

CLARIFIED

ANSWERS TO

25

INTRIGUING BIBLE QUESTIONS

MICHAEL PEDRIN, PH.D.

Copyright Reserved © Michael Pedrin, 2016
(2nd printing, revised)

All rights reserved solely by the author.

Unless otherwise indicated, Bible quotations are taken
from the King James Version of the Bible

Cover Design: Nikita Sarkar

My sincere thanks to you for the lovely work of art and
the timely help!

Editing: Dr. Akshaya Mary Fernandez-Pinheiro

Many thanks to you for the skilful work and the great
help!

Preface

Anyone who reads the Bible will have lot of questions! The Holy Spirit, the divine Author, has inspired the prophets to write this Word in such a way that it hides the deep and wonderful truths from the casual reader but it reveals precious truths to the seeker of God and the truth!

In my twenty five years in the Master's vineyard, I think the Lord has helped me to give more than five thousand Bible studies to individuals and families across the years. And I have encountered thousands of interesting questions that people have asked me but I can't remember all of them all at once, obviously. However, the Spirit of God has enabled me to answer them all.

In this little book, "CLARIFIED: Answers to 25 Intriguing Bible Questions", I have tried to remember the frequently asked questions that I have encountered. I cannot remember the top 25 questions, but these surely are some of the popular ones, if my memory serves me right!

In my other books—*Magnified*, *Simplified* and *Amplified*, *Trinity*—I have 100 other questions answered.

I have enjoyed writing it and I hope you enjoy reading it.

—Michael Pedrin

Foreword

You hold, in your hand, a virtual wealth of Biblical insight! Its title “Clarified”, represents an accurate description of its content and nobly befits its purpose; for the author presents his “Answers to 25 Intriguing Bible Questions” with uncanny lucidity.

Michael Pedrin puts forth concise Biblical explanations to questions Bible students have asked throughout centuries and he does so without superfluous rhetoric and the oft seen meandering apologies. One can't help but be captivated and drawn in by its compelling combination of good theology and simple logic. Truths revealed in its straightforward question and answer format take the reader on a journey, a journey that builds confidence in scripture as you progress through its pages.

Read it once and you will be pleasantly surprised with its clarity. Read it twice and you will appreciate its depth and penetration into profound real-life questions. Read it three times and you will recognize an amazing synthesis of theology, logic and philosophy that presents a worldview, consistent with experience and practice!

Joe Skrobowski
Evangelist, USA

CONTENTS

1. Was there a time gap from Adam and Eve's creation to their fall? Did the test take place immediately after creation?.....9
2. The Bible says that God made "light" on the first day of creation. And on the fourth day He made the sun, moon and stars (see Genesis 1:3-5, 14-19). What was that "light" of the first day?.....12
3. There are many who believe that man was created in two phases—first as a spirit, in the image of God, and later a material body was added to it. Is that true? (See Genesis 1:26 and 2:7).....20
4. Who did Cain marry? Was it his own sister? But in Leviticus 20:17 it is written, that one cannot marry his own sister. So how can Cain's marriage be lawful?.....27
5. Genesis mentions about "giants" in Noah's days. Who were they, and why aren't there giants now?.....30
6. How could all the animals fit into Noah's ark? Wasn't the ark too small to contain all the varieties of creatures in the world?.....34
7. Were the children of Israel in Egypt for 400 years or 430 years? The Bible seems to give

- both these figures! (See Genesis 15:13 and Exodus 12:41).....41
8. Is it fair for God to punish the innocent? He said, "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me"! (Exodus 20:5)..... 43
9. Why didn't God punish Lot's daughters for their base act with their father? (See genesis 19:30-38).....53
10. What does this verse mean, "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force"? (Matthew 11:12).....58
11. Didn't Jesus say to cut off the hand, and pluck out the eye, if it offends and causes us to sin? (See Matthew 5:29, 30).....61
12. Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34). How can this be?.....66
13. What did Jesus mean in Matthew 11:11 by saying, "He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he"? (i.e., John the Baptist).....70
14. On which day was Jesus crucified? It is believed by some, to be Wednesday! Is that true?.....74

15. Jesus said in Matthew 12:40 about being in the grave for "Three days and three nights". Where are the three days and three nights?....81
16. Why did Jesus tell the rich, young ruler in Matthew 19:17, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God". Wasn't Jesus good, and wasn't He God as well?.....85
17. Jesus said in Matthew 22:14, "For many are called, but few are chosen". Why doesn't He call all?.....89
18. The four gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—are not always in harmony in the narration of many things! Therefore, aren't they contradictory in nature?.....92
19. What does John 5:4 mean—"An angel troubling the water"? Does God work in this manner?...95
20. Can Satan read our minds? If not, how does he feed our minds with thoughts of temptations?.....99
21. If God made man in His own image, how are there different races and colors of people?.....104
22. Why did Jesus, the Creator of all things, curse the fig tree for not bearing fruits, when it was not even the season! (See mark 11:12-14).....108

23. Why did Jesus ask His disciples to buy a sword? He said: "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one" (Luke 22:36).....114
24. Why did Jesus say that we need to "hate" our father and mother before coming to Him? (See Luke 14:26). Isn't that against the fifth commandment which states, "Honour thy father and thy mother"? (Exodus 20:12).....123
25. If the book of Revelation is so important, why isn't it given in plain and understandable language?.....127

1

Was there a time gap from Adam and Eve's creation to their fall? Did the test take place immediately after creation?

We do not have any text that specifies exactly how long after creation, our first parents fell. But a careful analysis of the fall indicates it was not too long after.

