and my feet" (Ps 22:16).
- "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" (Ps 22:1).
- "Everyone who sees me mocks me; they sneer and shake their heads: 'He relies on the LORD; let Him rescue him; let the LORD deliver him, since He takes pleasure in him'" (Ps 22:7-8).
- "They gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (Ps 69:21).
- "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are disjointed; my heart is like wax, melting within me" (Ps 22:14).
- "Yet He Himself bore our sicknesses, and He carried our pains; but we in turn regarded Him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted" (Is 53:4).
- "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth. Like a lamb led to the slaughter and like a sheep silent before her shearers, He did not open His mouth" (Is 53:7).
- "They divided my garments among themselves, and they cast lots for my clothing" (Ps 22:18).
- "He submitted Himself to death" (Is 53:12).
- "He bore the sin of many and interceded for the rebels" (Is 53:12).
- "You may not break any of its bones" (Ex 12:46).



- “He protects all his bones; not one of them is broken” (Ps 34:20).
- “They will look at Me whom they pierced” (Zch 12:10).
- “They made His grave with the wicked, and with a rich man at His death, although He had done no violence and had not spoken deceitfully” (Is 53:9).
- “For You will not abandon me to Sheol; You will not allow Your Faithful One to see the Pit” (Ps 16:10).
- “You ascended to the heights, taking away captives; You received gifts from people, even from the rebellious, so that the LORD God might live there” (Ps 68:18).
- “The LORD declared to my Lord: ‘Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool’” (Ps 110:1).

I said to him, “About whom did I read?”

He replied, “Well, you obviously read of the life and ministry and suffering and death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.”

I said, “Is there any question in your mind about that?”

He answered, “No, that could refer to no one else.”

I replied, “Well then, I would want you to understand that all of the Scriptures I just read to you are taken from the Old Testament, which was completed some four hundred years before Jesus was born. No critic, no atheist, no agnostic has ever once claimed that any one of those writings was written after His birth. In fact, they were translated from Hebrew into Greek in Alexandria some 150 years before He was born. If this is merely a book written by men, would you please explain to me how these words were written?”

He said, “I haven’t the faintest idea.” He was completely nonplussed. He had never heard those things before in his life. Indeed they cannot be explained by any purely humanistic presuppositions.

It is noteworthy that in no other religious writings in the world do we find any specific predictive prophecies like we find in the Scripture. You will find no predictive prophecies whatsoever in the writings of Buddha, Confucius, Mohammed, Lao-Tse, or Hinduism. Yet in the Scripture there are well over two thousand prophecies, most of which have already been fulfilled.

They are so specific in nature that they burn all the bridges behind them. If they are not fulfilled, it leaves no room for excuse. How can these be explained? Of all the attacks that have ever been made upon the Scripture, there has never been one book written by a skeptic to disprove the prophecies of the Scripture. Though the Bible has been attacked at every other place, the one place where God rests His inspiration is that the things He foretells come infallibly to pass.

The Bible prophecies are altogether unexpected! I know of no one ever prophesying that any other human being would rise from the dead and ascend into heaven. That is exceedingly improbable. The chance of it happening by coincidence is incalculable. No, the Bible is not merely a book written by men; it is a book written by God through men, and the heart of its prophetic message is Jesus Christ.

# WRITING HISTORY—THEN AND NOW

by Kirk Lowery

Is the Bible “history”? Did the ancient biblical authors write “history” as we moderns understand it? These questions are essential elements of the debate about the trustworthiness and authority of the Bible. In recent years, the usefulness of the Bible for writing the history of the ancient Near East has come under attack as it has not been since the nineteenth century. And this attack is rooted in the intellectual winds of our time. Since the 1970s, people have been questioning whether science or history can tell us anything more than the ideology, politics, and biases of the scientist or historian, either individually or collectively. It is part of the so-called “postmodern” debate about the nature of “knowledge.” Many postmodernists assert that the meaning of any particular biblical text (or any other literary text, for that matter) cannot be separated from the worldview and ideology of the reader. They deny that the original intention of the author can be recovered.

In order to evaluate the usefulness of the Bible for history and its trustworthiness as a source of both information and judgment on people and events, we must remember that there are two separate points of view—the ancient and the modern. Are we talking about modern ideas of history or ancient ones? Were the biblical writers attempting to write *history* as we understand it? If they were not attempting to write a modern history, just what were they trying to do?

The word *history* is normally understood in two senses: (1) what actually happened in the past, or (2) the telling (or writing) about what happened in the past. The first sense is objective (although some deny even this); the second necessarily filters those events through the personality of the historian. While the modern historian begins with a chronology and facts, the historian’s evaluation hardly stops there. He reconstructs facts and events, fitting them together into a tapestry of telling a story. He evaluates his sources for their value and validity, much as a lawyer probes the credibility of a witness. Indeed, the historian is more like a prosecutor than a scientist in his method of work. After that examination, he makes conclusions about people and events, much like a judge or jury. The basic concern is that the Bible asserts certain facts or that certain events happened. Did they happen and in the way the Bible presents them? The Bible also makes judgments on people’s actions, attitudes and deeds. Can we trust its judgment on events we cannot access?

Where did all this radical skepticism come from? There has always been skepticism about the Bible. Marcion (c. A.D. 85–160), for example, rejected just about all the New Testament except for Paul’s writings and a highly edited Gospel of Luke. But modern (and postmodern) views of the Bible are rooted in the period known as the Enlightenment in the seventeenth century. This was a time when thoughtful persons began to distinguish between knowledge and superstition by using empirical methods. They struggled against state church authorities in their pursuit of truth. They pursued the original texts of not only the Bible but of the classics of Greek and Roman philosophy and literature. Their struggle polarized them from not just the contemporary church authorities, but galvanized them to regard any religious text as suspect. The seventeenth century was a time dedicated to the discovery of what was true and of what was superstition or chicanery. In that respect, the skepticism was healthy. Because many chose the cloak of religious authority to pander their intellectual wares, skepticism was a very powerful defense against this abuse. And a healthy skepticism is still useful, for superstition (in pursuit of money or adherents) is still used today against the unwary—that is, against those who uncritically trust whatever they are told. And it is important to remember that not everyone at that time embraced the “scientific” method accompanied by radical unbelief. Many of these early “scientists” were trained clergy, most notably Isaac Newton.

The modernist approach to writing history includes establishing events and a chronology, distinguishing between primary (original witness to the events) and secondary (dependent upon another) sources, and arranging those facts in some sort of a narrative. The modernist historian

believes there is an objective reality in the past that can be accessed and known today. Critical scholars of the nineteenth century focused upon supposed “contradictions” and “errors” of fact to be found in the Bible. During the first half of the twentieth century, archaeological discoveries supported the presentation of fact found in many places of the Bible that previously had been challenged. At the end of World War II, scholars held the Bible to be much more trustworthy than they had believed at the beginning of the century.

In the past 50 years, the focus has changed. Once preoccupied with “contradictions” in the Bible, and “errors” of fact, now the emphasis is upon how the reader *responds* to the message of the text. One’s understanding of the text is inevitably filtered through the previously existing biases of the reader. The original meaning of the text intended by the author is not accessible to the modern reader; indeed, “Truth” is not knowable. This brings us to the late 1980s and early 1990s when a new movement of historians arose to challenge the conclusions of their older colleagues; they have come to be known as the “Minimalists.”

The controversy is all about *historiography*, the art of writing history. It is an art, not a science. One cannot repeat the “facts” of history in the same way that a scientist can reproduce the same events again and again in an experiment. But writing history is not simply telling a story. It is about the trustworthiness of the sources which one uses for telling that story. Are the sources that the historian uses to “prove” his point credible? The historian is much like the lawyer who constructs a tale about a crime (or lack of a crime), and uses witnesses and evidence to support his point of view and conclusion. And then it is the framework (often a story, but it could be a table of demographic facts) that relates all the events to one another. This involves selecting which facts will be included and which will be set aside as not relevant to the point being made.

The Minimalists assert that the Israel as depicted in the Hebrew Bible never existed, except in the minds of the Persian and Hellenistic writers who created the patriarchal narratives and the stories of the monarchy out of whole cloth. They were novelists in the modern sense who wrote fiction. Unless there is independent verification by “extra-biblical sources,” they reject the Hebrew Bible’s usefulness as a witness to the events written about. The biblical text is held to a higher standard of verification than are “extra-biblical” sources.

They believe that “unwritten” archaeological remains are more reliable than written documents, because they are “real,” whereas the message contained in documents is created by humans with ideologies, misperceptions, incomplete information, etc. Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), an Enlightenment philosopher, said that reality—the thing in itself—cannot be truly known. The Minimalists explicitly cite Kant as one reason they rate the biblical text so low for knowledge of the past. However, while archaeological remains tell us what the material world was like and the context and constraints under which the people of the past lived, they cannot tell us what decisions people made or explain why people made the choices they did.

