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not science vs. the Bible.*

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DOES GOD EXIST?

March/April 2011
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**A nonprofit effort
to convince mankind
that God is real and
the Bible is His Word.**

The
Wisdom of
Newness

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DATA ON SUN. The Sun's mass is two octillion tons—that is 27 zeros after the two. The earth's mass is six octillion grams (remember there are 453.6 grams in a pound, and 2,000 pounds in a ton). Every second the Sun loses four million tons of mass as it is converted to energy and radiated into space. Source: *Astronomy*, October, 2009, page 16.

HOMOSEXUALITY IS A DESTRUCTIVE LIFESTYLE. The issue of homosexuality will always be with us. We have tried to state the problems with homosexuality in this journal saying it is a choice and that humans are not robotically programmed to any behavior. We have also pointed out that homophobic behavior is strongly condemned by scriptures and that we are to love and support everyone, including those whose lifestyles we do not embrace. A collection of facts on homosexual behavior is available from <http://www.familyresearchinst.org/2009/02/getting-the-facts-same-sex-marriage/>. Here are some of the facts:

1. At any given time less than a third of gays and roughly half of lesbians are living with a lover because the relationships are so short.
2. In married heterosexual couples the violence rate during a one year period is 2 percent in males and 3.2 percent in females. Studies have shown that in homosexuals the rate of violence runs as high as 39 percent in gays and 48 percent in lesbians.
3. Life expectancy in gays is significantly lower than in the heterosexual community. The AIDS picture is changing with advances in medicine, so numbers here are misleading as far as death is concerned, but 82 percent of those who are HIV positive in the U.S. contracted the virus in a homosexual relationship.

There is no question about whether the Bible discourages homosexual relationships. We have pointed out in previous columns that sexual abuse and the disposal of hormonal waste is a factor in people being gay. In our opinion homosexuality is a destructive lifestyle produced by the abuse that people have sustained in their childhoods and possibly environmental contamination with hormonal wastes. Those who have had this tendency pushed upon them need our love, compassion, and support as they battle to make good choices.

LOOKING BACK BOOK. In our last issue we announced the latest book by John Clayton entitled *Looking Back*. It is a history of how God used John and Phyllis Clayton from the start of their work in 1968 when they desired to help young people with faith problems. It follows their story until May 2008 when Phyllis finished her journey in this life. The book can be ordered online at doesgodexist.tv, by calling 574-514-1400, or by mailing a check for \$3.00 to John Clayton at 1555 Echo Valley Dr., Niles MI 49120.

or anything holy, speaking in a language the possessed person doesn't know and abnormal displays of strength." We would suggest that this is a misunderstanding of demonology and possession, and that in fact demon possession of the kind described in the Bible does not happen today. If you are interested in why we think that, you can go to our video website at www.doesgodexist.tv and watch program number 23.

NEW OCEAN NUMBERS. The Census of Marine Life reports in their October 2010 summary of their study that there are roughly 250,000 species of living things in the ocean. They also state that the number of species yet undiscovered is estimated to be over a million and could be in the hundreds of millions. This includes microbes, and to give you a handle on size, a cubic centimeter of sea water will usually have roughly a million bacterial cells in it. If you added up their total weight it would be more than 240 billion African elephants.

USE OF ALLAH BY CHRISTIANS DECRIED. In January 2010 there was an Associated Press article by Vijay Joshi in the news about violence in Malaysia. Muslims firebombed three churches because of a court decision allowing Christians to translate "God" as "Allah." The Muslims contend that "Allah is only for us," and the trouble started when Malay language Bibles translated "God" as "Allah." This is interesting because Mizrahi Jews, Bahá'ís, Eastern Orthodox Christians, and Eastern Catholic Christians also use this Arabic word for God. The term "Allah" is derived from a contraction of the Arabic definite article *al-* (the) and *'il a h* (deity, god) to *al-lah* meaning "the (sole) deity, God". The word "Allah" was used by pagan Meccans as a reference to the creator deity in pre-Islamic Arabia. Allah was one of many gods who was said to be the creator and the giver of rain. He was said to be have had sons and daughters. The Hebrew words *Elohim*, *Yahweh*, and *Adonai* refer to functions of God and are biblical. *Elohim* refers to the power and creativity of God. *Yahweh* refers to God's holiness and the promises of redemption. *Adonai* refers to the ruler aspect of God. In our modern world, there are cultural and political reasons not to use "Allah" in referring to the God of the Bible, and the history of the word also makes it unwise.

ABSTINENCE SEX EDUCATION. There has been a lot of information in the media trying to prove that abstinence education does not work when it comes to teenagers and sex. A study by the *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine* shows that abstinence education programs proved more effective in encouraging teens to delay having sex than comprehensive school programs that include information about safe sex and contraceptive options. Source: *Time*, February 15, 2010.

The Wisdom of Newness



"Behold, I make all things new."
Revelation 21:5

This passage (to the left) comes toward the end of the biblical message when God describes to us what our ultimate position will be if we live as God has called us to live. Notice how many times the word "new" is used in this section of the Bible. "Then I saw a new heaven and

a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, ... I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem ..." (Revelation 21:1-2, NIV). This ultimate newness is the last of a large number of biblical references to things God brings to mankind as new and beneficial to us. All of this newness is in the face of a creation that is wearing "out like a garment" (see Hebrews 1:11; Isaiah 34:4), and is in conformity to the second law of thermodynamics which states that in any closed system things move toward a state of disorder.

Human religions and philosophies tend to bring people to a belief that is destructive, pessimistic, and negative in nature, while the Christian system continuously brings man a perspective that is positive, new, and uplifting.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Bible on my desk has the following title at the start of the second section: "The New Testament of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." One of the major problems of atheists and many general readers of the Bible is that they do not understand the "newness" of the New Testament. God did a remarkable thing in the establishment of the "New



2 Corinthians 5:17

Both photos: Roland Earnst

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Covenant” with man. It was a very difficult transition for the people of the first century to make. Throughout the letters of the New Testament we see repeated references to this problem. The whole book of Galatians deals with this, and Paul continuously expresses amazement at how quickly the Galatians veered away from the new freedom of Christianity and went back to the impossible enslavement of the law of the past (see Galatians 1:6; 3:1–4, 11–14; 6:15). In Colossians 2:8–17 Paul makes additional references to this issue and tells his readers that Jesus nailed the old ordinances to His cross.

A further problem for the first century searchers was the unity and lack of status emphasized by the teachings of the Christian system. This causes Paul to say, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28, KJV). The newness of the New Testament was shocking and difficult to accept, but any thinking person can see the uniqueness and positive effect on those who will follow it. What a tragedy it is that in the first century and even today there are those who would revert to old and destructive practices that may have served a purpose in the primitive society of 3,000 or more years ago, but clearly need replacement in the age of modern man.