The very fact that God educated Adam about the "test" on the day of his creation shows that the tempter was around, and that temptation was not far away. We have no record of Adam and Eve doing anything after creation, though they would have gone around and enjoyed God's nature, and would have started to work in the Garden, for God commanded the man, the day he was made:

To dress it and to keep it. (Genesis 2:15)

Adam named all the animals in the Garden the day he was created, even before Eve was brought forth. It is interesting to note that Adam named his wife as, "Eve" (Genesis 3:20), only after the fall. So this should indicate, at least, that the fall was not long after they were created.

From the tempter's point of view, he would have liked to have had a go at them earlier rather than later, for the more he delayed the more they would have known the loving character and truth of God, and that extra knowledge would be a tougher barricade for him to break through.

After creating them on the sixth day, God said:

Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it. (Genesis 1:28)

God blessed them to bear children while they were sinless. So they could bear children even while they were sinless, for God made them "male and female". But it was only after the test Eve bore children. The Bible says:

And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. (Genesis 4:1)

There are some who try to suggest that they could not have had children if they did not sin. This is untrue, as we have already seen God giving them the command to bear children and fill the earth even before they fell.

You will see in God's message to Eve, after the fall, that He indicated a change of the original experience in child bearing.

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. (Genesis 3:16)

The Phrase, "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception" clearly shows that she would not have had this painful experience had she not fallen in sin.

Initially, Adam was appointed ruler of this planet, Eve was to share the rule with him. But after sin, her husband would rule over her, and the reign of the earth passed on from Adam to Satan, his conqueror. (See Genesis 3:16; Luke 4:5, 6). Also the original plan of child bearing, took a beating.

It is most likely that God wanted them to face the test and then reproduce; otherwise what would their child be, if he were born before the test? If they passed the test it would be fine, and if they would fail the test (which they did,) what would be the fate of a

sinless, holy and perfect child? So the test was first, before they could set up a family.

Also we can get a clue from looking into the temptation of the “last Adam” (1 Corinthians 15:45). The test and temptation of Jesus took place immediately after Jesus was anointed to begin His ministry. So also, the first man Adam, along with his wife, were put to test, not long after their creation!

2

The Bible says that God made "light" on the first day of creation. And on the fourth day He made the sun, moon and stars (see Genesis 1:3-5, 14-19). What was that "light" of the first day?

According to the Genesis record, in the beginning, darkness covered the whole earth, and it was filled with water too.

Darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. (Genesis 1:2)

On the first day and on the fourth day God did something that looks similar. Let us read the verses.

And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. (Genesis 1:3-5)

Now let us see what was done on the fourth day:

And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the

firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day. (Genesis 1:14-19)

If you notice carefully, you will see why this was done and the difference between the first and fourth day of creation.

What did God make on the first day? We all might quickly say—He made "light". But actually God made "day" and "night"! God used the light to create day and night. Till this point the whole earth was only night (dark), but now God divided the light from darkness. And God called the light part "day", and the dark part He called "night".

How did God make the day and the night? We see from the Genesis record that darkness was all over the earth; so making night was not necessary. God had to only make day and separate it from the night that already existed by causing light to shine on one side. And the bright (light) side was called day, and the dark side of the earth was called night.

There are twelve hours of light and twelve hours of darkness normally, in a 24-hour day. The Lord Jesus said:

Are there not twelve hours in the day? (John 11:9)

God brought light to shine on one side of the earth, while the other side remained dark.

It is interesting and important to note that with "the evening and the morning" commenced the "first day", and not with "the morning and the evening". So with the dark part of the 24-hour period begins a new day and then follows the light part of it, probably because

darkness was there before light was introduced on planet earth!

One might ask: What was that "light" that God used to make day & night? Well, God did not specify as to what that was because the purpose of that light was to create day and night. So the focus has to be on what was created on the first day—day and night!

On the first day, the earth's clock started ticking, and time commenced for planet earth. She now has two distinct phases of the time period—day and night. Time began by the creation of day and night.

Look at another example with regard to getting our focus right. On the sixth day, what did God make? Man and Woman (and also animals). How did God make them? He used the dust of the ground. The dust of the ground was the means of making man. But the objects of the sixth day of creation were man and woman, and not the dust, which was only the material of their creation. It doesn't really matter what kind of mud it was, the color, etc. What mattered was the creation of Adam and Eve, by God!

So also, God used "light" on the first day to create "day and night". The "nature" of the light and its "source" of origin do not matter! If it mattered then God would have specified it. "Light" was only the means, and the creation of "day and night" was the object. Therefore, the focus should be on the creation of day and night, and *not* the light!

There are interesting parallels between the first few verses of Genesis Chapter 1 and the first few verses of John Chapter 1. Both start their books with the phrase—"In the beginning"

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)

Both mention about “light” in the initial part of first chapter itself.

And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. (Genesis 1:3)

In him was life; and the life was the light of men. (John 1:4)

Both the books of Genesis and the gospel of John present light in contrast to “darkness”.

And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. (Genesis 1:4)

And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. (John 1:5)

As the physical light of the first day dispelled the darkness during the creation week, so also the spiritual light of Jesus dispels the darkness in the soul. The Master invites us to follow Him and walk in the light.

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. (John 8:12)

Paul the apostle beautifully connects the light of Jesus to the first day light. He wrote,

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:6)

God is light (1 John 1:5); His Word is light (Psalm 119:105) and His Law is light (Proverbs 6:23) as well.

So there were many options before us. It does not really matter which option God used.