They insist that any assertion by an ancient text must be verified by an independent source. But insistence on a strict verification principle would leave us in the dark about almost everything. In point of fact, no one lives this way. We constantly make decisions based upon insufficient verification and make the “likely” choice. Better is the principle of “innocent until proven guilty,” that a text is given the benefit of the doubt until and unless grounds for suspecting it are discovered.

How does one answer the Minimalist? Let’s take the problem of the conquest of Canaan. Archaeological evidence is lacking for the Israelite conquest and occupation in the Iron Age. The Minimalists conclude it never happened, and certainly not as presented in the book of Joshua. Kenneth Kitchen, well-known and respected Egyptologist, is famous for his dictum: “The absence of evidence is not the evidence of absence.” Also, the biblical text helps explain it: Joshua 24:13 says, “I [the Lord] gave you a land you did not labor for, and cities you did not build, though you live in them; you are eating from vineyards and olive groves you did not plant.” In other words, the Canaanite material

culture—cities, farms, vineyards, and orchards—was not universally destroyed by the Israelites. Apparently, total destruction was the exception rather than the rule.

How should we evaluate these ancient texts? We should allow the ancient writers to speak in the manner that they wish. We should try to understand the ancient writers before posing questions of them that is outside of both their intention and their worldview. We should “translate” the message of the ancients from the ancient context to the modern. Finally, we must embrace humility: We do not have all the data; we do not have complete or even certain understanding to answer all our questions. Let us make a virtue of necessity and take what the ancient writers give and be content with that.

So what were the biblical writers doing, what did they expect to accomplish, and how ought the modern reader attempt to understand their literary output? The books of Kings and Chronicles, along with the other “historical” books of the Hebrew Bible, are not books written by modern historians for modern readers. Their literary nature is much different. For one thing, their purpose is *didactic* or *polemic*; that is, the authors are attempting to convince their readers about moral and spiritual principles. Their stories are intended to support this purpose and their various propositions. Second, their commitment to truth does not aspire to modern standards of reporting. What they valued as important and unimportant does not translate easily to third millennium A.D. values. For example, the recording of genealogies strikes many modern readers as irrelevant to the story. But it was critical to how these ancient peoples conceived of their identity. Genealogies may have had the function of establishing chronology or the framework for the story being told. It establishes precedence, relationship, and identity.

Allowance must be made for paraphrase, abbreviation, explanation, omission, rearrangement, and other techniques used by the ancient author that might offend modern principles of historiography. This is not to say that the ancients did not write history. To the contrary, they often show sensitivity to the events and corroborating witnesses to those events. But they also did not make a distinction between the writer’s judgment or evaluation of events and the events themselves. They did not have precision—or, at least, modern notions of precision—in mind when they wrote. That does not mean the authors were not trying to tell a story that corresponds to real events! In order to understand the ancient texts, one must mentally and emotionally *become* an ancient and enter into their world. The process is very similar to watching a film where one must grant the filmmaker the premise of the film and even suspend belief in how the world should work before the message of the filmmaker can be perceived. The difference with the ancient writers is that we have much more work to do before we can enter into their world. Only then have we earned the right to form an opinion.

The ancient writer made choices: subject matter (events needing telling), point of view (theological purpose), and aesthetics (creative choices). These writers selected their material, glossed over less relevant events, simplified the story to meet space constraints and only included detail that illuminated the significance of the events as the writer understood them. This is true of modern professional historians as much as of ancient story tellers.

How, then, should we understand the intentions of the biblical writers? The first historians (that we have evidence of) were the Sumerians, for whom history was a matter of personal experience, not the analysis of sources or principles of interpretation. Later, Mesopotamian rulers desired to interpret the present or future in light of the past. Events on earth are controlled by the gods; hence, their decrees have a prominent place in their myths and legends. Indeed, that may have been the cultural function of the myths and legends. The earliest historiographers in the modern sense of the word were Manetho (third century B.C., Egypt) and Herodotus (*Histories*, c. 440 B.C.) and later, Aristotle (384–322 B.C., *Natural History of Animals*). The biblical writers were something in between: The view of these ancient Hebrew writers is that history has a *planned* goal. History is not the result of forces or great men, but moves forward to an end planned by God. Their purpose in writing history was didactic: to teach the reader about how God acts in human affairs, what are His purposes and the consequences of obedience and disobedience to that purpose.

# NUMBERS IN THE BIBLE

by Kirk Lowery

The modern reader of the Bible—especially of the Old Testament—often finds its use of numbers strange. The ancient world did not use numbers for every aspect of life. Their technology did not require many places past the decimal point of precision, or even a decimal point at all. The Bible has been closely read and interpreted by many cultures through more than four millennia. So the modern reader reads these ancient texts through the lens of all this history of interpretation. How others in the past have interpreted the numbers of the Bible influences a reader's understanding. How ought the numbers found in the Bible to be understood? They are to be understood in the same way that any other part of the text is understood: by how they are used and by keeping in mind both the textual context in which numbers occur and also the cultural context of how numbers were used by those ancient societies with which Israel lived and interacted.

Assyria, Egypt, Greece, and Rome used the decimal system for numbers. That is, numbers were expressed in base 10. ("Number" refers to the mathematical entity of quantity. "Numeral" refers to the symbol used to represent a number.) Sumerians and ancient Babylonians used the sexagesimal system, base 60, which is not unfamiliar to us since we use it every day—our system of timekeeping and navigation uses the sexagesimal system: 60 seconds to one minute, 60 minutes to one hour; 360 degrees to a circle subdivided into 60 minutes/degree and 60 seconds/minute. The ancient Israelites used the decimal system, as did their immediate neighbors in Canaan. For the most part, the major inscriptions of early Israel write out the numbers by words—"ten" rather than "10"—as is also true of the Old Testament itself. There is no instance of symbols being used, but all numbers are written out as words. The earliest (c. 140 B.C.) use of the Hebrew alphabet for numerals is to be found on Maccabean coins.

How did the biblical writers use numbers? They used them to count things and people. They used them for weights, measures, and time. They were familiar with arithmetic: addition (Gn 5:3-31; Nm 1:20-46), subtraction (Gn 18:26ff), and multiplication (Lv 25:8; Nm 3:46ff). Arithmetic processes are not mentioned in the New Testament. The frequent use of fractions shows a basic understanding of division: half (Ex 24:6); one fourth (Neh 9:3; Rv 6:8); one fifth (Gn 47:24); a tenth (Nm 18:26). Numbers are important in Daniel, Ezekiel, and Revelation. In summary, the biblical writers used numbers literally, rhetorically, and symbolically. They are never used mystically. Each use is addressed in turn below.

When the Bible uses numbers in the ordinary way, do they mean what they apparently mean? Some interpreters suppose that since the biblical writers were "pre-scientific," the numbers are not to be taken seriously. This supposition is flawed, however, for many non-scientific cultures record numbers that can be taken perfectly seriously (such as the astronomical observations of the Babylonians or the administrative records of the ancient Egyptians). The use of numbers is very culture-specific: Some languages have only the numbers "one, two, many," because they do not need greater precision than that. Modern society is permeated with numbers for every conceivable aspect of life. The ancient world was not that way. The ancients did not give a unique number to their citizens, did not number their roads, etc. But regardless of the level of technological development, every society has to deal with numbers in a real way to function. For some, the system may be simple, for others, very complex. Ancient Israel was no exception: Tolls and taxes were recorded, censuses were taken.

The biblical writers often used round numbers, a fact that should be noted in questions of reliability and trustworthiness of the biblical record. For example, we find "a hundred" (and "100") used as a round number (Gn 26:12; Lv 26:8; 2 Sm 24:3; Ec 8:12; Mt 19:29), as well as "a thousand" (Dt 1:11; 7:9). The word "about" often precedes rounded numbers: "about 3,000 men" (Ex 32:28). On the other hand, numbers which could be interpreted as rounded numbers are often intended as actual



amounts: “1,000 pieces of silver” (Gn 20:16). In general, one should assume a number is not rounded, unless there is reason to believe otherwise. Smaller numbers are less likely to be rounded than larger ones.

Much ink has been spilled debating the meaning of large numbers in the Bible. There are the large, indefinite numbers, and these do not present an interpretive problem. The highest recorded numbers are one million (2 Ch 14:9), ten thousand times ten thousand (Dn 7:10), thousands of thousands (Rv 5:11), and 200 million (Rv 9:16), the highest number recorded.