THE NEWNESS OF MARRIAGE

In Genesis 2:24 and Ephesians 5:31 we see that God’s initial concept of marriage was that two people, a man and a woman, would become



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one flesh. In Matthew 19:4–6 Jesus confirms that new relationship again in the framework of God having designed the newness that man should not pollute (separate, alter, or adulterate). Marriage is a huge adjustment in one’s life, but the bottom line is that this adjustment is due to the newness of the relationship. Sharing

every aspect of your life is a new experience. It is a radical idea for a man to love a woman as himself (Ephesians 5:28) and be willing to give himself for her, but this is part of the new relationship marriage brings.

First Corinthians 7:4 brings us to another concept of the newness of the marriage relationship in that men and women relinquish control of their own body in sexual relationships. Marriage is all about

guarantee an average of 25 by choosing people in apologetics and who have strong educational backgrounds. When the Pew Forum “did a more stringent analysis, correcting for respondents’ education and income . . . there was no significant difference between believers and nonbelievers.” It is the same old story that “figures don’t lie, but liars figure.” Source: *Scientific American*, December 2010, page 31.

FRAUD AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH. *Time* magazine reported in their November 29, 2010 issue (page 17) that 788 English language science papers have been retracted since the year 2000, and 30 percent of those—some 236 papers—were retracted because of fraud. The rest were retracted because of errors. Our society seems to feel that scientific research is beyond corruption or error, but anything done by humans will have error and fraud involved in it, and learning not to trust the fallible work of humans is an important survival skill in all areas of life.

THE SCIENCE OF MARIJUANA. Even though marijuana is illegal by federal law, 13 states have established programs for its use, and 369,634 people are users. Previous surveys have shown that 16.7 million people use marijuana at least once a month in this country. Because it has been shown to relieve nausea and pain, the medicinal use of this drug has accelerated its acceptance. The facts are that there are two agents in marijuana that affect humans. One is tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and the other is cannabidiol (CBD). THC leads to the intoxicating component of pot and CBD gives the drug its sedating power. THC produces paranoia and hallucinations and diminishes short term memory. Acetaldehyde is present in marijuana just as it is in tobacco and causes damage to the DNA and can initiate cancer. Marijuana is addictive, but withdrawal does not cause severe withdrawal symptoms. The question is whether the benefits of THC and CBD can be obtained without smoking a joint, and whether legalization will solve the problems of drug trafficking. We would suggest that just like alcohol, marijuana should not be condoned as a recreational drug, and its beneficial uses should be researched more fully before legalization is implemented. Source: *Time*, November 22, 2010, page 30.

CATHOLIC CHURCH CALLS FOR MORE EXORCISMS. On January 29, 1999, the Vatican released a book titled *Of Exorcisms and Supplications* and in November 2010, a conference was held in Baltimore in which some 50 bishops and 60 priests were trained in how to conduct the liturgical rite. This was done because of “a shortage of priests who can perform the rite.” Signs of demonic possession according to the Catholic Church, are “a violent reaction to holy water

to answer. No attention was paid in the interview to the positive things taught in the Bible or the answers to these alleged discrepancies. Young people hit these issues every day, and the failure of churches to address these struggles continues to be an eroding force on faith among our youth.

“CHRISTIAN” CITIES. Barna Research studies show that 98 percent of the residents of Shreveport, Louisiana, describe themselves as “Christian” making it the most Christian city in the country. Portland Maine, is the most atheistic with 19 percent describing themselves as atheist or agnostic. The least Christian city in the U.S. was San Francisco with 68 percent describing themselves as Christian. These numbers do not mean a lot because the meaning of the word “Christian” is very ambiguous. I have a number of atheist friends who call themselves Christian because of what they are not — not Muslim, not Hindu, etc. Source: *Christianity Today*, December 2010, page 13.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC ON DAVID AND SOLOMON. The December 2010 issue of *National Geographic* magazine (page 67) contains an interesting analysis of the archeological evidence for the biblical account of David and Solomon. The author, Robert Draper, interviewed the major archeologists studying the ruins throughout the Middle East, and asked for their assessment of what the evidence shows. In our May/June 2010 issue (page 15) we had an article by Dr. Lydia Evdoxiadi Verniory on the archeological claims about the historicity of the Bible, and this *National Geographic* article shows how true Dr. Verniory’s statements are. This article shows how far apart the experts are, and sheds some interesting light on the conditions that existed during the time of the biblical characters we read about in the Bible. Those with an interest in archeology and the Bible will find this *National Geographic* article to be interesting reading.

BIAS REVEALED IN RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE STUDY. In September 2010 a study was released showing that atheists/agnostics know more about religion than believers do. We had a comment about that study in our January/February 2011 “News and Notes.” As researchers have looked at the study conducted by “The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life,” they have found the numbers are misleading. The study gave 3,412 people a series of 32 basic questions about religion. Atheists/agnostics got an average of 20.9 right while the average of religious groups was 16 with some as low as 11. We now know that the atheist/agnostic group was very small, only 212 people, and the sample was drawn from well-educated groups with many of them involved in organized atheism. If someone were to ask me to get 212 people who believe in God to take the test I can

newness, and working to retain that newness is a challenge that can only be met when both partners are following God’s plan for how they should conduct themselves in the new relationship they share.

THE NEW BEGINNING OF BAPTISM AND CONVERSION

I can still remember the incredible joy I felt as I came out of the waters of baptism with the realization I was beginning a new life. I had lived a destructive life up until that time as an immoral, militant, atheistic user and abuser of others. I had reaped the consequences of that lifestyle and had even been driven to the point of being willing to consider suicide. Second Corinthians 5:17 (KJV) made it clear that if I became a Christian I was “a new creature: old things are passed away; ... all things are become new.” Colossians 3:9, 10 (KJV) tells us we “put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.” I knew that when people asked about the conversion process they were told, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all who are afar off, ...” (Acts 2:38, 39, KJV). I not only could begin a new life with all of the past left behind, but God would help me to live in a new way.



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People “raised in the Church” may not appreciate the promise and scope of baptism as much as those of us who have been totally alienated from God. One of the joys of prison work is to see a man or woman whose life has been pregnant with sin go under the waters of baptism and emerge a new creature. Romans 6:3–7 expresses this beautiful new beginning this way, “Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin — because anyone who has died has been freed from sin” (NIV).

ETERNAL NEWNESS

Revelation 21:5 — “He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’” This is preceded in verse 1 with John’s



Both photos: Roland Earnst

statement that he “saw a new heaven and a new earth ... ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death

or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (Revelation 21:1–4, NIV).

It is impossible for us living in the physical world to comprehend heaven. All we can really comprehend is that it will be new, wonderful, eternal, and free of everything that is bad in the present world. In His wisdom, God has provided some beautiful new beginnings in life and man can rejoice in that fact. Each day we awake to a new beginning of what can be a wonderful start of new work and new blessings. We can start a new year with new resolutions and a clean, new calendar. If we will obey God and access the blessings He offers, we can leave our old lives of sin behind and walk in newness of life.



At the end of that walk we will enter eternal newness “... which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:8, NIV).