Now let us look at what was created on the fourth day. The sun and the moon and the stars were made, the Bible says. On the first day, "day and night" were made; and on the fourth day, "the sun, moon, and stars" were made. So nothing was repeated! On the first day God used *light* "to create" *day* and *night*, and on the fourth day He created the *sun*, *moon*, and the *stars* "to give" *light* to the earth.

What was the purpose of the sun and the moon? Was it to create day and night? No, that was already done on the first day. The sun and the moon were meant to rule the day and night that already existed. They were made:

For signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years. (Genesis 1:14)

With the first day light, time began, and the 24-hour period began with the rotation of the earth on its own axis; and with the sun and the moon around from the fourth day onwards, the rotation would still continue, along with the revolution around the sun.

One might then ask, "Why didn't God create the sun and the moon and the stars on the first day itself, and that would take care of the day and night too!"

Notice that the sun and moon and stars were "placed in the firmament of heaven". On the first day there was no firmament called heaven; it was created on the second day. So a firmament had to be created for the sun and the rest to be placed. And God would not create the firmament first without the commencement of time! He had to start time for planet earth, as with everything, that is the way it always goes. No work can be calculated or measured without time.

Now let's look into the perfect order of the creation week and see the wisdom of God.

a) "Day and Night" were made on the first day. Time commenced for planet earth. A 24-hour period was created by the rotation of the earth on its own axis alternatively between day and night parts during the 24-hour day cycle. Perfect start!

b) The whole earth was a mighty ocean and the first thing was to create an atmosphere, an environment that will be conducive for life, with the right amount of gases to fill the air; and therefore God made the firmament called heaven or sky, with all the accurate calculations.

c) On the third day. God made dry land to appear to commence life on planet earth. He made a portion of the earth "dry", and called it land, and proceeded to decorate it with scenic beauty. Trees, grass, and all kinds of vegetation sprang forth. What scenery! Beautiful and smooth mountains, valleys and plains decorated with greenery!

d) There has to be different seasons for different varieties of trees to bear fruits and for the flowers to bloom. Everything has an order and time to display its beauty. God did exactly that on the fourth day. Well, why didn't God make the sun on the third day and the vegetation on the fourth day? Probably, God wanted us to know that it is not the sun that sustains life, but God, the Creator of the sun. (For many say if there is no sun, there cannot be life. But the truth is—if there is no God, there is no life; God can use anything to give us life, and not just the sun. And many people worship the sun today thinking that without it nothing can survive. But the plants and trees were there for a full day even before the sun was created!)

e) God proceeded to create moving creatures to fill the waters and the skies—fish of diverse kinds and

colors, and birds of various shapes, sizes, colors and features. Why didn't God create them before He made vegetation? Well, the birds need trees to rest and food to eat. Therefore they were made after the vegetation. And why weren't the fish made earlier? They needed food, too, so God had to create a supply first and then place them there. For sure the trees and plants and fruits in the seas were done on the same third day as it was done on land. Why didn't God make the fish and birds before the sun, the moon and the stars? Well, living things in whose nostril is the breath of life are higher in order than the non-living things. So God decided to first furnish their environment and then make them.

f) On the sixth day, He first made all kinds of animals and creeping things that move on the land. Finally, He made man and woman on the sixth day—the crowning act of creation. Man, with his wife, was to be the caretaker of this planet, the ruler and the manager of it all. As it is written:

The earth hath he given to the children of men. (Psalm 115:16)

One might say—if all was done for man, why was he made last, and not first? Well, the owner or tenants occupy the house only after it is built! God first decorated the earth and then presented it to man.

g) On the seventh day, God created something. He created a day called the "Sabbath". By resting, blessing and sanctifying it He created this special day. It was the first gift God gave the newly wedded couple, the gift of special time together with their Lord. Jesus, the Creator, testified:

The Sabbath was made for man. (Mark 2:27)

The Sabbath is the pivot or the focal point on which the week rotates. The powerful God did not need a week to finish His work. He could have made

everything in a flash. He chose to do it this way as He is a God of order, and was setting an example for man to follow this pattern in work!

We have seen that God had a perfect plan and order for His creation week. Nothing was accidental. The plan was well thought of and executed by God. God Himself testified at the end of each day that it was "good". And so it was! This seven-day week for the world can never be changed, for God set it so in the beginning!

3

There are many who believe that man was created in two phases—first as a spirit, in the image of God, and later a material body was added to it. Is that true? (See Genesis 1:26 and 2:7)

Nowhere in the Bible is it recorded that man was created in two phases. It is just a wrong interpretation of the texts of Genesis. If at all the texts of Genesis meant that, then why is that idea not mentioned by the Bible writers elsewhere when they wrote about man's creation?

Let us look at the two texts that mention about the creation of man in the book of Genesis.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them... And the evening and the morning were the sixth day. (Genesis 1:26, 27, 31)

It was on the sixth day of the creation week that God created man and woman. The animals also were created on the same sixth day, just before the creation of man. The scripture says,

And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and

creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good. (Genesis 1:24, 25)

Genesis chapter 1 tells us that man and woman were created in God's own image, and in chapter 2 the details of that creation is given. The repeat and enlarge principle is always seen in scripture.

Look at the first chapter of the New Testament for instance. It talks about the genealogy of Jesus.

The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. (Matthew 1:1)

After presenting Jesus as the son of David, Matthew proceeds to explain the details of the genealogy to reveal how Jesus was the son of David. He gives the whole list from Abraham to Jesus. And he concludes:

And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. (Matthew 1:16)

Is it proper to conclude that Christ was born twice, because Matthew first presents Jesus as the son of David, and then twenty eight generations later he presents Jesus being born into the family of Joseph and Mary? Surely not!