The long life spans of the pre-flood patriarchs have been compared to the Sumerian king list, whose life spans are recorded in the tens of thousands of years. The Sumerian kings’ life spans have been called “mythical,” so why not the biblical patriarchs’ ages? After all, everyone knows humans rarely live beyond 100 years, never mind 500 or 1,000. The actual fact is that we don’t know. The Sumerian king list records life spans on an order of magnitude greater than the biblical names. If both reflect a tradition about antediluvian times, what they may both be saying is that those ancient people lived an extraordinarily long time. Some have suggested that environmental conditions could explain it; others suggest mankind’s closer proximity to its original sinless estate explains it. We just don’t know how to explain the apparently impossible life spans. What we have is a witness (the Bible) that has proved trustworthy too often to dismiss.

The Bible records the number of men capable of bearing arms at the time of the exodus to be 603,550 (Nm 1:46). From this, it has been calculated that the entire population leaving Egypt would be about two million. Could such a number survive in the wilderness? The answer is no. Neither could a hundredth of that many survive on their own. It required God’s provision because that part of the world would have been simply unable to support large numbers of nomads, especially without modern farming methods and technology. It required God to actively intervene in Israel’s physical history in order for them to leave Egypt and subsequently survive. That is the point of the Exodus narrative.

There have been various attempts to reduce the real numbers of the exodus by understanding the Hebrew term for “thousand” (*eleph*) as “captain” or “family, clan.” There is evidence for this use of the term in Nm 1:16; Jdg 6:15; 1 Sm 10:19; and Mc 5:2. But in the census lists of the book of Numbers, the numbers of the tribes is calculated in terms of thousands, hundreds, and fifties. Gad, for example, numbered 45,650 (Nm 1:25). And the total given to Israel’s army (Nm 1:46) can only be arrived at if we calculate using *eleph* as meaning “thousand.” Difficult to explain or not, the text is clear as to its intended meaning.

Numbers are also used in the Bible for rhetorical effect. They are used for contrast in poetic parallelism: “As they celebrated, the women sang: Saul has killed his thousands, but David his tens of thousands” (1 Sm 18:7). Perhaps the most common is to use the formula  $x \dots x + 1$  to express progression, intensification, completion, or some sort of climax: “The LORD says: I will not relent from punishing Israel for three crimes, even four . . .” (Am 2:6). Amos used the phrase in a string of condemnations of the sins of the surrounding lands. By using the same phrase for Israel and Judah, he was saying “you are no better than they,” and so had a stronger impact upon his audience. The  $x \dots x + 1$  formula is also used in the NT (e.g., Mt 18:20). Perhaps the most popular interpretation of numbers in the Bible is their symbolic meaning. The numbers 1, 3, 5, 7, 10, 12, and 40 among others have been assigned various meanings such as “unity,” “perfection,” “completion,” and “generation.” Where do these interpretations come from? The surprising fact is that only one number in the entire Bible is explicitly said to be symbolic: “Here is wisdom: The one who has understanding must calculate the number of the beast, because it is the number of a man. His number is 666” (Rv 13:18). Nowhere else are we told that numbers are used symbolically in any way. Any other symbolism for a number must be inferred from the biblical text itself by demonstrating a frequent association of a particular number with a particular concept. The only candidate for such an association is the number 7. And

its usage is so diverse (seven days of creation; Jacob's seven years of service for Rachel; seven-fold curse of Cain; praising God seven times a day as in Ps 119:164) that it is hard to pin down a consistent meaning, but "completeness" or "perfection" appear to be the intended symbolism most of the time.

Where do all the other traditionally associated meanings and instances of symbolism come from? Modern lists of symbolic meanings of the biblical use of numbers most closely follow the system of meanings proposed by the sixth century B.C. Greek mathematician and philosopher, Pythagoras. Famous for his "Pythagorean Theorem," he also founded a religious cult with the belief that the "real" world was the realm of numbers and that those numbers explain why the physical world is the way it is. He speculated on the mystic and symbolic properties of numbers, which are the early origins of number theory. His ideas were picked up by the Gnostics in the apostolic and post-apostolic eras. Even the early church fathers were influenced by this approach to biblical interpretation, although not universally. Irenaeus (c. A.D. 140–200) classified it with other heresies: "Nor should they seek to prosecute inquiries respecting God by means of numbers, syllables, and letters. . . . For system does not spring out of numbers, but numbers from a system; nor does God derive His being from things made, but things made from God. For all things originate from one and the same God" (*Against Heresies*, Bk II:25:1). This is a direct refutation of Pythagorean metaphysics.

It is a small step from looking for symbolic meaning in numbers to seeking *hidden* meaning in numbers. After Alexander the Great conquered Palestine, Greek philosophies influenced Jewish thinking. From Pythagorean influence sprang Jewish *Gematria*, the system of interpretation that says there is hidden, intended meaning in the numeric values of a word. Since the Greeks had no separate writing system to express numerals, the ancients used Greek letters instead. Words could be broken up into letters, and mathematical operations could be done on the numeric values of those letters. Those numeric values were given mystical meanings loosely based upon Pythagorean numeric metaphysics described above. The Jews applied these procedures to the words of the Hebrew Bible using the letters of the Hebrew alphabet for numbers and claimed to discover hidden meaning and messages from God intended for the faithful. The church fathers were attracted to this form of interpretation of the Bible because of its apparent value in proving the inspiration and truth of the scriptures. In this way, *Gematria* passed into Christian circles and is still practiced today by many.

There is no historical or archaeological evidence of any culture using letters for numerals before the Greeks. The human authors of the Old Testament would have had no cultural model or literary form to suggest to them that they write a message in code. There is no hint in the Bible that there is any message encoded in the letters of the text. There is no procedure or mathematical operation common to the time of the writers of the Bible that the writers could conceivably expect a reader to know to use to discover the encoded meaning. We must conclude that the only way intelligible results can be obtained this way is by starting with the message one wishes to find! Then, using mathematical deduction, one proceeds to create the steps needed to get to that message from the numeric values of the biblical text, just like one would attempt to prove a theorem in number theory.

God's message of salvation for mankind was intended to be intelligible to everyone, of all ages and from all cultures. Certainly numbers in the Bible are sometimes difficult to understand, and there are "mysteries" about the future that are deliberately couched in ambiguous or symbolic wording. But at no time—with the one exception in Revelation noted above—is the reader exhorted to resort to mathematics. God does not speak to us in "code."

# THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

by Kirk Lowery

Whether it is a simple story or a complex history, a key element is time. It establishes cause and effect, act and consequence. The books of Kings are not exempt from the need to relate one event to another in time. The author traces the action of kings and rulers throughout time by recording the beginning, end, and duration of one reign after another. Modern readers naturally want to relate the chronology of the books of Kings to the dating systems we use today so we can relate the events narrated there to each other and to contemporaneous events in the lands surrounding ancient Israel and Judah in order to recover the original context of those events.

The books of Kings synchronize the reigns of the northern and southern kingdoms of the divided monarchy as well as proving the number of years a king reigned. But there is a very significant problem. These numbers and the synchronisms appear to be in constant contradiction with one another. It appears difficult, if not impossible, to create a chronology that accounts for all these numbers and agrees with established chronologies of the ancient Near East. These conflicts of numbers have led many to conclude that the books of Kings cannot be faithful witnesses to the history of Israel. If the writer got the numbers wrong, what else did he get wrong?

Here is an example of one problem: Often the synchronism given for the beginning of a reign does not correlate with the total number of years given for that reign. First Kings 15:25 says the reign of Nadab of Israel begins in the second year of Asa of Judah. First Kings 15:28 says Nadab died in the third year of Asa; that is, he reigned for one year. But 1 Kings 15:25 says he reigned for two years. This is one category of conflict. A second category of conflict is concerning the year a king is supposed to have begun his reign. Second Kings 3:1 says Joram began to reign in Israel in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat of Judah. But 2 Kings 1:17 says he began to reign in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat. The sum of regnal years for Israel and Judah is a third source of discrepancy. The total number of years for the kings of Israel from Jehu through Pekahiah is 114 years and 7 months. For the same period of time in Judah (from Athaliah through Azariah) the total comes to 128 years, a 14-year discrepancy. When we compare the sum of the regnal years for Israel as compared to the same period for Assyria, we find Israel's kings reigned 12 years longer than the Assyrian kings. And Judah's kings reigned longer by 25 years! Since the numbers do not match up, we must conclude that either someone made an error or the numbers mean something different than we suppose.

In 1951 Edwin Thiele published *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* in which he presented solutions to the problems outlined above. His discoveries and principles used to harmonize the regnal years of Israel and Judah with an absolute chronology are summarized here.