—John N. Clayton

COST: No money is paid to **Does God Exist?**, to your guides, or to John Clayton. The only cost is for the items described above. Prices per person are singles: \$898, doubles: \$797, three or four to a room: \$549. Trip insurance is available. To reserve space or for more information contact: Mark Story at QueensLanderTours (Mark@QLTours.com) phone 877-865-6711 or John Clayton (jncdge@aol.com) phone 269-687-9426.

ALIEN LIFE AND NASA. The tabloids and some mainstream media have been extolling an announcement by the space agency that “Alien Life Forms Have Been Discovered.” As usual, the glitzy headline belies what is actually going on and what it means. A study at Mono Lake in California has found a bacterium that can grow in arsenic-rich environments if phosphorous is present. Robert Sawyer who was on the team that studied the bacterium says “We have found a different life form that uses arsenic in its basic DNA structure.” Arsenic is element number 33 in the periodic chart which is in group V along with nitrogen, phosphorous, and antimony. These elements are very active chemically and bond strongly with nearly every element in the periodic chart. Arsenic trioxide is quickly formed when arsenic is heated in air for example. The fact that living things can use these group V materials in the DNA helix is remarkable, but it is not a new alien life form. No one expects to run into arsenic people on some phosphorous planet. It is a remarkable thing that DNA is so well designed that it can function with a wide variety of chemical environments — arsenic and phosphorous complexes mimicking nitrogen phosphorous structures apparently being one. We will have more for you as more data becomes available.

MORE ATHEIST BILLBOARDS IN HOLIDAY SEASON.

A billboard near the Lincoln Tunnel in New Jersey over the holiday season, had a manger scene with the block letters “You know it’s a myth—This Season Celebrate Reason.”

The billboard cost \$20,000 and was paid for by American Atheists. The billboard company (Lamar Billboards) is the same organization that posted the “You can be good without God” signs last year. However, they refused to put up billboards of a political nature during the last election because “we think it is misleading ...” There were four competing atheist groups that ran ads over the holidays according to *The New York Times*, this being the first one displayed.

Another atheist coup was an *ABC World News* program on November 9, 2010, with Diane Sawyer in which she interviewed Baptist pastors who no longer believed in God. The interview revolved mostly around discrepancies these pastors found in the Bible, all of which were things we have discussed in this journal and are relatively easy

News and Notes

ANNOUNCING: DOES GOD EXIST? 2011 SUMMER SEMINAR IN THE CANYONLANDS SEPTEMBER 18-23

PURPOSE: To help Christians understand the history of the earth as seen in the rock record, and how that history correlates with a literal understanding of the Bible.

WHERE: Leave from Flagstaff, AZ, and visit Sunset Crater, Grand Canyon, Bryce Canyon, Zion National Park, Lake Powell, Meteor Crater, Painted Desert, and Petrified Forest.



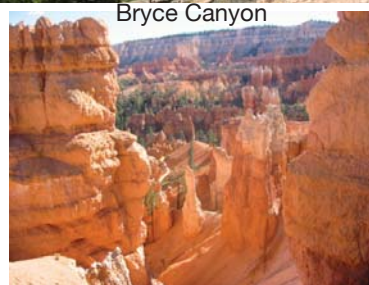
Zion Canyon



Lake Powell Boat Ride



Grand Canyon



Bryce Canyon

PARTICIPANTS: Anyone age eight or older who is willing to participate in lectures, devotionals, studies, and wholesome activity. No alcohol or smoking, please.

INCLUDED: Bus transportation, motels, field guides, boat trip, entry fees, breakfasts Tuesday–Friday. **NOT INCLUDED:** Other meals, gratuities, souvenirs, transportation to and from Flagstaff, Sunday or Friday motels.

DOES GOD MICROMANAGE?

My wife and I have several theological debates we engage in on a fairly regular basis. One of those debates is over the degree to which God acts in the affairs of humans. We recently had an event which set off the debate again. My rowboat had a very old set of oars that had actually belonged to my father. One of the oars had split so that the blade consisted of two sections (see picture). My wife complained bitterly that the oar was an eye-sore and that we could afford a new one. I argued that the oar worked okay, that no one would steal the oar as it was, and there was no reason to buy a new one. My wife ended the argument by saying she was going to pray about it. I halfway thought the oar might disappear mysteriously sometime, but the debate ended—temporarily.



Both photos: Roland Earnst

In early July of 2010 we had a severe weather incident that took down trees, caused the power to go off for five days, and generally created chaos in our lives. When the dust settled and things were getting back to normal, I went down to bail out the boat. I could not believe what I saw. A large tree limb had fallen across the boat. It landed across the oar in question and broke it into two sections (see picture). My wife maintains that this is proof that God answers all our prayers and cares about even such mundane things as a functionally challenged oar. “If God knows the number of hairs on your head (Matthew 10:30) He knows you need a new oar and He takes care of it,” she says. This is further followed by all the passages where Jesus tells us to seek, ask, etc., and that our requests will be given to us (see Luke 11:9–10; John 15:7). My response to all of this is that it is not a question of what God knows, but how God functions. My response to the fact that the oar she prayed about was the one shattered is that it was a serendipitous accident and God does not micromanage our lives that way. I am fully aware, however, that my atheist friends answer my claims of answered prayers in the same way, and the broken oar continues to remind me that my wife’s faith in God’s action in our lives is far more spiritual in nature than are mine.



The reality of this discussion is that this is a very general question that has implications in all aspects of apologetics. Did God micromanage the creation process?

Genesis 1:1 simply states that God created the *shamayim* (heaven) and the *erets* (earth). That means God created everything—what you see when you look up and what you see when you look down. Nowhere in the Genesis account does it address the methods God used in doing this. Some will say “God spoke it into existence” but God’s sound waves did not do the creating and the description in Genesis indicates very specific creative acts.

Through quantum mechanics the scientific evidence continues to grow to support the fact that even quarks, neutrinos, mesons, and other subatomic particles were used in a method to produce the physical mass particles our classical physics laws describe—electrons, protons, neutrons, etc. Scientists are close to being able to duplicate some of these processes.

In a similar way, we can see the record of the creation of the natural resources we are dependent on in the rocks of the earth. God



Roland Earnst

could miraculously “zap” oil, coal, and gas into the earth but the evidence is that He did not. He established a natural process that has, and still does produce these resources. Once again we are duplicating some of these methods to address our energy needs. The wisdom and intelligence involved in designing an ecosystem that could produce the resources

needed to sustain human life and the environment humans would need for thousands of years is incredible. The fact that man has always had enough energy sources to move him to the next energy source is also remarkable. We have had just enough wood to allow us to move to fossil fuels, just enough fossil fuels to move us to nuclear fuels. We have not always done this smoothly, as greed and politics have muddied the transition, but the resources and their great quantities show God’s wisdom, power, and design.