Consider also the last book of the Bible. We see a few times John recording the return of Jesus.

Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. (Revelation 1:7)

And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. (Revelation 14:14)

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. (Revelation 19:11)

In the first passage we see Christ coming with clouds; in the second passage we see Christ coming with clouds, sickle and crown; and in the third passage we see Christ coming riding on a white horse. Do we therefore conclude that Christ will come back several times to earth because the presentations of His appearing are given with different details and in different places of the Bible—Revelation chapters 1, 14 and 19? For sure we all know it is the same Second Coming of Jesus, repeated and enlarged!

Genesis chapters 1 and 2 are the same creation story of Adam and Eve—repeated and enlarged.

One might say—since "God is a Spirit" (John 4:24), and man was made in the "image of God" and after His "likeness", it has to be that God first made man as a spirit being!

That logic seems good, but is it true? The scripture tells of the Genesis Chapter 1 story:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish

of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. (Genesis 1:27-29)

Is God male or female? The Bible says both "male and female" were made in the "image of God". Also, does God need food to survive? The ones who were made in His image were dependent on food—"every herb bearing seed... every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed" was given to them to eat and live. Does God produce and multiply gods? The ones who were made in His image were told to be "fruitful, and multiply"!

We shouldn't stretch a matter beyond what God meant it to be. If we do that then it becomes a "private interpretation" (2 Peter 1:20), and God warns against it. We are not supposed to build a doctrine around a text or two; we have to harmonize it with the entire Bible and fit it in the right place. Isaiah wrote:

But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little. (Isaiah 28:13)

Why does God need to make man first a spirit being, and put flesh and bones later? Couldn't He have done it right away? Or did He get this idea later? If you think that man, who was made in the "image of God", had to be first made a spirit being because God is a spirit Being, then did man lose that "image of God" when God added flesh and bones later? Paul is clear that we still bear the image of God, though marred now because of sin.

Man... is the image and glory of God. (1 Corinthians 11:7)

One might again say—God gave man a body of flesh and bone so that he could rear up a family and fill the earth with his offspring!

My question to this suggestion is—was this an afterthought by God? In fact, the command to "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Genesis 1:28) was given to Adam and Eve in Genesis chapter 1 itself and not chapter 2! If the concept—the physical body was added later—is true, then the command to "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" should have been in Genesis chapter 2 and not in chapter 1!

We know that the animals were also created on the sixth day as Genesis chapter 1 declares. In fact they were created before man was. Now Genesis chapter 2 presents the creation of animals too.

And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. (Genesis 2:19, 20)

Because the mention of the creation of animals is repeated in Chapter 2 of Genesis, do we conclude that animals too were made as spirit beings earlier and later real bodies? At this point in time Adam saw that all the animals were paired, male and female, and he desired to have his partner too. The Bible continues:

And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the

field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. (Genesis 2:21-23)

If Eve was already around as a "spirit" being at this time, the Bible should have mentioned it! But we see the coming of Eve from the rib of Adam. The Bible says:

And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man (Genesis 2:22).

The Bible does not say that God took the rib of Adam and placed it into the spirit of Eve that was already around. There is no transition mentioned from the spirit state to a physical state! On the contrary the scripture plainly declares this is how God "made" the woman.

Finally, to prove that Adam and Eve existed in a spirit form before they got a body form, some quote what Paul wrote to the Ephesians.

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.
(Ephesians 1:4)

Paul did not say we were around in a spirit form before the world began and now got a physical structure at birth, but he said God has "chosen" us before the foundation of the world. Because of His

foreknowledge God has the ability to speak about the future. Paul himself said elsewhere that God:

Calleth those things which be not as though they were. (Romans 4:17)

And even if we take it the way some want to take it, Paul says it was all done "before the foundation of the world". "Before the foundation of the world" means, prior to even the creation week of Genesis. And that would mean Adam and Eve existed in spirit form even before they were made on the sixth day of creation week! But if you notice carefully the Genesis chapter 1 creation you will see that Adam and Eve were brought into existence only at this point of time.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. (Genesis 1:26, 27)

The word "created" is repeated three times in a single verse to let us know that they were indeed created at this period of time, and not before. And also the phrase "Let us make man" clearly proves that man did not exist before that. If not the scripture should have read, "Let us transfer man" to this planet earth!

The truth is simple and clear. The creation account of man and woman in Genesis chapter 1 and 2 are not two different creations, but the details of the same creation of chapter 1, enlarged and given in chapter 2!

4

Who did Cain marry? Was it his own sister? But in Leviticus 20:17 it is written, that one cannot marry his own sister. So how can Cain's marriage be lawful?

The Bible is silent about who Cain's wife was. Looking at the possible options it has to be his sister. Let us analyze and see the other possibilities first.

If God had to create a wife for Cain, as He created Eve for Adam, she would have been an unfallen woman (i.e., a sinless person). And an unfallen woman cannot marry a fallen man. That would be tremendously unfair if God did it. And on the other hand God will not create a sinner to give Cain his wife, as God makes only perfect beings/things. So creating a wife for Cain was impossible, and so was it for all in that generation.

If God did not permit Cain, or his brothers, to marry their own sisters, then there would be only one generation of people—just Adam and Eve's children, and no further. And the human race would have come to an end a little after the death of our first parents!