In the northern kingdom, Israel, the regnal year was calculated from the month of Nisan in the spring, but in Judah, the regnal year began in the month of Tishri in the autumn. Both of these systems overlap the January new year of modern calendars. It must also be kept in mind that both calendar systems are lunar rather than the solar calendar used today; that is, each month consisted of exactly 30 days following the phases of the moon. An important consequence of all this is that a regnal year in Israel begins in the spring and will overlap parts of two regnal years in Judah which begin in the autumn. If a king of Judah came to the throne just before January, his accession year would synchronize with, for example, the third regnal year of a king in Israel. However, if the Judean king came to the throne six months later in the following summer, his accession year would synchronize with the fourth year of the Israelite king.

A second principle used to resolve numeric conflicts is to understand that the method of calculating the regnal years was different in the two kingdoms. Is the first year of a king to include



a partial year up to the next new year, or is the first year of a king's reign to be calculated from the following new year's beginning? In the ancient Near East, some countries followed the former method and others the latter. The former method is called "accession year" dating, and the partial year is not counted; it could be called "Year Zero." The latter method is called "non-accession year" dating and counts any partial year as "Year One." This means that nations using the non-accession year dating system are always one year ahead of those that use accession year dating. And for every new king, the years increase by one in absolute time. For non-accession year dating, one must subtract one year for every king, in order to keep in sync with absolute chronology.

Judah used the accession-year system for Rehoboam through Jehoshaphat; then the non-accession-year system was employed from Jehoram to Joash. Beginning with the next ruler, Amaziah, Judah returned to the accession-year system until the destruction of Jerusalem. In Israel, the non-accession-year system only was used throughout its history; that is, from Jeroboam to Jehoahaz. For example, the total number of official years of reign for the Judean kings Rehoboam through Jehoshaphat are 79; the total number of regnal years for the same period in Israel (Jeroboam through Ahaziah) is 86. But when we subtract one year for each of the seven kings of Israel because of Israel's use of the non-accession-year system, the final sum is 79 years, which agrees with the Judean record.

A further source of confusion is how the regnal years are reported. Since each nation had its own method of reporting (accession year or non-accession-year), it reported the numbers of the other kingdom according to its own method. Thus, Rehoboam had a 17-year reign according to Judah's accession-year recording system, but Israel's non-accession-year system reckoned 18 years for Rehoboam. First Kings 15:25 says Nadab's rule over Israel began in the second year of Asa of Judah. Since Israel used a non-accession-year system, the second year of Asa would be the first year according to Judean accession-year dating. Depending upon which source the author was using, the *Historical Record of Israel's Kings* (1 Kg 14:19) or the *Historical Record of Judah's Kings* (1 Kg 14:29), the calculation of the regnal years and the synchronization between two kings must take these differences into account.

A fourth principle used to resolve regnal year numeric conflicts is to recognize that some reigns overlap (especially in Israel) and some kings were coregents (especially in Judah). Sometimes these overlappings and coregencies are mentioned explicitly in the text (e.g., 1 Kg 16:21-23) in a form called "dual dating." More often, the overlapping reigns must be deduced and reconstructed. In all, nine overlapping reigns have been identified, six for Judah and three for Israel.

How is the relative chronology of the Hebrew kings correlated with contemporary historical events? Lists of Assyrian kings record an eclipse which astronomical calculations determine to have occurred on June 15, 763 B.C. This allows us to fix the absolute date of most of the Assyrian kings and hence the various events of their reigns from their court records. In the sixth year of Shalmaneser III, the Assyrians fought a coalition of Aramean kings (now modern Syria) called "the Battle of Qarqar" in 853 B.C., and among the names of the kings listed is Ahab of Israel. (This event is not recorded in the Bible.) In the eighteenth year of Shalmaneser III, in 841 B.C., Assyrian records show that Shalmaneser received tribute from Jehu, king of Israel. There are 12 years between the Battle of Qarqar and the receipt of Jehu's tribute and also 12 years between the death of Ahab and the ascension of Jehu (1 Kg 22:51). Thus, Ahab died in 853 B.C. and Jehu ascended the throne in 841 B.C. This allows for further calculations of absolute dates for many other kings of Israel and Judah. Another synchronization from Assyrian records is the year 701 B.C. when Sennacherib of Assyria besieged Jerusalem during the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign (2 Kg 18:13). From the Battle of Qarqar in 853 B.C. to Sennacherib's campaign against Hezekiah in 701 B.C. is a span of 152 years, according to Assyrian chronology. According to the properly calculated years of Israelite and Judean kings from the death of Ahab to the fourteenth year of Hezekiah is also 152 years, proving the synchronization and method of reckoning regnal years is correct.

The history of biblical studies in the twentieth century has shown again and again that major “problems” of the biblical record have been the result of modern ignorance of the ancient world. The resolution of the apparent conflicts of the chronology of the books of Kings shows the reliability and trustworthiness of the biblical record to the history of the ancient Near East.

See the chart of kings in the section of charts and maps at the back of the Bible. This chart is an absolute chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah, taking into account the beginning of regnal years, overlapping reigns, coregencies, dual datings, and accession- and non-accession-year dating systems.

THE  
OLD TESTAMENT





# GENESIS

## AUTHOR

Although the author of Genesis is not identified in the book, its integral part in the Pentateuch (Genesis—Deuteronomy) suggests that the author of these five books was the same person. The books of the Pentateuch give evidence of unity through their common plot, theme (divine promises), central figure (Moses), and literary interconnections. Jewish and Christian traditions attribute the Pentateuch to Moses, whose life paralleled the events of Exodus—Deuteronomy (cp. 2 Ch 23:18; Lk 16:29,31; Ac 28:23).

Passages in Exodus—Deuteronomy testify that Moses authored diverse materials (Ex 17:14; 24:4-8; Nm 33:2; Dt 31:9,22). Although we cannot be certain about the contents of the “book of the law [of Moses]” (Jos 1:7-8; 8:31; 23:6; 2 Kg 14:6), its association with Moses established a “psychology of canonicity” that set the pattern of divinely authoritative writings (Nm 12:6-8; Dt 18:15; 34:10). Scholars have usually recognized that minor post-Mosaic contributions must exist in the Pentateuch, such as the report of Moses’ death (Dt 34). Some have contended that the first-person (“I”) sections were written by Moses and that another author set them in a third-person (“Moses”) narrative frame. Prior to the nineteenth century, the consensus remained that Moses wrote the essential whole, probably during the wilderness sojourn.

## THE RELIABILITY OF GENESIS

Since the events of Genesis preceded Moses, this raises the question of where he got his information. For most of the Christian era, the principal explanation was divine revelation coupled with the availability of written records, such as genealogies and stories.

Gradually, though, by the nineteenth century, a new consensus arose among “critical” scholars. They believed that the Pentateuch was the product of a series of unnamed Jewish editors who progressively stitched together pieces of preexisting

## INTRODUCTION

sources dating from the tenth to the sixth centuries B.C. Instead of being Mosaic, the Pentateuch was viewed as a mosaic. Such scholars today often view the stories in the Bible's first five books as fabrications conceived hundreds of years after the supposed events, perhaps during the exile.

There is significant evidence, however, that Genesis reflects the political and cultural setting of the second millennium B.C. The structure and contents of chapters 1–11 generally parallel the Babylonian epic *Atrahasis* (c. 1600 B.C.). Social and religious practices among the patriarchs correlate better with the earlier period than with the first millennium B.C. For example, Abraham's marriage to his half-sister Sarah was prohibited under the Mosaic law (20:12; Lv 18:9). It is unlikely that the Jews of the exilic period would have fabricated offensive events or preserved such stories unless these were already well-entrenched traditions. Also the prevalent use of the *El* compounds for the name of God (e.g., God Almighty—*El Shaddai*, 17:1) in Genesis contrasts with their virtual absence in first-millennium B.C. texts. The tolerant attitude toward Gentiles and the unrestricted travels of the patriarchs do not suit the later setting. The evidence, when considered as a whole, supports the position that Genesis remembers authentic events.

#### GENESIS AND ANCIENT MYTHS

The parallels between chapters 1–11 and creation and flood myths have elicited the question, Is the Bible merely a Hebrew version of myths about beginnings?

When weighing the importance of parallels, these principles should be kept in mind. First, not all parallels are equally significant, since minor ones can be attributed to common content. Second, the identity of who is borrowing from whom cannot be definitively concluded. Often it is best to assume a universal memory as the source. Third, the functions of the stories are much different. For example, the flood story of the Babylonian *Gilgamesh Epic* is incidental to the main idea of telling how Gilgamesh sought immortality. In the Bible, by contrast, the flood narrative is central to the development of the theme.