The subject of evolution also reflects God’s technique of not micromanaging life itself. The physical world in which life exists is necessarily a world of constant change. Weather systems are necessary to bring water to widely divergent latitudes. Diastrophism (folding and faulting) in the earth’s crust must happen to recycle necessary elements and raise ground eroded by running water. Natural cycles

SENSATIONAL SUCKER

“Sensational Sucker” is the title of a research article by Frank W. Grasso of Brooklyn College in *Scientific American* (October 2010, page 78). Dr.



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Grasso mentions in the article that an untrained person would look at an octopus sucker on its tentacles and think it is just a suction cup like we use to attach things to windows. It is far more complex

than that, and Dr. Grasso has been studying the octopus with the hope of learning some mechanisms of control and behavior. It has been known for a long time that the octopus is a very intelligent animal, and learns very quickly. It turns out their tentacles and suction cups are also remarkable pieces of equipment.

The sucker of an octopus has two chambers. When the octopus finds something it can eat, like a clam, the muscles of the outer chamber reshape the sucker to conform to the shell surface making a seal. The muscles of the inner chamber then contract making a negative pressure which increases the sucker’s grip. There are muscles which enable the octopus to rotate the shell without breaking the seal.

In addition to the muscle structure there is an elaborate electrical system which connects to the edges of the surfaces and allows the animal to taste what it has caught. The sucker essentially has a small brain which enables the animal to sense what it is eating. The suckers are connected to each other, so they can pass an object from one sucker to the next without the brain of the animal being involved.

When you look at an octopus you would not believe that it has a large brain and is very sophisticated. As we learn more about them we are realizing they are not only intelligent animals, but that they have very complex bodies. Their suction cups are just one of many things we see in nature that speak of the design God has built into animals to enable them to survive.

DANDY DESIGNS

THE HAMMERHEAD SCHNOZ

One of the most interesting animals in the sea is the hammerhead shark. Why should such an awkward looking head be present on a fish that depends on eating other fish for its survival? Those opposed to the notion that God has designed living things have long ridiculed this odd shape as being a proof that there is no intelligent design in living things maintaining that it was not a good shape for swimming rapidly through the water. It is almost a universal truth that when you see something in an animal in nature that does not make sense, it is because you do not have a full awareness of all of the factors that are involved in the animal's survival. This certainly has been shown to be true in the hammerhead's situation.



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Dr. Jayne Gardiner at the University of South Florida has headed up a study to learn more about how the hammerhead functions. It turns out that the nostrils of the shark are located at the ends of the flat areas of the shark's head. That means that when the odor of a food source comes to the shark it will come to the nostrils at different times. If the right nostril gets the smell a half second before the left nostril, the shark will turn to the right towards the source of the smell. If there is no delay or a very long delay between when the two nostrils get the smell, the shark will not change its direction. You might call it "stereo smelling."

The use of smell instead of sight or motion vibrations should be obvious. Muddy water, waves crashing, or any number of other distractions will not interfere with the hammerhead finding its food. It is an eloquently designed system with great sensitivity that involves not only the sensory organs at the ends of the hammer head section of the shark's body, but also the brain to interpret and direct the use of the information the sensory organs give.

Source: *National Wildlife*, October/November 2010, page 10.

occur in the sun and the sun and moon have celestial effects on the earth such as in tides in the ocean.

For living things to exist in this physical world of change, life itself must have the capacity to change. Our current experience with global warming is giving us a chance to see a relatively rapid change in the physical world and how life adapts to this change or does not adapt and becomes extinct. Global warming and cooling are a fact of the physical world (not solely caused by man), and the design of life shows us that God has created life with built-in abilities to change. God does not "zap" new life forms into existence each time such change is mandated by a new ecosystem.

The place where this discussion becomes difficult for most of us is in our own personal lives. Why do I have to deal with cancer, diabetes, birth defects, and natural disasters like earthquakes? Let us first of all point out that things like war, pollution, politics, slavery, murder, poverty, and religion are not included in this discussion for a reason. Man is a free moral agent and for sentient beings to inflict pain on their fellow sentient beings is a different issue, which we have discussed previously in this journal. God's purpose in creating man is the fundamental issue in why sentient beings do these things and that is a separate concern we have addressed before.

While we are not dealing with mankind's inhumanity to man in this discussion, that topic does necessarily get involved with God's role in the issues we are discussing. If being a Christian absolved a person from cancer, birth defects, and other diseases, people would be flocking to Christ every time they had a crisis and leaving Christ every time the crisis was over. God never intended for obedience to Him to be an escape mechanism. God wants love to be the basis of our relationship to Him and each other. It is also important to understand



Roland Earnst



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that man has had a role in many of the things the media likes to refer to as "acts of God." There is no question that much of cancer and birth defects has been caused by man-generated pollution. Much of the suffering associated with earthquakes and hurricanes is due to selfishness and greed on the part of contractors and politicians.

The purpose of this essay is to promote thinking about God's role in a managerial way. My son was born blind, mentally challenged, afflicted with cerebral palsy and muscular dystrophy. God did not cause or instantly create these problems, nor did God pick my wife and me to be the parents of a child with multiple birth defects. My first wife was not an insulin-dependent diabetic for sixty years because God decided some divine purpose could be served by inflicting her with this difficult disease that radically affected our whole family and ultimately caused her death. God does not micromanage our lives or the difficulties that come upon us.

This does not mean that God has no plan for each of us, nor does it mean that God cannot be approached for whatever concerns we might have. Paul was identified as a "chosen vessel" in Acts 9:15. Peter was told by Jesus what would happen to him later in life in John 21:18, 19. Paul indicated that he could choose to reject the purpose God had for him and be lost (1 Corinthians 9:27). There are those times when God seems to be surprised by what man does. The story of Jonah and the king of Ninevah is a classic example, when God is surprised by the response of the king and his people and modifies what He was going to allow to happen (see Jonah 3:5–10).

Some things happen in life because Satan is alive and well on planet Earth. There are times in the Bible when reference to this fact is made directly (see Job 1–2; Luke 4:1–13; Acts 5:3). The physical world can bring needs upon us that are just a part of being in the physical world. Paul had a "thorn in the flesh" that impeded him and he even asked God repeatedly to get involved in removing it and God refused (2 Corinthians 12:7). Christians can be in the wrong place at the wrong time and suffer because of it (see Acts 17:5–9).

God has not created man to be in paradise now in this physical world. We are not mindless robots or puppets, nor do we float above the realities of the physical world aloof from all that happens.

If all of this is true, why do we pray? The first point that needs to be made here is that I am not saying God cannot act in a direct, miraculous way. God can do anything God wants to do, and I know from scripture that is true.