So Cain had to marry his own sister, for God permitted it then, as the human race had to populate the earth. (Please remember it was an exceptional case, as there were no other women for Cain to marry, except one of his sisters.)

That does not mean if it was okay then, it is okay even now. For no one is in Cain's position today. There are several choices for all to choose from. Also, reproduction between close relatives, now, can cause genetic abnormalities as the human race has

degenerated quite a bit, but it was not so till before the flood.

God gave this law later through Moses:

And if a man shall take his sister, his father's daughter, or his mother's daughter, and see her nakedness, and she see his nakedness; it is a wicked thing; and they shall be cut off in the sight of their people: he hath uncovered his sister's nakedness; he shall bear his iniquity.

(Leviticus 20:17)

This text primarily means committing adultery or fornication with one's sibling and not about marrying them. Abraham married Sarah, his half sister (Genesis 20:12)—and they were the most blessed couple in the Jewish history! Isaac married Rachel his cousin's daughter, and Jacob married Leah and Rachel his cousins (See Genesis 22 and 29). All these marriages were before the Mosaic period. [For questions on polygamy read the book I have written—*Polygamy: What Does the Bible Say?*]

As time passed on because of the genetic challenges we face, due to the degeneracy of the human race, it is safe not to marry close relatives.

One might say—wasn't God changing His Word by permitting one generation to do it and forbidding later generations? No, not at all! There is no inconsistency in it. A few illustrations will make it clear that this pattern was not unique.

Think of the traffic laws. One is not permitted to cross the stoplight, and also to over speed. But don't ambulances and police vehicles do this many a time? And it is lawful! Can anyone rightly accuse them of being lawbreakers? Imagine the plight if ambulances were not allowed to over speed, and sometimes by-

pass the stoplight. Then many patients would die before reaching the hospitals!

And on occasions if the police vehicles cannot over speed or jump the stoplight, many offenders would escape. So there is room for special cases everywhere. And it is within the law!

Also when a civilian kills another man it is called murder, and the law of the land punishes him; but when a soldier kills an enemy soldier, he is hailed as patriotic! And the law of the land does not punish him, but rather it commands him to do so whenever needed.

Look at the Fourth Commandment for instance. Working on any of the six days is lawful, but the same secular work done on the seventh day is unlawful (See Exodus 20:8-11). Can anyone accuse God of not being consistent all seven days? Well, that is the rule—six days work is legal, but secular work on the seventh day is illegal and unlawful in God's sight.

Similarly, for Cain (and his generation) to marry his sister was necessary and lawful, but for anyone else thereafter to do that, would not be necessary at all.

God is the law Giver, and God is the law Definer. None can interpret it better than Him. His Word is truth!

So Cain marrying his sister was lawful. And it would not affect medically, their children, because that generation was nearly perfect as their parents came forth fresh from the Master's own hands!

5

Genesis mentions about “giants” in Noah’s days. Who were they, and why aren’t there giants now?

Let’s go to the scriptures and see who these giants were. Moses writes,

There were giants in the earth in those days. (Genesis 6:4)

That is, during Noah’s days, the days before the flood. Most of the people were huge and mighty in size and stature. Also after the flood there were a few giants.

When Moses sent the spies to the promised land of Canaan the spies came back, reporting,

And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight. (Numbers 13:33)

Compared to the giants the children of Israel were like grasshoppers!

In the coast of Moab, the book of Deuteronomy records about a land of giants!

That also was accounted a land of giants: giants dwelt therein in old time; and the Ammonites call them Zamzummims; A people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakims. (Deuteronomy 2:20, 21)

Moses also talks about the last of the giants, the remaining of giants. The king of Bashan was a giant, it says. King Og’s bed size is given. Therefore we can get an idea how tall he was. It says,

For only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of giants; behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron; is it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon? nine cubits was the length thereof, and four cubits the breadth of it, after the cubit of a man. (Deuteronomy 3:11)

This giant was having a bed size of 9 cubits length and 4 cubits breadth. The length of a cubit was determined on the distance from the elbow to the fingertips, so it varied between different ancient groups of people. The standard cubit was 18 inches. Some had even 20.6 inches as a cubit.

If we take the standard measurement of a cubit as 18 inches, it is 1 ½ feet. So, the length of his bed was 13 ½ feet, and the width 6 feet. For him to sleep on a cot of 13 ½ feet he would have been around 12 ½ or 13 feet in height at least! His cot was made of iron because he was heavy as well. What must have been his weight I wonder!

If this "remnant" of giants was around 13 feet, how tall would have been the first man and the first woman? Definitely much more than that!

Sin has affected even the very physical structure of man. Regarding his age the Bible says Adam lived for 930 years (Genesis 5:5). But today the average lifespan of man is 60 years, and is still decreasing! The Bible says:

All have sinned, and come short. (Romans 6:23)

We have come short in many things—the glory of God, in life span, in height, in wisdom, in vision, in the fineness of tastes, etc.

Sin has made us short. That does not mean, the shorter the person, the greater the sinner or the taller the person the more righteous he is!

If the remnant of the giants was around 13 feet, do not be surprised if Adam, the first man, who was perfect, was a bigger giant! We don't know his actual height. Probably somewhere around 18 feet! Why not? Eve would have been a just little shorter than Adam, I presume.

On the resurrection morning Adam and Eve will be in for a big surprise to see their descendants just 6 feet tall, or even less! But let us not despair. The work of redemption embraces all aspects of the fall. Restoration means to bring us back to the original plan!