That the Bible's theology is divergent from the polytheism of antiquity argues against the Bible's dependence on sources from other cultures. The author of Genesis was aware of the cultural context of the nations and often crafted his accounts to counter the prevailing view. The historical framework of chapters 1–11 (e.g., "these are the records of," 2:4; 5:1) and the genealogies (chaps. 4–5; 10–11) indicate that the author presented a historical account, not a literary myth.



## The Creation

**1** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

<sup>2</sup> Now the earth was<sup>a</sup> formless and empty, darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. <sup>3</sup> Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. <sup>4</sup> God saw that the light was good, and

### TWISTED SCRIPTURE

*Genesis 1:1-2*

The creation story has been interpreted in various ways. Some Christians believe a time gap exists between these verses, with verse 1 referring to God’s initial creative act and verse 2 describing a world plunged into chaos and darkness, possibly through the expulsion of Satan from heaven. Only later in the chapter does God choose to create human beings (v. 27). According to this gap theory, millions of years could have passed between verses 1 and 2.

Using similar logic, those followers of the New Age movement who believe in the existence of the lost continent of Atlantis place the rise and fall of the ancient civilization between verses 1-2. Edgar Cayce, known as the “sleeping prophet,” taught that Atlantis existed 10 million years ago and was inhabited by spirit beings. After a cataclysmic destruction (“chaos and darkness”), the spirits of the inhabitants eventually took up residence in the bodies of Adam and Eve and the others who populated God’s new creation (v. 27). Thus all earthlings originally resided in Atlantis.

God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup> God called the light “day,” and He called the darkness “night.” Evening came, and then morning: the first day.

<sup>6</sup> Then God said, “Let there be an expanse<sup>b</sup> between the waters, separating water from water.” <sup>7</sup> So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above the expanse. And it was so. <sup>8</sup> God called the expanse “sky.”<sup>c</sup> Evening came, and then morning: the second day.

<sup>9</sup> Then God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. <sup>10</sup> God called the dry land “earth,” and He called the gathering of the water “seas.” And God saw that it was good. <sup>11</sup> Then God said, “Let the earth produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit with seed in it, according to their kinds.” And it was so. <sup>12</sup> The earth brought forth vegetation: seed-bearing plants according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it, according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup> Evening came, and then morning: the third day.

<sup>14</sup> Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will serve as signs for festivals and for days and years. <sup>15</sup> They will be lights in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth.” And it was so. <sup>16</sup> God made the two great lights—the greater light to have dominion over the day and the lesser light to have dominion over the night—as well as the stars. <sup>17</sup> God placed them in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the

<sup>a</sup>1:1-2 Or *When God began to create the sky and the earth, the earth was* stamp, beat firmly,” which suggests something like a dome; Jb 37:16-18; Is 40:22. <sup>b</sup>1:6 The Hb word for *expanse* is from a root meaning “to spread out, “1:8 Or “heavens”

1:1 The Hebrew word for “God,” *Elohim*, is grammatically plural, but does not indicate a numerical plural (i.e., “gods”). Hebrew uses the plural form to indicate honor or intensity, sometimes called the “plural of majesty.” The consistent appearance of a singular adjective (Ps 7:9) or verb (Gn 20:6) used with *Elohim* shows that the one God is intended. Where the plural adjective or verb occurs, the context determines whether *Elohim* means the “gods” of the nations (Ex 20:3) or whether the plural agreement is simply due to scribes being

more grammatically precise (Gn 19:13; cp. 1:26-27). From the Israelite standpoint the oneness of the true Deity is never in question. In Dt 6:4 “The LORD,” that is, *Yahweh* the God of Israel, is called “our *Elohim*,” and declared to be “One.”

1:14-18 The lights were “signs” that mark off time periods. They were not to be heeded as astrological signs, correlating heavenly movements with events on earth. The worship of heavenly bodies is condemned (Dt 4:19).

## Are the Days of Genesis to Be Interpreted Literally?

*by Ted Cabal*

This question has stoked controversy among conservative Christians in recent times, but it has proved to be of little interest to theistic evolutionists (those who accept evolution as God's mechanism in creation) and those rejecting Genesis as God's inerrant Word. The debate has been primarily between young- and old-earth creationists, who believe that God literally created the various kinds of living things (as opposed to the common descent of Darwinism). Both sides hold that humans have not descended from other species, and both reject the atheism and macroevolutionary theory of neo-Darwinism.

The two creationist camps, however, differ in interpreting the creation days of Genesis. If the days were consecutive 24-hour periods, and if the earth was created on the first day, then calculations based on biblical genealogies reveal that the earth was created only thousands of years ago. If the days were either of indeterminate length or nonconsecutive, then the Bible does not reveal when the earth was created. Interestingly, both sides agree that the genealogies reveal that Adam and Eve were specially created only thousands of years ago.

Young earth creationists (YCs) interpret the days as 24-hour, consecutive periods for reasons such as the following: (1) The days in Gn 1 are consecutively numbered and comprised of an "evening and morning." (2) Exodus 20:8-11 commands a literal week of six days of work and one day of rest based on God's original creation/rest week. The two weeks would seem, then, to be of equal duration. (3) According to Rm 5:12, "sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin," but old-earth creationism would have animal death entering the world before the sin of Adam and Eve.

Old earth creationists (OCs) argue against 24-hour creation days for reasons such as these: (1) The Hebrew word for "day" (*yom*) is used in different ways in the creation account. For instance, Gn 1:5 refers *yom* only to daytime (daylight), not nighttime. Also, Gn 2:4, literally translated, speaks of "the *yom* that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens." (2) God's rest on the seventh "day" has no evening and morning (Gn 2:2-3), and Heb 4:3-11 portrays this same Sabbath as continuing to the present time. (3) Adam could not have named all the birds and animals in 24 hours according to Gn 2.

Both sides believe they have strong arguments favoring their interpretation and rebutting the other side. And historically, debate regarding biblical interpretation has often led to a clearer understanding of God's Word. But it is also highly debatable whether this issue merits the rancor and division often attending it. Some YCs accuse OCs of compromising the Bible with evolutionary science. Some OCs charge YCs with undermining biblical credibility by generating a false conflict between science and the Scriptures.

Happily, one thing is not debatable among those who believe the Bible: even if the correct interpretation of the creation days is not readily apparent in the present generation, the Bible can be trusted in every way. Debates about biblical interpretations should not be interpreted as the failure of Holy Scripture.



earth,<sup>18</sup> to dominate the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good.<sup>19</sup> Evening came, and then morning: the fourth day.

<sup>20</sup> Then God said, "Let the water swarm with<sup>a</sup> living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky."<sup>21</sup> So God created the large sea-creatures<sup>b</sup> and every living creature that moves and swarms in the water, according to their kinds. [He also created] every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.<sup>22</sup> So God blessed them, "Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the waters of the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth."<sup>23</sup> Evening came, and then morning: the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup> Then God said, "Let the earth produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that crawl, and the wild-life of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so.<sup>25</sup> So God made the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and creatures that crawl on the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, all the earth,<sup>c</sup> and the creatures that crawl<sup>d</sup> on the earth."

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in His own image;  
He created him in the image of God;  
He created them male and female.

<sup>28</sup> God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls<sup>e</sup> on the earth."<sup>29</sup> God also said, "Look, I have given you every seed-bearing plant on the surface of the entire earth, and every tree whose fruit contains seed. This food will be

#### TWISTED SCRIPTURE Genesis 1:27

Modern-day vampires trace their origins to this verse and the mythical figure of Lilith, who was supposedly created before Eve. The legend of Lilith derives from a theory that Genesis has two creation accounts (this verse and 2:7,20-22). The two stories allow for two different women. Lilith does not appear in the Bible (apart from a debatable reference comparing her to a screech owl in the Hb text of Is 34:14). Some rabbinic commentators, however, refer to Lilith as the first created woman, who refused to submit to Adam and fled from the garden. Eve was then created to be Adam's helper. After their expulsion from the garden, Adam reunited for a time with Lilith before finally returning to Eve. Lilith bore Adam a number of children, who became the demons of the Bible. According to kabbalistic legend, after Adam's reconciliation with Eve, Lilith took the title Queen of the Demons and became a murderer of infants and young boys, whom she turned into vampires.