When Jesus came to the tomb of Lazarus in John 11 He wept (verse 35) at the pain He saw losing a loved one brings. Then He stepped in and restored life to Lazarus. That was a unique situation used for a specific purpose (see John 12:9–11). My wife, friends, family, and I prayed



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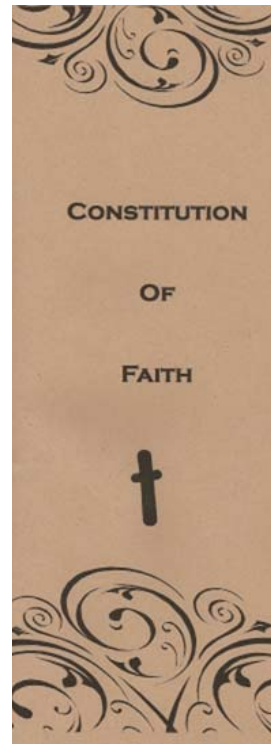
The author's own views raise a few issues in the latter parts of the book where the implications for the Church are discussed. Overall however, the book does a good job of explaining and dissecting the dispensational millennial movement.

We recommend this book to a biblically literate reader who wants to understand the left behind movement and dispensational millennialism. Any biblical understandings outside of that narrow focus will not be found.

Constitution of Faith

by LaVern Vivio

www.constitutionoffaith.com, 2010, 39 pages, \$5.00 (paperback), no ISBN



LaVern Vivio is well known in the Nashville, Tennessee, area as a creative, intelligent voice for God and for the credibility of the Christian system. She shares the concern of many people that the United States Constitution is being twisted and distorted to be an atheist document. Vivio's contention is that God's blessings on the United States has been at least in part enjoyed because of a desire of the founding fathers to be united in an allegiance to God. With that in mind she has written an apologetic for the Christian system in the form of the constitution.

This booklet is divided into a Preamble and four Articles and an Amendment on grace. The four Articles are The Creator, The Fall, The Savior, and The Church. Each of those four areas are supported by quotes from others who have explored the evidence in these subject areas including Lee Strobel, Josh McDowell, Bruce Shelley, Bodie and Brock Thoene, Penn Jillett, and John Clayton. The booklet is 4-by-12 inches so it is not a typical booklet in appearance or form. It is a one shot apologetic, and would be useful in a variety of evangelistic uses.

ADDRESS CHANGE? To remain on our mailing list, please give us both your old and new addresses with both zip codes at least six to eight weeks before the move, if at all possible. Thanks!



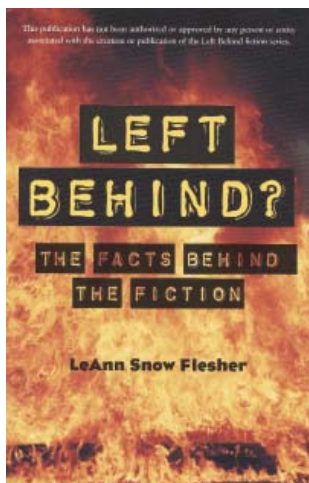


The books that are reviewed in the Book Review section are not available through us, but can be obtained from a local bookstore or through many online bookstores.

Left Behind? The Facts Behind the Fiction

by LeAnn Snow Flesher,

Judson Press, 2006, 163 pages, \$14.00 (paperback), ISBN-10: 0-8170-1490-X



We have had a number of articles in this journal discussing the impact of dispensational millennialism on apologetic issues. A large number of protestant denominations teach that the history of the earth is made up of roughly six 1,000-year dispensations, the last of which we are living in. According to this creed, our dispensation will end with the rapture, the seven-year tribulation, and the physical reign of Christ over the world from Jerusalem. The current interest in this approach to prophecy started with denominational preachers and scholars like John Walvoord, president of Dallas Theological Seminary, Charles Ryrie, Jerry Jenkins, and Tim LaHaye. Jenkins, LaHaye

and other authors have written over 20 fictional books promoting this theological belief system. We have talked about the biblical errors in this denominational system (see “Destructive Dispensationalism” in November/December 2008), and we have also discussed how this creed has impacted apologetics. Young earth creationists and flood geology have been products of this belief system.

LeAnn Snow Flesher is a professor of Old Testament at American Baptist Seminary of the West in Berkeley, California. This book is a theological study of the “Left Behind” belief system. The book is divided into eight chapters: the first four chapters discuss the history of premillennial dispensationalism. The last four chapters involve biblical studies of Daniel and Revelation and how they should be interpreted.

fervently and repeatedly each time a new problem appeared to be possible for our newborn son, but none of the problems we prayed about were removed. What kind of a God is it that would fix an oar problem and ignore the huge physical needs of a baby? That is the question that causes me to reject the notion that God chose a branch, directed it to fall from the tree and land on the chosen oar. God does not micromanage the physical world to relieve physical distress for the selfish desires of human beings.

When my wife and I realized that our pointed specific prayers for the physical well being of our baby were not going to be answered as we desired, our choices about God narrowed. My parents, who did not believe in God, had an evolutionary solution to our dilemma. In their view this child was “not fit” and life is about survival of the fittest. We had the option of “putting this baby away,” and they even went so far as to try to start the machinery to force that to happen. My second choice was to accept the situation and to change my prayer life from one asking escape to one of asking help in dealing with the problem and making good come from it. John 9 tells the story of a man born blind and how it was used so that the power of God could be demonstrated in him. Romans 8:28 tells us concisely “that in all things God works for the good of those who love him” (NIV).

I will never forget the night when my wife and I came to that realization and conclusion together. We fell into each other’s arms feeling relief and believing that while God did not cause our son’s problems and would not bring us a miraculous cure, He would provide us with guidance and help and a way to bring good out of our personal pain. When our prayer life changed, the answers came. Our marriage was enriched and grew as we fought the many problems that blindness, retardation, and physical impairment brought. God brought people into our lives who blessed and enriched us for the past fifty years. Ultimately, our experience became a ministry that allowed us to reach out to others to whom we could uniquely relate. In each case where something good happened, there was prayer involved, and in each case there was a choice to be made as to whether we would do what the teachings of Christ called us to do, or not. God still did not micromanage our situation and we made some mistakes as we made choices for which we had to ask forgiveness. God does micromanage forgiveness—but that is another subject.

(For more on this topic see www.whypain.org and these books—*Timothy, My Son and Teacher*; *Living Successfully with Diabetes*; *A Whiner’s Guide to Chemotherapy*; *I’d Offer You My Seat ... But It’s Taken*; *All He Needs for Heaven*; *The Empty Crib*; *The God of All Comfort*; and *Why I Left Atheism*—available from the address on the back cover or from doesgodexist.tv.)

—JNC

WHAT DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACH ABOUT THE RESURRECTION?

by Phillip Eichman

(Editors Note: In our last issue Phillip Eichman looked at what the Old Testament says about the resurrection. This time he continues with a look at what the New Testament has to say.)

The hope of a future resurrection in Jewish thinking became more developed during the intertestamental period and was common at the time of Jesus' ministry. That does not necessarily mean that there was uniform agreement, however. The Pharisees, for example, were known for their belief in a physical, bodily resurrection, while the Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection of the dead.

Of those Jewish people who did believe in a resurrection of the dead, the most common view was that the righteous would be raised from the dead on the last day. This can be seen for example in Martha's reply to Jesus when he told her that her brother would rise from the dead. She said to Jesus, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (John 11:24, all scripture quotations from NIV).