There is a time for everything, the Bible says. Therefore there is even a time in the order of restoration. First, God wants us to get rid of this menace called sin, by His grace. This has to happen while we are still alive here. Next, the perishable body that we now possess will be replaced with an immortal and incorruptible one at the Second Coming of Jesus (See 1 Corinthians 15:51-55). Finally, in heaven there will be "healing" taking place as we partake of the "leaves of the tree" of life, (Revelation 22:2) the fruit of which Adam and Eve were forbidden to eat because of sin (Genesis 3:22-24). It will be ours, freely to partake of, "every month"! (Revelation 22:2).

Apart from eating of the fruit, the redeemed will eat something that Adam and Eve initially were not commanded to eat—the leaves of the tree of life.

What does the Bible say those leaves are for?

And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. (Revelation 22:2)

What "healing"? Are we going to be sick there in heaven and in the New Earth? No! But there has been a damage done to our physical structure because of sin, and that damage will be restored. We will be healed and will be restored to the original plan. At the

resurrection, we will come out perfect, holy, immortal, but with the same size that we went into the grave. Since it was sin that brought this decline in size and age, it will also be restored. As we partake of the fruit of the tree of life, our lifespan will be taken care of; and as we eat of the leaves of the tree of life our stature will be restored.

It will be gradual, as we will be partaking of it every month. Even if it takes 100 years to grow an inch, it will not matter, as eternity is there for us!

Thank God for the complete restoration in the plan of redemption! Someday we can look into the eyes of Adam and Eve, the first giants of the earth, without straining our necks, or without them having to bend their knees to look at us—face to face and eye to eye!

The last chapter of the New Testament talks about the "healing" that will take place, and the last chapter of the Old Testament too talks about this "healing". God declared,

But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. (Malachi 4:2)

Christ is the "Sun of righteousness". He will be the one to lead us to the tree of life and the river of life (See Revelation 7:15-17). And there will be "healing" or restoration. That healing is to make us "grow up"! (Malachi 4:2). We will be no more dwarfs but giants, and more than that! The restoration will be complete all because of what Jesus has done for us!

All men and women may not reach the same height of Adam and Eve, respectively. There will be variations I'm guessing because God is not a God of monotony. But there will be no one too short compared to the rest! All will be happy with God's restoration, in all its beauty and variety!

6

How could all the animals fit into Noah's ark? Wasn't the ark too small to contain all the varieties of creatures in the world?

The Bible gives the size of the ark in cubits. God told Noah the complete details of it:

Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it. (Genesis 6:14-16)

"Three hundred cubits" was its length, "fifty cubits" its breadth, and "thirty cubits" its height.

A cubit is 18 inches, and that would mean 450 feet was its length, 75 feet its breadth, and 45 feet its height. Some scholars, based on ancient findings, indicate that a cubit was 20.6 inches, which would mean the ark would have been 515 feet in length, 86 feet in breadth, and 52 feet in height. It was a huge structure anyway.

The next largest ship of ancient times is said to be an Egyptian vessel which was 130 cubits in length and 40 cubits in breadth.

The ark was built in such a way as to endure the mighty waters and the fury of nature that would burst

upon every quarter. Its structure was well designed and planned by God Himself to have more than sufficient space for all its occupants. It was a three storied construction. God said:

With lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it. (Genesis 6:16)

It is suggested that Noah's ark bore a weight of more than seventy five thousand tons!

God told Noah as to how many animals he has to take into the ark.

Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female. Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth. (Genesis 7:2, 3)

That is, a pair of all unclean animals, and seven pairs of all clean animals. (Leviticus chapter 11 gives the details of how to know which is clean and which is not.)

The space in the ark would be sufficient for every "kind" of animal. Science has categorized the animals into various divisions. Every "kind" was preserved in the ark. God told Noah:

Every beast after his kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, every bird of every sort. (Genesis 7:14)

The word "kind" and "sort" are interchangeably used in the above text. "Kind" comes from the Hebrew word "meen" which means "to portion out", "to sort out"; and the dictionary suggests it's a reference to the division of species.

We come across this word "kind" right in the creation narration in Genesis chapter 1.

And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. (Genesis 1:24)

We know that man and animals were both created on the sixth day; animals were created before man. And Adam was created first and later in the day Eve was created.

Before creating Eve, God brought all the kinds of animals to Adam for him to name them. In a matter of a little time (before Eve was created in the same day) he gave names to all of them! The Bible records,

And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. (Genesis 2:19-22)

So in a matter of a little time Adam did all the naming of the kinds of animals that paraded in front of him.

During the time of Noah, just as God brought all the kinds of animals to Adam, God brought all these

kinds of animals to Noah's ark as well. As Adam named all the kinds of animals in a short while so did all the kinds of animals enter the ark in a matter of a short time as well.

And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation. Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female. Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth. For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth. And Noah did according unto all that the LORD commanded him... In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark; They, and every beast after his kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, every bird of every sort. And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life. And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in. (Genesis 7:1-5, 13-16)

For Noah to go around and bring all the animals in would have been an impossible task. It was the hand

of the Lord that brought them in. Noah and his family went in and the animals followed Noah! The record declares:

And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark... There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female. (Genesis 7:7, 9)

It was not a natural phenomenon; it was a supernatural scene. The wild and the mild living in harmony for little over a year! All the food supply for them was taken into the ark as well as the Lord commanded Noah.

Many skeptics say it was impossible for all these animals to fit into Noah's ark. Therefore they deny the reliability of the Bible and state it was just a man-written book! Well, if I were that man to write this "cooked-up" story, as people say, I would not have given the measurements of the ark! The very fact that all the intricate details were given shows that it is truth, and truth will stand any investigation!