<sup>a</sup>1:20 Lit with swarms of <sup>b</sup>1:21 Or created sea monsters <sup>c</sup>1:26 Syr reads sky, and over every animal of the land <sup>d</sup>1:26 Lit scurry <sup>e</sup>1:28 Lit and all scurrying animals that scurry

1:26-27 "Let Us make . . ." (3:22; 11:7; Is 6:8) does not indicate multiple gods. Such a polytheistic view would be inconsistent with the lofty theology of the chapter and with the singular "His own image" (Gn 1:27; cp. 5:1-2). Ancient theories of the universe's origin typically explained creation as the outcome of either a sexual cohabitation of male and female deities or of a battle between the major deity and some other hostile entity. The Bible uniformly affirms that God is asexual with no corresponding female consort. God made the universe by His authoritative speech, not by battling chaos deities. Genesis 1 was written in part to show that the view of the physical world current at that time (i.e., physical entities representing various deities) was wrong. The cosmos is inanimate and entirely under the control of the one God. Plural and singular forms are

combined in 1:26-27 (cp. "the Spirit of God," v. 2), reflecting God's unity and yet His fullness. Subsequent scriptural revelation develops this further.

Although humans are created in the "image" and "likeness" of God (the terms are essentially synonyms; cp. 5:3), it does not follow that God has a body. "Image" or "likeness" often refers to a physical representation of something that may be non-material. Man was created to serve as God's representative to govern the earth. Since man is God's image-bearer, murder merits the strongest retribution (9:6). The OT prohibits making any material image of God (Ex 20:1-4; Dt 4:16) because God is spirit (Jn 4:24). In Lk 24:39 Jesus explains that a spirit "does not have flesh and bones" (see Is 31:3). Because God is spirit, He is invisible (Jn 1:18; Rm 1:20; Col 1:15; 1 Tm 1:17).

for you,<sup>30</sup> for all the wildlife of the earth, for every bird of the sky, and for every creature that crawls on the earth—everything having the breath of life in it. [I have given] every green plant for food.” And it was so.<sup>31</sup> God saw all that He had made, and it was very good. Evening came, and then morning: the sixth day.

**2** So the heavens and the earth and everything in them<sup>a</sup> were completed.<sup>2</sup> By the seventh<sup>b</sup> day, God completed His work that He had done, and He rested<sup>c</sup> on the seventh day from all His work that He had done.<sup>3</sup> God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, for on it He rested from His work of creation.<sup>d</sup>

### **Man and Woman in the Garden**

<sup>4</sup> These are the records of the heavens and the earth, concerning their creation at the time<sup>e</sup> that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.<sup>5</sup> No shrub of the field had yet [grown] on the land,<sup>f</sup> and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not made it rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground.<sup>6</sup> But water would come out of the ground and water the entire surface of the land.<sup>7</sup> Then the LORD God

### **TWISTED SCRIPTURE Genesis 2:7**

According to modern-day psychics, this “breath of life” enables humans to exhibit supernatural abilities. Most people, however, do not know how to tap into this power. Such a bizarre conclusion cannot be derived from the text. A better interpretation is that the “breath of life” is simply the animating force of the body.

formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being.

<sup>8</sup> The LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there He placed the man He had formed.<sup>9</sup> The LORD God caused to grow out of the ground every tree pleasing in appearance and good for food, including the tree of life in the midst of the garden, as well as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

<sup>10</sup> A river went<sup>g</sup> out from Eden to water the garden. From there it divided and became the source of four rivers.<sup>h</sup> <sup>11</sup> The name of the first is Pishon, which encircles the entire land of the Havilah, where there is gold.

<sup>12</sup> Gold from that land is pure;<sup>i</sup> bdellium<sup>j</sup> and

<sup>a</sup>2:1 Lit and all their host <sup>b</sup>2:2 Sam, LXX, Syr read sixth <sup>c</sup>2:2 Or ceased <sup>d</sup>2:3 Lit work that God created to make <sup>e</sup>2:4 Lit creation on the day <sup>f</sup>2:5 Or earth <sup>g</sup>2:10 Or goes <sup>h</sup>2:10 Lit became four heads <sup>i</sup>2:12 Lit good

<sup>j</sup>2:12 A yellowish, transparent gum resin

2:2-3 “Rested” (Hb *shabat*) does not imply fatigue but means only “ceased” because it is connected to the completion of the work of creation.

2:4-26 Chapter 2 is a second creation account only in the sense that it gives a more detailed accounting, not a contradictory one. While chapter 1 provides a general description, chapter 2 is specific. Twofold accounts were common in ancient theories of creation (e.g., the Babylonian story of Atrahasis). The differences in the order of the creation events are due to the narratives’ respective purposes. The first gives a loosely chronological account, gathering creation events into a discernible pattern to show the symmetry of creation’s purpose. The second is topical, focusing on the sixth day by expanding on the creation and the relationship of the man and woman. Genesis 2 presupposes chapter 1 and does not duplicate all the creation events.

2:7,21-22 The creation of the first man and woman is not myth. The author of the account intends to portray a historical event. The heading “these are the records/family records” (v. 4) occurs 11 times in Gen-

esis to introduce genealogies and historical narratives (e.g., 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:27). The first man (Hb *adam*) is treated in genealogies as a historical individual named “Adam” (5:1; Lk 3:38). Since the name *Adam* means “man(kind),” the author also intends him to represent humanity in general (Gn 3:17-18; cp. Rm 5:12-21). The account of the man and woman’s creation views them as special creations, not merely types of humans. The concept of evolution of humans from lower forms is inconsistent with the author’s purpose in this narrative.

2:10-14 The lack of archaeological evidence for the garden of Eden would not mean that the place existed only in myth. Despite advances in archaeology, what has been discovered of the ancient Near East is only a small percentage of what might one day be found. The two rivers Tigris and Euphrates exist today in modern Iraq. The identities of the Gihon and Pishon are uncertain but may have been local streams or canals. Floods, climatic changes, and land shifts since ancient times may well have brought about significant changes in topography.

## Evolution: Fact or Fantasy?

*by Phillip E. Johnson*

Evolution is a fact only at a very small scale. It is fantasy when it is used to explain how plants and animals came into existence or how human beings supposedly evolved from apelike ancestors. We might summarize the fantasy by saying that, where the theory of evolution is true, it is not very interesting, and where it is most interesting, it is not true.

If “evolution” merely refers to a process of cyclical (back and forth) variation in response to changing environmental conditions, then evolution is a fact that can be observed both in nature and in laboratory experiments.

For example, when a population of insects is sprayed with a deadly chemical like DDT, the most susceptible insects die but the individuals most resistant to the poison survive to breed and leave offspring, which inherit the genes that provide resistance. After many generations of insects have been sprayed, the entire surviving population may be comprised of the DDT-resistant variety, and some new form of insect control will have to be applied. Such changes are not permanent, however, because the resistant mosquitoes are more fit than the others only for as long as the insecticide is applied. When the environment becomes free of the toxic chemical, the insect population tends to revert to what it was before.

A similar effect explains how disease-causing bacteria become resistant to antibiotic drugs like penicillin, which then are no longer as effective in controlling the disease as they formerly were.

Almost all illustrations of “evolution in action” in textbooks or museum exhibits are similar to these examples. They involve no increase in complexity or appearance of new body parts or even permanent change of any kind. Small-scale, reversible population variations of this sort are usually called microevolution, although “adaptive variation” would be a better term.

It is misleading to describe adaptive variation as “evolution,” because the latter term commonly refers also to macroevolution. Macroeolution is the grand story of how life supposedly evolved by purely natural processes from very simple beginnings to become complex, multicelled plants and animals, and eventually human beings, without God’s participation being needed at any step along the way.

Charles Darwin assumed that macroevolution was merely microevolution extended over very long periods of time. Biology textbooks, museums, and television programs still teach people to make the same assumption, so that examples of microevolution are used as proof that complex animals and even human beings evolved from simpler organisms by a similar process.

The primary flaw in the story of macroevolution is that all plants and animals are packed with information—the complicated instructions that coordinate the many processes enabling the body and brain to function. Even Richard Dawkins, the most famous living advocate of Darwin’s theory, admits that every cell in a human body contains more information than all the volumes of an encyclopedia, and every one of us has trillions of cells in his or her body, which have to work together in marvelous harmony.

The greatest weakness of the theory of evolution is that science has not discovered a process that can create all the necessary information, which can be likened



to the software that directs a computer. Without such a demonstrated creative process, evolution is merely a story, because its supposed mechanism can neither be duplicated in a laboratory nor observed in nature.

It is true that there are patterns of similarity among living creatures. For example, humans, apes, mice, worms, and even plants have many similar genes. The important question is not whether there are similarities among all living things but whether those similarities came about through a natural process akin to the observable examples of adaptive variation that we find in textbooks and museum exhibits.

One mistake Christians often make in debating evolution is to take on too many issues at once, rather than starting with the most important problem and solving it first. For example, evolution requires a time scale of many millions of years, while many people understand the Bible to allow for an earth history of only a few thousand years. The evolutionary time scale is debatable, but debating it involves several complex scientific disciplines and distracts attention from the most important defect of the theory of evolution. The only mechanism the evolutionists have is a combination of random variation and natural selection, illustrated by the survival of the insects that happened to be resistant to an insecticide. This Darwinian mechanism has never been shown to be capable of creating new genetic information or new complex body parts such as wings, eyes, or brains. Without a mechanism that can be demonstrated to be capable of the necessary creation, the theory of evolution is just a fantasy with no real scientific basis.