THE RESURRECTION IN THE GOSPELS

The raising of the dead was a part of the ministry of Jesus as it is recorded in the Gospels. For example, when questioned by the disciples of John if he was "the one who was to come," Jesus' reply included a list of miraculous healings along with the statement that "the dead are raised" (Matthew 11:5; Luke 7:22). Also, when Jesus sent out the twelve disciples he gave them instructions to not only heal the sick, but to "raise the dead" (Matthew 10:8).

The Gospels also contain four specific examples of individuals that were raised from the dead. These include the son of a widow of Nain (Luke 7:11–17), daughter of Jairus (Matthew 9:18–19, 23–26; Mark: 5:21–24, 35–43; Luke 8:40–42, 49–56), Lazarus (John 11:1–44), and people who were raised at the time of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection (Matthew 27:52–53).

The widow's son and Jairus' daughter were similar events and reminiscent of the raising of the dead by Elijah and Elisha in the Old Testament. Both individuals had been dead only a relatively short time, and thus more correctly were examples of revitalization or resuscitation. Physical life was restored to the dead bodies and the individuals continued to live for a time in the same bodily form that they had before death.

Cynthia's Corner



Most of us who have lived long enough have some regrets, some things we wish we had not done or had done. Those circumstances in our past cannot be changed, but we can be changed; we can be given a fresh start with a new attitude. That is what spiritual rebirth is—to be given a new life (Romans 6:4). When we repent and are baptized into Christ, as described in Romans 6, our old self is crucified with Christ, buried, and we become a new creation (Colossians 2:12; 3:9–10). God not only forgives, but forgets ALL of our sins—EVERYTHING (Psalm 130:3, 4; Colossians 1:14; 2:13)! That is amazingly mind-blowing. He gives us a clean slate—a new start. He also gives us His Holy Spirit in order to live a new life (1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 1:13–14; Romans 6; 8). God's Spirit in us gives us a new mind and a new heart. First Corinthians 2:16 says we have the mind of Christ. We do not look at the world or ourselves the way we used to (Philippians 2:5). We have new eyes, a new focus, and a new attitude (Ephesians 4:22–24; 1 Peter 4:1, 2).

How do we maintain this new spiritual attitude when we still have a sinful nature (Romans 6–7) and still have the same problems as we had in the past? When we give our life to God, when we are baptized into Christ, His Holy Spirit helps us overcome our sinful nature (Romans 6 and 8 discuss this thoroughly). Romans 8:12 says we have an obligation to live by the Spirit, and Romans 8:5, 6 says we are to have our mind set on the Spirit and controlled by the Spirit. Romans 8:13 says "by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body" (see also Colossians 3:5). Romans 8:14 tells us that we are to be "led by the Spirit of God." We are to set our heart and mind on things above (Colossians 3:1–2), fix our "thoughts on Jesus" (Hebrews 3:1), and "be transformed by the renewing of" our mind (Romans 12:2). How do we do this?

Jesus is God and the Word in the flesh (John 1:1, 14). To know God is to know His Word and vice versa. We are to put God's Word in our mind and heart daily. Psalm 119 describes beautifully our relationship and attitude toward the Word of God. Hebrews 4:12 says the Word of God is "living and active." We are to crave it (1 Peter 2:2) and use it (2 Timothy 3:15, 16) and put it into practice (Matthew 7:24–26; James 1:22; 1 John 2:5, 6). Having been baptized, we now have unbroken fellowship and communion with God in our mind and heart (Philippians 4:4–8; Colossians 3:15–17; 4:2). God's Holy Spirit, Christ in us, helps us to understand and apply God's word to our life, and to pray. (Romans 8:26, 27; Ephesians 1:17–19; 3:16–19; 6:18).

—Cynthia Clayton

Photo: Patty Gibson

Nobel Scientists and God

Editor's Note: One of the things that has come out of the battle between extremists in the evolution/creation controversy has been a flow of literature from atheists claiming that good scientists and intelligent, educated people do not believe in God. This simply is not true. Tihomir Dimitrov has compiled an e-book on <http://nobelists.net> of quotations of Nobel Prize winning scientists. In each issue of this journal we hope to quote statements from some of these.

ALEXIS CARREL

1912 NOBEL PRIZE IN MEDICINE AND PHYSIOLOGY FOUNDER OF MODERN TRANSPLANTOLOGY

“Prayer gives us strength to bear cares and anxieties, to hope when there is no logical motive for hope, to remain steadfast in the midst of catastrophes.”

“The words of Jesus penetrate deeply into the reality of life. They ignore philosophy; they break all conventions; they are so astonishing that, even to this day, we find them hard to understand.” “Nevertheless, Jesus knows our world. Wherever we are at any moment of day or night, Jesus is at our disposition. We can reach Him simply by turning toward Him our desire and our love. It is an easily observable fact that, even in a society created by science and technology, this need of God has persisted.”

“For modern man, the only rule of conduct is his own good pleasure. Everyone is enclosed in his own egoism like a crab in its shell, and again like the crab, seeks to devour his neighbor.” “Our civilization has, in truth, forgotten that it is born of the blood of Christ; it has also forgotten God.” “Unfortunately, most modern men are incapable of acting for the love of their neighbors, of their country, or of God, for the only thing they love is themselves.” “But [our civilization] still understands the beauty of the Gospel narratives and of the Sermon on the Mount. It is still moved by those words of pity and love which bring peace, and sometimes even joy, to the broken, the afflicted, the sick and the dying.” “I want to be like smoke in the wind at God’s disposal.”

(Additional quotes are in our Jan/Feb 2010 issue.)

The raising of Lazarus, however, was different from the others. Lazarus had been dead for four days and the processes of decomposition would have been well underway. There was a Jewish tradition at the time that after death the soul remained near the body for three days in case the person might somehow be resuscitated. Lazarus had been dead for four days and thus beyond even this distant hope. Thus, the raising of Lazarus was obviously intended to demonstrate God’s power over death that was manifested in Jesus.

The final example of people raised from the dead in the Gospels is the brief account in Matthew of several people emerging from their graves at the time of Jesus’ crucifixion, or more correctly, his resurrection.



Jewish beliefs would have anticipated an event such as this to occur at the coming of the Messiah. Nothing is known, however, outside of Matthew’s account and the event remains obscure.

The Gospels also contain several examples of Jesus’ teaching on the resurrection and life after death. Jesus’ discussion with the Sadducees on the nature of the resurrection is one such example (Mark 12:18–27; Matthew 22:23–33; Luke 20:27–40). The Sadducees, as noted earlier, did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. Many of those Jewish people who did believe in the resurrection, assumed that those who experienced the resurrection would resume their earthly life and relationships. This was the point of the exaggerated story of the woman and her various husbands presented by the Sadducees. Jesus, however, took a different view. As he put it, “When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like angels in heaven” (Mark 12:25). This should not be misunderstood to suggest that the resurrected person will be some sort of spirit without a body. Rather, it seems that Jesus is teaching that after the resurrection, physical relationships, such as marriage, will no longer exist.