Let's just look at one example of the number of dogs that would have entered the ark. Today there are around 200 breeds of dogs in the world.

It is a scientific fact that with just two dogs, a male and a female, through the selection of gene mutations that takes place in a few thousands of years you can have all these breeds of dogs that we have today.

Noah's flood occurred 4500 years ago, and this period of time is enough for a pair of dogs or wolves to produce 200 plus breeds in 4500 years time. So Noah just took a pair of dogs in his ark, and not more!

Also we need to realize that Noah wouldn't have taken fully grown animal species into the ark. The young little one would be the best size to go in.

In fact there were only few animals that were big in size like the elephants, camels, rhinoceros, hippos, giraffes, etc. Also, not all dinosaurs are big sized. There are small dinosaurs, as small as a lizard.

The scientists say the average size of the animals is less than that of the size of a sheep!

In fact all those animals that Noah took in would occupy less than half of the ark if you calculate! So there was enough space for the food to be stored as well, and for Noah and family to walk around freely.

To put it in a calculative perspective, for the size of the ark given in the Bible, you can put 522 standard American railroad stock cars into it! Each standard American railroad stock car can hold 240 sheep. And the total number of sheep that could fit into the ark would be 125,280.

Christian Scientists, who have studied this situation, tell us that a total of about 8000 genera, including extinct genera, thus about 16,000 individual animals were all that Noah needed in the ark.

Of course a little more than that would have been there for the Bible says the clean animals and birds went in by sevens and the unclean by twos. But if you notice most of the animals and birds are unclean; only few are clean. So a maximum of 20,000 animals was enough. This is the maximum. Some of the creation scientists say just a few thousands would be enough.

The 3 storied ark of Noah was enough to accommodate not 20,000 thousand animals, that needed to enter in but 125,280 animals could fit in!

Also the fossil records are a great proof that there was a worldwide flood. Several scientists, who were evolutionists, after honestly investigating the evidence, have become creationists!

Even the Lord Jesus Christ spoke about Noah and the worldwide flood. If at all it was a fairy tale the Lord

should have told us of it. But on the contrary, He spoke in affirmation to it. Talking about the unrighteous who did not believe that the flood was coming, as God's Word declared, Jesus said:

They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. (Luke 17:27)

The flood was real, the ark was real, and the destruction was real! And all the kinds of animals truly had enough and more space in Noah's floating zoo!

7

Were the children of Israel in Egypt for 400 years or 430 years? The Bible seems to give both these figures! (See Genesis 15:13 and Exodus 12:41)

Let us read both the passages of scripture that mention about the period of their sojourn in Egypt.

And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years. (Genesis 15:13)

Here it says four hundred years.

In Exodus, Moses records the actual number of years they spent in Egypt. He wrote:

And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. (Exodus 12:41)

The Exodus record declares that the children of God spent 430 years in Egypt!

Was it 400 years or 430 years that the children of Israel spent in Egypt?

The New Testament also gives both the number of years. Stephen said:

And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years. (Acts 7:6)

And Paul wrote to the Galatians:

And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. (Galatians 3:17)

Well, Moses is very clear that the number of years spent in Egypt were indeed 430 years, to the very date! Look at the passage again:

And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. (Exodus 12:41)

With this plain passage there can be no dispute that they lived in Egypt for 430 years.

Now let us closely examine the passages that talk about the 400 year period.

They shall afflict them four hundred years. (Genesis 15:13)

Entreat them evil four hundred years. (Acts 7:6)

The affliction and the "evil" that they suffered in the foreign land were indeed four hundred years. But the total time they sojourned in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years!

8

Is it fair for God to punish the innocent? He said, "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me"! (Exodus 20:5)

The above passage of scripture can be found only four times—in Exodus 20:5, Exodus 34:7, Numbers 14:18 and Deuteronomy 5:9. These are all in the writings of Moses. In Exodus 20:5 and Deuteronomy 5:9 the appearance of the phrase is a part of the Ten Commandment law. It says:

Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. (Exodus: 20:5, 6)

Notice that there are only two groups mentioned here. It is these two groups that get the reward or punishment.

It is important to note that God does not say that those who don't know Him will receive the curse but, rather, those who "hate" Him. You cannot hate a person or love a person unless you know that person. Obviously, the ones who have known God, and deliberately rejected Him after seeing His goodness, deserve to be cut off from His goodness. But God says this rebellious action will have an influence or bearing, only till the third or fourth generation. But on the other hand, you need to see the goodness of God—He says, the influence of a good action will have an affect

unto thousands, or "a thousand generation" (Deuteronomy 7:9). So we see clearly that God takes pleasure only in the bestowal of good things and not in the negative aspect. What a merciful God we serve!

One might say—is it fair for the next two or three generations to be punished for the actions of their ancestors? But I ask you, on the same lines—is it fair for a thousand generations to receive blessings for the actions of their ancestors? We have no complaints on the “blessings” part! Why then complain on the “punishment” that is relatively insignificant?