The Bible teaches, "In the beginning God created" and "In the beginning was the Word." A simple way of explaining this basic principle is to say that a divine intelligence existed before anything else and that intelligence was responsible for the origin of life and for the existence of all living things, including human beings. No matter how much time we might allow for evolution to do the necessary creating, the evidence shows that the process would never get started, because all evolution can do is to further minor variations in organisms that are already living, without any change in their basic classification. When the Bible says, "In the beginning God created" (Gn 1:1), it is presenting us with a fact, which we need to know to understand everything else, including what we were created for and how God wants us to live.

The Bible also says that God created men and women in His own image. That, too, is a fact. If it were not true, there would be no science, because no theory of evolution can demonstrate how intelligence came into existence, including the intelligence of misguided people who misuse science to try to explain creation without allowing any role to God.

"In the beginning was the Word." The Bible says it and, properly understood, the evidence of science confirms it. Anyone who says otherwise is peddling fantasy, not fact.

onyx<sup>a</sup> are also there.<sup>13</sup> The name of the second river is Gihon, which encircles the entire land of •Cush.<sup>14</sup> The name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows to the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

<sup>15</sup> The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it.<sup>16</sup> And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree of the garden,<sup>17</sup> but you must not eat<sup>b</sup> from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die.”

<sup>18</sup> Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is like him.”<sup>19</sup> So the LORD God formed out of the ground each wild animal and each bird of the sky, and brought each to the man to see what he would call it. And whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.

<sup>20</sup> The man gave names to all the livestock, to the birds of the sky, and to every wild animal; but for the man<sup>c</sup> no helper was found who was like him.<sup>21</sup> So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to come over the man, and he slept. God took one of his ribs and closed the flesh at that place.<sup>22</sup> Then the LORD God made the rib He had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man.<sup>23</sup> And the man said:

This one, at last, is bone of my bone,  
and flesh of my flesh;

this one will be called woman,  
for she was taken from man.

<sup>24</sup> This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh.<sup>25</sup> Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame.

### **The Temptation and the Fall**

**3** Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You can’t eat from any tree in the garden?’”

<sup>2</sup> The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden.<sup>3</sup> But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, ‘You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.’”

<sup>4</sup> “No! You will not die,” the serpent said to the woman.<sup>5</sup> “In fact, God knows that when<sup>d</sup> you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God,<sup>e</sup> knowing good and evil.”

<sup>6</sup> Then the woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she

TWISTED SCRIPTURE  
Genesis 3:5

**M**ormons believe humans can reach godhood. This verse clearly shows that the idea originated with the serpent and is contrary to God’s revelation (2:17).

<sup>a</sup>2:12 Identity of this precious stone uncertain <sup>b</sup>2:17 Lit eat from it <sup>c</sup>2:20 Or for Adam <sup>d</sup>3:5 Lit on the day <sup>e</sup>3:5 Or gods, or divine beings

2:19 The verb rendered “formed” can also be “had formed” (NIV), which would alleviate the alleged contradiction with the order of animals created before man (1:24-26). Moreover, chapter 2 may be understood as a topical telling, setting the creation of the animals in contrast to the creation of the woman so as to highlight her dignity as fully human.

3:1 While snakes do not speak, this is more than just a folk story explaining why people tend to find them repulsive. The animal’s life is finite and will end in a future destruction (“all the days of your life,” v. 14). Snakes/serpents in ancient times were associated with both life and death, wisdom and evil (Nm 21:6,8; Mt 10:16). Thus they served as effective symbols for wisdom that gives life or for evil that leads to death. Though a literal creature, the serpent in the garden embodied the evil being (Satan) that opposed God and the human couple (see Jb 1-2; Zch 3:1-2; Rm 16:20). The serpent was an unclean

animal (Lv 11:42) and symbolized the enemies of God (Is 14:29; Rv 12:9; 20:2). The snake talked to the woman as would a deceitful opponent.

3:4 The couple did not immediately die physically (cp. 2:17). By God’s grace, their death was postponed till a later time. But their expulsion from the garden (vv. 23-24) shows that the word of God was indeed fulfilled as the immediate consequence of their disobedience. They were cut off from access to the tree of life, which symbolized the source of life (2:9; Rv 2:7; 22:2,14,19). In Israel expulsion from the tabernacle in the camp, such as quarantine (e.g., Lv 13:46), meant that the person was ceremonially dead until he was declared fit again. The human couple’s expulsion signaled their spiritual death (see Eph 2:1). That their physical death occurred is confirmed by the refrain “then he died” in Adam’s genealogy (Gn 5:5). Physical death for humans was the result of disobedience in the garden (Rm 5:12-21; 6:23).

took some of its fruit and ate [it]; she also gave [some] to her husband, [who was] with her, and he ate [it].<sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

### **Sin's Consequences**

<sup>8</sup> Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze,<sup>a</sup> and they hid themselves from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.<sup>9</sup> So the LORD God called out to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

<sup>10</sup> And he said, "I heard You<sup>b</sup> in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid."

<sup>11</sup> Then He asked, "Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree that I had commanded you not to eat from?"

<sup>12</sup> Then the man replied, "The woman You gave to be with me—she gave me [some fruit] from the tree, and I ate."

<sup>13</sup> So the LORD God asked the woman, "What is this you have done?"

And the woman said, "It was the serpent. He deceived me, and I ate."

<sup>14</sup> Then the LORD God said to the serpent:

Because you have done this,  
you are cursed more than any livestock  
and more than any wild animal.

You will move on your belly  
and eat dust all the days of your life.

<sup>15</sup> I will put hostility between you  
and the woman,  
and between your \*seed and her seed.  
He will strike your head,  
and you will strike his heel.

<sup>16</sup> He said to the woman:

I will intensify your labor pains;  
you will bear children in anguish.

### **TWISTED SCRIPTURE** *Genesis 3:15*

Many Pentecostal Oneness sects use this verse to promote the serpent seed theory. William Branham, a faith healing evangelist of the 1940s, taught that Eve's sin in the garden was an illicit sexual affair with the serpent, resulting in her pregnancy. The serpent's seed was Cain and his descendants. Scripture is clear that the first sin was not sexual but rather consisted of Adam's disobedience to God's command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:16-17).

<sup>a</sup>3:8 Lit at the wind of the day <sup>b</sup>3:10 Lit the sound of You

3:8 That God walked is a common figure of speech (anthropomorphism). From the human standpoint, it is not possible to describe God's interaction with people without attributing to Him some of the properties of a human body, such as back or face (Ex 33:11,23), eyes or ears (1 Kg 8:29; Ps 34:15), arm or hands (Ex 3:20; 6:6; Dt 4:34; 33:3; Is 53:1; Heb 1:10; 10:31). God does not have a physical body (see note on 1:26-27), although He can manifest Himself in the form of a man (Gn 18:16-22; 32:30; Ezk 1:26) or even a burning bush (Ex 3:2-4) or a fiery pillar (Ex 13:21-22).

3:9-11 The Bible is full of affirmations of God's unlimited knowledge (see 16:13; Ex 3:7; Jb 12:13; 28:23-24; 36:4; Ps 33:13-15; 139:1-4; Is 46:10; Jr 23:24; Mt 10:29; Ac 15:8; Heb 4:13). Therefore God's questions here are rhetorical; He is not unaware of the couple's location and what had transpired in the garden. The passage describes God as a parent who instructs His children with restoration as His purpose. He did not question the serpent, because He had no plan to redeem the tempter.

3:14 The snake's penalty does not suggest a belief that snakes once walked on legs. The characteristic slither-

ing of the snake was a sufficient symbol of its degradation. Food laws were to prohibit the eating of animals who crawled along the ground, making them abhorrent to Israel (Lv 11:42). The mention of "dust" further symbolized the snake's humiliation for its crime (see Mc 7:17).

3:15 This predicted battle between the serpent and the woman would not be a literal confrontation in the garden. The language is figurative, indicating the life-and-death struggle between the adversary and the human family borne by the woman. Like the word "sheep" in English, the word "seed" in Hebrew is both singular and plural, meaning either descendants without number, taken as a whole, or one particular descendant. The passage incorporates both meanings by referring to the ongoing opposition to the people of God by their enemies and by predicting the rise of a particular seed, Jesus Christ, who will destroy the serpent in the end (Rm 16:20; Rv 12:9-10).