Jesus also at times taught on the general subject of eternal life. One example occurred when a man came to Jesus asking, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Mark 10:17–31; Matthew 19:16–30; Luke 18:18–30). In the discussion that followed this incident, Jesus indicated that eternal life is to be in “the age to come” (Mark 10:30), thus affirming that there will be life after death.

In the Gospel of John there are several occasions in which Jesus spoke of raising the dead. One example is found in John 5:21 where

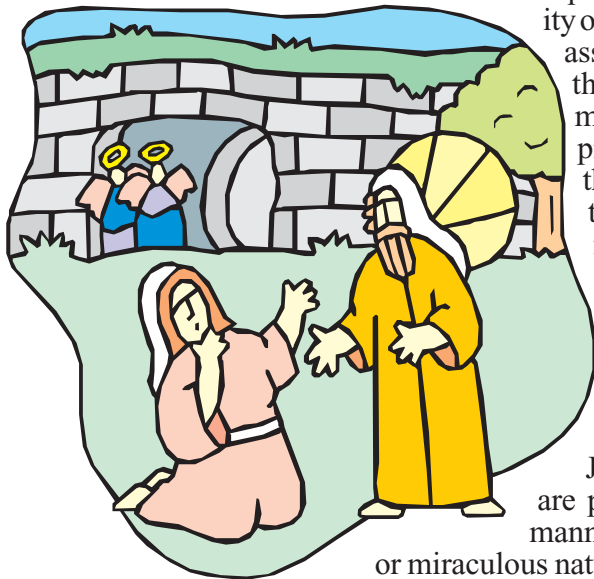
Pictures in this article: Art Explosion by Nova Development Corporation, © 1997–2001.

Jesus said “For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.” Jesus continued this thought further by stating that “a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his [Son of Man’s] voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned” (John 5:28–29). Jesus clearly teaches here the future raising of the dead in a manner suggestive of Daniel’s prophecy (Daniel 12:2–3). He also asserts that he, himself has been given authority to accomplish this.

Perhaps the most explicit teaching on the resurrection is found within the context of the raising of Lazarus (John 11:1–44). Speaking to Martha, Jesus said, “Your brother will rise again” (verse 23). Following Martha’s reply expressing the Jewish belief in a final resurrection, Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die” (verses 25–26). Thus, Jesus clearly stated that even though one who believes in him may experience physical death, that person can anticipate being raised to a life that knows no death. As Jesus expressed it, “whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”

In addition to Jesus’ teaching on the resurrection, the Gospels also contain several examples of predictions, or prophecies, made by Jesus concerning his own resurrection. The more well known of these are found in Mark 8:31, 9:31, and 10:33–34 and the parallels in Matthew and Luke.

In these passages Jesus clearly predicted that he would die and be raised again on the third day. Because he predicted specific events, some



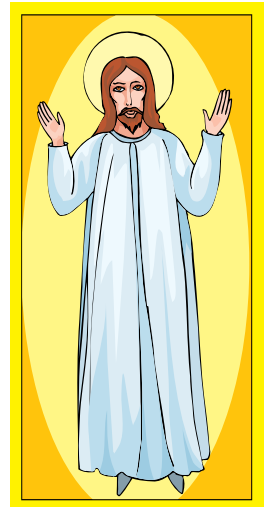
have questioned the authenticity of these statements. It is assumed here, however, that Jesus did in fact make these statements prior to his death and that he was predicting that he would be bodily raised from the dead.

The final chapters of the Gospels contain specific details concerning the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. These events are presented in a factual manner. The supernatural or miraculous nature of Jesus’ resurrec-

There are also a few references to the resurrection in the last books of the New Testament. For example, the resurrection is mentioned in 1 Peter 1:20–21 where Peter spoke of a hope that Christians have in “the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” The resurrection of Christ is also found in 1 Peter 3:21–22 and alluded to elsewhere in the letter (4:11ff; 5:10ff).

There are no references to the resurrection in the letters of James and Jude. Neither is it a topic in John’s epistles. The resurrection is certainly assumed by John, however, since he wrote as one who had witnessed the “Word of Life” (1 John 1:1).

Revelation is a “book centering on the risen Christ.” He is described, for example in Revelation 1:5 as “the first born from the dead.” Also, in the early chapters of Revelation, it is indicated that John recorded the very words of the risen Christ. The “one who was slain” was the object of the worship scene depicted in chapter 5 (5:9). This too is an obvious reference to Jesus. Finally, the resurrection is also mentioned in Revelation 20. There, however, it is clothed in the imagery of apocalyptic literature, which has been open to many interpretations.



CONCLUSION

Paul summarized the situation well in 1 Corinthians 15:13–14 when he wrote: “If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is useless and so is your faith.”

The resurrection of Jesus is presented in the New Testament not only as an historical fact but also as the basis for the belief in the future resurrection of believers as well. Without the resurrection, Christianity is worse than hopeless, it is a fraud. Thus, the resurrection is the central foundation upon which the Christian faith is built.

A belief in the resurrection of the dead had its beginning in the Old Testament, but was not fully developed until the time of the New Testament. It is there in the New Testament, in the teaching of Jesus, the witness of the disciples to the empty tomb and resurrected Lord, and the development of the doctrine by the New Testament writers, that we can begin to understand the concepts of the resurrection of the dead and life after death.

(Space limitations prevent us from listing Phillip Eichman’s suggested bibliography on the resurrection. You can find it at www.doesgodexist.org/MarApr11/Resurrection-Eichman-Bibliography.html.)

ages of the kernel of grain and the shoot, different “kinds” of “flesh,” various heavenly bodies, “natural” and “spiritual” bodies, the “first Adam” and the “last Adam,” and the “earthly man” and “man from heaven” to illustrate his point (15:37–49).

Paul finally concluded then, that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” and that “we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye” from a perishable, mortal body to an imperishable, immortal body (verses 50–52). This was the “mystery” which Paul revealed—that we will be raised, never to die again. As a result, death will finally be conquered, or as Paul put it, “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

THE RESURRECTION IN THE REST OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Certainly Paul wrote more on the resurrection than any other writer in the New Testament. There are, however, several additional references to the doctrine of the resurrection in the latter books of the New Testament.

Although there are few direct references to the resurrection in Hebrews, the whole presentation of Christ as high priest assumes it. It begins, for example, in the first chapter where Christ (as God’s Son) is said to be sitting “at the right hand of Majesty in heaven” after having “provided purification for sins” (1:3). Thus, although not specifically mentioned, the resurrection is implied by the author. This is also the case in later passages in Hebrews (4:14; 7:23–28) which refer to Jesus as a high priest. The resurrection of Jesus is also alluded to in Hebrews 2:14–15. Here the writer spoke of Jesus as sharing in humanity “so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil.”