3:16 The woman's penalty was not in bearing children but in the pain attached to giving birth. "Yet he will dominate you" does not warrant the enslavement of



Your desire will be for your husband,  
yet he will dominate you.

<sup>17</sup> And He said to Adam, “Because you listened to your wife’s voice and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘Do not eat from it’:

The ground is cursed because of you.  
You will eat from it by means of  
painful labor<sup>a</sup>  
all the days of your life.

<sup>18</sup> It will produce thorns and thistles  
for you,  
and you will eat the plants of the field.

<sup>19</sup> You will eat bread<sup>b</sup> by the sweat  
of your brow  
until you return to the ground,  
since you were taken from it.  
For you are dust,  
and you will return to dust.”

<sup>20</sup> Adam named his wife Eve<sup>c</sup> because she was the mother of all the living. <sup>21</sup> The LORD God made clothing out of skins for Adam and his wife, and He clothed them.

<sup>22</sup> The LORD God said, “Since man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil, he must not reach out, and also take from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.” <sup>23</sup> So

the LORD God sent him away from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. <sup>24</sup> He drove man out, and east of the garden of Eden He stationed \*cherubim with a flaming, whirling sword to guard the way to the tree of life.

### **Cain Murders Abel**

**4** Adam knew his wife Eve intimately, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain. She said, “I have had a male child with the LORD’s help.”<sup>d</sup> <sup>2</sup> Then she also gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel became a shepherd of a flock, but Cain cultivated the land. <sup>3</sup> In the course of time Cain presented some of the land’s produce as an offering to the LORD. <sup>4</sup> And Abel also presented [an offering]—some of the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions. The LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, <sup>5</sup> but He did not have regard for Cain and his offering. Cain was furious, and he was downcast.<sup>e</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you furious? And why are you downcast?<sup>f</sup> <sup>7</sup> If you do right, won’t you be accepted? But if you do not do right, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must master it.”

<sup>8</sup> Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.”<sup>g</sup> And while they were in

<sup>a</sup>3:17 Lit *it through pain* <sup>b</sup>3:19 Or *food* <sup>c</sup>3:20 Lit *Living*, or *Life* <sup>d</sup>4:1 Lit *the LORD* <sup>e</sup>4:5 Lit *and his face fell* <sup>f</sup>4:6 Lit *why has your face fallen*  
<sup>g</sup>4:8 Sam, LXX, Syr, Vg; MT omits *Let’s go out to the field*

women as chattel. Woman is also created in the image of God and has the honored role of giving birth by which the blessing for all humanity is realized (1:26-28). The Lord’s pronouncement predicts the future rivalry between the sexes for dominance, a rivalry resulting from the sinful condition of the man and woman. These words are not an exhortation directed to the man to dominate his wife. Hebrew law recognized the vulnerability of women and required special deference to them (Ex 22:22; Dt 25:5-10). The NT explicitly commands husbands to love and honor their wives (Eph 5:25; Col 3:19; 1 Pt 3:7), and Christian husbands and wives observe their spiritual equality (Gl 3:28) while carrying out their respective God-given roles.

3:20 Although skeptics find it absurd that Eve “was the mother of all the living,” the meaning of her name makes sense in this passage. Her husband recognized that she was the source of the “seed” (v. 15) that would eventually defeat the serpent and restore life. She was the first woman to bear children (4:1), and Adam showed faith in God’s promise that she would bear more in the future.

3:22 God’s admission that the man “has become like one of Us” does not indicate that the serpent’s suggestion that God was insecure about His position was correct. God was not threatened by the man’s wisdom when He expelled him from the garden, but it was necessary to prohibit the couple’s access to the tree of life or the penalty of death for disobedience could not be carried out. Although the human couple would die, it was ultimately merciful to deny them the tree; otherwise they would live forever in a sinful and painful world. God graciously provided for their new environment outside the garden (v. 21), and ultimately for their eternal salvation through the promised “seed.” For the plural “Us,” see note on 1:26-27.

4:4-5 God preferred Abel’s offering not because He liked meat more than vegetables or shepherds more than farmers, but because Abel’s offering was made in faith (Heb 11:4). He offered the best of his flock (“the firstborn”), and Cain offered only “some” of his produce (Gn 4:3; cp. Ex 23:19; Lv 2:14).

the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

<sup>9</sup> Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?”

“I don’t know,” he replied. “Am I my brother’s guardian?”

<sup>10</sup> Then He said, “What have you done? Your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground! <sup>11</sup> So now you are cursed [with alienation] from the ground that opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood you have shed.<sup>a</sup> <sup>12</sup> If you work the land, it will never again give you its yield. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.”

<sup>13</sup> But Cain answered the LORD, “My punishment<sup>b</sup> is too great to bear! <sup>14</sup> Since You are banishing me today from the soil, and I must hide myself from Your presence and become a restless wanderer on the earth, whoever finds me will kill me.”

<sup>15</sup> Then the LORD replied to him, “In that case,<sup>c</sup> whoever kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over.”<sup>d</sup> And He placed a mark on Cain so that whoever found him would not kill him. <sup>16</sup> Then Cain went out from the LORD’s presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

## The Line of Cain

<sup>17</sup> Cain knew his wife intimately, and she conceived and gave birth to Enoch. Then Cain became the builder of a city, and he named the city Enoch after his son. <sup>18</sup> Irad was born to Enoch, Irad fathered Mehujael, Mehujael fathered Methushael, and Methushael fathered Lamech. <sup>19</sup> Lamech took two wives for himself, one named Adah and the other named Zillah. <sup>20</sup> Adah bore Jabal;

TWISTED SCRIPTURE  
Genesis 4:19

Mormons cite this verse and their own scriptures (*Doctrines and Covenants*, section 132) in order to justify polygamy. Polygamy, however, came into existence only after the fall in the garden. The creation mandate directs that a man shall be joined to one wife (2:24). Other verses that teach monogamy include Pr 5:18-19; Mal 2:14-15; Mk 10:2-8; 1 Co 7:2,10; 1 Tm 3:2,12; and Ti 1:6. While there are examples of polygamy in the OT (2 Sm 5:13; 1 Kg 11:3), they did not receive God’s approval. Instead God, in His mercy, issued laws to protect the many wives and children of polygamists.

<sup>a</sup>4:11 Lit blood from your hand <sup>b</sup>4:13 Or sin <sup>c</sup>4:15 LXX, Syr, Vg read Not so! <sup>d</sup>4:15 Or suffer severely

4:12,16-17 That Cain founded a city does not contradict the Lord’s declaration that Cain will be a “restless wanderer.” “Nod” sounds similar to the word “wanderer” (Hb *nad*), creating a wordplay between the punishment of wandering and the region where he roamed. The point of the curse is that Cain could no longer live a settled life as a farmer. Therefore he developed the first urban center “east of,” that is, no longer affiliated with, his parents and their descendants.

4:15 Although the only other humans mentioned thus far are his parents, Cain’s fear of retaliation for the murder of Abel is understandable. Adam fathered many children during his 930 years (5:4-5), producing future generations that could exact revenge. That God marked to safeguard Cain does not contradict the divine provision of capital punishment (9:6). By this sign God declares that the taking of life is His prerogative, in contrast to Cain’s presumptuous murder of Abel. With the threatening development of widespread violence, the Lord instituted capital punishment as a societal obligation to restrict murder (6:11-12; 8:21).

4:17 The age-old question, Who was Cain’s wife?, has raised the specter that Cain committed incest, which was prohibited (Lv 18:6-18). But the Mosaic laws were

not given until much later, and even the implied condemnations of incest in Genesis (Lot in 19:30-38; Reuben in 35:22; 49:3-4) relate to a time later than that of Cain and his siblings.

4:19,23 The Bible nowhere explicitly forbids polygamy, and Lamech is the first of many polygamists in the OT, including favored patriarchs and kings (e.g., 29:21-30; 1 Sm 27:3). We must not assume, however, that the absence of explicit prohibition entails divine approval. First, God’s mind and will may also be expressed implicitly through story and description. Here Lamech’s arrogant vengefulness is clear, showing him to be a true descendant of the murderer Cain. His practice of polygamy, then, is to be understood as typical of the wicked whose willful pride seeks to be satisfied by the multiplication of wives or other symbols of status and acts of self-indulgence (Gn 26:34; 28:9; 36:2; Dt 17:17). Second, God’s mind and will can be gauged from positive statements like Gn 2:21-25, which mandates the divine pattern of monogamous marriage (see Mal 2:14,16; Mt 19:4-6). Plural marriage is not, and never has been, biblical marriage. When polygamy occurred, it had predictably disastrous results for the family (e.g., 2 Sm 13:4-37). We may not fully understand why God did not denounce Abraham, Jacob, David and others when they