There are also two additional passages in Hebrews that refer to the resurrection. In Hebrews 6:1–2 the writer referred to “elementary teachings about Christ.” It is interesting to note that the “resurrection from the dead” was one of those teachings mentioned. The beginning of the verse suggests that the recipients of the letter should “leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity.” It is interesting that the resurrection, something so difficult for many to accept was considered a basic belief of Christianity by the author of Hebrews.

In chapter 11 of Hebrews (11:35) the author speaks of women receiving back their dead raised again. Some scholars interpret this as a reference to the miracles of raising the dead in the Old Testament. Also in this verse is a reference to a “better resurrection” which is likely referring to the final resurrection that leads to eternal life rather than being raised to the same physical existence.

tion and the presentation of it as objective, historical fact have been questioned by some individuals.³ It is not the purpose of this study, however, to examine the authenticity of the resurrection event. This subject has been examined in detail by numerous authors.⁴

Assuming that the Gospels do in fact contain valid historical information, at least three conclusions may be drawn from the accounts of the resurrection of Jesus. The first is the clear presentation in the Gospels that Jesus was raised from the dead. This is given in the details of the resurrection accounts with further evidence supplied by the post-resurrection appearances.⁵

Secondly, the Gospel accounts indicate that Jesus was bodily resurrected from the dead. Following his resurrection, he was not some sort of disembodied spirit or “ghost,” but rather had a body that was recognizable to others.

Third, it may be concluded from the Gospel accounts that Jesus was not merely revitalized or resuscitated in the same manner that others had been raised from the dead previously. He was rather raised to a new existence, or a new way of life.

THE RESURRECTION IN ACTS

The book of Acts contains primarily historical narrative. As such, it begins with events following the period of Jesus’ life and ministry, and then proceeds to give a brief history of the disciples and early church. In regard to the doctrine of the resurrection, Acts contains a record of two types of events. First, there is the record of the miraculous raising of two individuals from the dead. Secondly, Acts also contains several examples of the earliest teaching of Jesus’ disciples that include numerous references to the resurrection.

The two recorded examples in Acts of the raising of the dead are similar in many ways to those discussed previously from the Old Testament and the Gospels. The first involves the death of an early Christian named Tabitha or Dorcas (Acts 9:36–42). The account illustrates primarily the miraculous power of God that was given to the apostles in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2.

The second example is the brief account of Paul raising the young man Eutychus from the dead after he had fallen from an upper story window (Acts 20:7–12). The details are somewhat similar to those recorded in the Old Testament of miracles perfumed by Elijah and Elisha and like the previous example, demonstrated the miraculous power that Paul had received from the Holy Spirit.

Like those other accounts of revitalization or resuscitation discussed previously, these two examples certainly point to God’s power over death but do not address directly the belief in the resurrection to a new life.

It is in regard to this belief that Acts marks a turning point in the doctrine of the resurrection. This can be clearly seen in the unfolding of the events in Acts, primarily in the teaching of the two main characters in Acts — Peter and Paul.



Peter, for example, asserted that the replacement for Judas must have been a witness to the resurrection of Jesus (1:22). It was also Peter who on the day of Pentecost made the first public announcement that Jesus had been raised from the dead (2:24, 31, 32). There are also several examples of Peter, and at times other apostles with him, affirming that God had raised Jesus from the dead (3:15; 4:2; 4:10; 5:30). Luke also provided a summary statement that the disciples had continued to testify that Jesus had been resurrected (4:33), even in the face of

opposition and persecution. In Acts 10 Peter expands the sphere of this teaching to the Gentiles by proclaiming that Jesus had been raised from the dead to those gathered at Cornelius' house (10:40, 41).

In the latter chapters of Acts the account focuses on the activities of Paul. Like Peter, Paul openly and boldly proclaimed that Jesus had been raised from the dead. This included brief recorded statements by Paul at Pisidian Antioch (13:30, 34, 37), in Thessalonica (17:3), in Athens (17:18, 32), and also before the Sanhedrin (23:6), Felix (24:15), and Agrippa (26:8).

It is fairly obvious from the brief summary of the recorded activities of Peter and Paul in Acts that the resurrection had quickly become the central theme of the gospel. It is primarily in the New Testament letters that follow, however, that the doctrine of the resurrection reaches its fullest development.

THE RESURRECTION IN THE WRITINGS OF PAUL

The resurrection was central to Paul's theology. This may be seen in his frequent references to the resurrection. In his writing Paul frequently affirmed the resurrection of Christ (Galatians 1:1; Romans 4:24; Ephesians 1:20). He also affirmed that it was God who had raised Jesus from the dead (Romans 4:24–25; 6:4), and God who will likewise raise believers from the dead (1 Corinthians 6:14; 2 Corinthians 4:14).

The resurrection, in fact, permeates all of Paul's writing. In Romans 1:4, for example, the sonship of Christ is linked to the resurrection.

Paul also linked the resurrection of Christ with the justification and reconciliation of Christians (Romans 4:24–25; 5:10). In Romans 8:11 Paul associates the Spirit with the raising of Jesus as well as giving life to our mortal bodies. Also, in Romans 8:34 Paul described the resurrected Jesus as interceding for Christians. Belief in the resurrection of Jesus was also associated by Paul with salvation in Romans 10:9.

It is also important to note that for Paul, Christ conquered death through his resurrection. For example, Romans 6:9 reads; "For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him." Unlike those who had been raised to life only to die again at a later time, Jesus was raised to never die again.

It is also in this chapter of Romans (6:1–14) that Paul deals with the relationship between the resurrection of Jesus and the symbolic death and resurrection of the believer in baptism, as well as the promise of the future resurrection of the believer.

One of the more lengthy treatments of the resurrection in Paul's writings is found in the letters to the Thessalonian church (1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12). Apparently some of the Christians in Thessalonica had questions about those who had died and would not be alive to meet Christ upon his return. Concerning the resurrection of those who had died, Paul explained that they will rise to meet Christ, along with those faithful who are living at the time of his return (1 Thessalonians 4:15–17).

The most extensive treatment of the resurrection in Paul's writings, and the entire New Testament for that matter, is found in 1 Corinthians 15. In this chapter, Paul first of all preserves what is likely to be the earliest Christian tradition regarding the resurrection of Christ (verses 3–8), which had been handed down to him from those who had themselves witnessed the resurrected Christ before his own conversion.

It would appear from verse 12 that some among the church in Corinth were teaching that there is no resurrection of the dead. Paul responded to this in three ways. First, he established the basic truth that Christ had been raised from the dead on the evidence of eyewitnesses to the resurrected Lord (15:1–11). Second, Paul shows the consequences of their denial that there is a resurrection of the dead. If the dead are not raised, then Christ was not raised, and if Christ was not raised, then their faith is worthless (15:12–19). Third, Paul then stated that if Christ was raised, then that is evidence that death has been conquered, and that the dead in Christ will also be raised (15:20–28).

In the latter part of the chapter (15:35–58), Paul then addresses the question: "How are the dead raised?" (verse 35). In particular, Paul discusses: "With what kind of body will they come?" (verse 35). For Paul, it was a matter of comparison or analogy. He used the im-