Before we proceed, let us consider man's judgment. There have been many bandits, terrorists and various criminals who have been punished for their crimes in our earthly courts. But their children or descendents, who have not participated in their crimes, are rarely punished. If man can use discretion and be just in his judgment, then how much more the all-knowing and merciful Judge of heaven! Are we better than God? In fact throughout the Bible God tells us to be like Him, who is full of mercy. Jesus said:

Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. (Luke 6:36)

Does the merciful heavenly Father punish the innocent up to the 3rd and 4th generation? Well, let us see what is passed on to the next generation. It simply says:

Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me. (Exodus: 20:5)

"Iniquity" means sin. Is it the “guilt” of sin that is passed on to the next generation or is it the “wages” of sin that is visited on their descendants or is it the “consequences” of sin that will be seen in the following generations? It simply states—“visiting the

iniquity". It does not state whether it is the "guilt/condemnation" or the "wages/penalty" or the "consequences/result" aspect of the sin. Well, other parts of scripture reveal to us as to what exactly is passed on.

The same Moses records the Word of God concerning the same topic:

The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin. (Deuteronomy 24:16)

The people understood and practiced just that (See 2 Chronicles 25:4). So it is very clear that the wages or the penalty of sin is not passed on to the next generation.

What about the guilt being borne by their descendants? In Ezekiel's days many thought the guilt is carried on and people felt the burden of it as they were taught thus by their Bible teachers. Listen to what God told the people who believed this view:

Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? (Ezekiel 18:19)

The Lord told them that this concept was not true. Let us read the truth about this matter from the mouth of God Himself.

Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the

wicked shall be upon him. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live? But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die. Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal? When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways

unequal? Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye. (Ezekiel 18:19-32)

So we see that neither the wages/punishment, nor the bearing of the guilt of sin is passed on. Therefore, it has to be only the natural consequences of sin that is seen in the succeeding generations.

What exactly is passed on from parents to children? The tendencies and inclinations are passed on through the genes from parents to children. Listen to the reason that Jesus gives for the evil act of the people in His day.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchers of the righteous, And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. (Matthew 23:29-32)

It was their ancestors who had murdered God's people in the past. Naturally that murderous blood was running through their veins. They now had the natural

tendency to repeat their fathers' sins. Christ predicted that they would do it.

Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city. (Matthew 23:34)

Of course they would be held guilty only for their act, if they did it. The law that God placed within our system is from parent to children many things are transferred by inheritance and example, good and bad.

Look at young Timothy. Paul wrote about his grandmother and mother who possessed certain qualities that Timothy now had. Paul told him:

When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also. (2 Timothy 1:5)

So propensities, tendencies and natural inclinations are passed on as God has set them as the laws of nature. Brilliant parents normally have brilliant children; it's same with the not-so brilliant parents too.

What else is passed on to the succeeding generation? Sickness, weakness, disease, etc. are passed on as well. Many have weak lungs, high sugar, delicate hearts and many chronic illnesses as a legacy from their ancestors. This is a natural law.

Also because of sin that is rapidly increasing by the passing of time, in the world, the bodies are becoming weaker and the resistance level is dropping, and therefore the rapid deterioration too. That is what sin does overall. It is the natural consequence that is passed on because of sin, and God does not hold us accountable, if we are not responsible for it. The same

Timothy who had a legacy of faith passed on to him had a weakness in the body. He had a weak stomach and often infirmities. Paul wrote to him:

Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities. (1 Timothy 5:23)

Well, we need to do our part to get well and do the repair as far as possible. We need not feel guilty or discouraged if our outward body is perishing for any reason that is not in our control. Jesus said:

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (Matthew 10:28)

Whether someone is killing our bodies, or whether the consequences of sin are taking its toll on our bodies, if it is out of our control, we shouldn't fear at all, as long as our soul (spiritual standing with God) is healthy. Paul was not worried about what was happening to him. He said:

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. (2 Corinthians 4:16)

Elisha, the great prophet of the Old Testament, a man who had the double portion of the Holy Spirit than did Prophet Elijah, died of sickness. It is written:

Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died. (2 King 13:14)

We might inherit a weak body because of the legacy that our parents have passed on to us. But we need to do our part not to follow any bad habits, be it wrong habits of eating (most diseases have its root cause in wrong eating habits), drinking, abusing our bodies in any way. Our body is the temple of God, and

no person should destroy it. (See 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17)

There are many who are born deformed, mentally or/and physically. It may not always be true that because of the sins of their own ancestors people are suffering. As mentioned earlier, the whole of humanity is degenerating because of the curse of sin. Because of this, the whole creation is suffering. Aren't there animals too that are physically deformed? What sins have their parents committed? Paul says in Romans:

For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. (Romans 8:22)

So it may be wrong, many a time, to judge anyone who is suffering. Only God knows the true cause. In the book of prophet Micah God links sickness and sin. It is written:

Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in making thee desolate because of thy sins. (Micah 6:13)

Yes, it is true that it is because of sin there are all kinds of sicknesses and calamities in the world. Sin is the root cause. Sometimes, it might be because of our sins that we are punished with sickness, and many times it is because of the sin that is prevalent in the world, for it affects us too.

Probably having this text in mind, the people asked Jesus regarding a blind man in John chapter 9.

And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. (John 9:2, 3)

The disciples, too, thought that all sicknesses are directly linked to a man's sin or his immediate ancestor's sin, as was commonly believed.

What did Jesus mean when He said, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him"? Was Jesus saying that God made him blind for His glory? No! Jesus just said, "The works of God should be made manifest in him".

First of all, Christ ruled out the reasons suggested for his blindness i.e. that it was because of the sins of his parents or his own sin that man was born blind. Since he was born blind how could it be because of his sin he was born so? That is illogical! Christ did not go to the root of the problem, but went to the final solution of that problem. Christ said, "The works of God should be made manifest". When he would be healed, God's work would be seen, that God loves to heal, and restore people; and God's name would be glorified. We know it is the devil and sin that is the reason for all problems and it is God who is the solution to all of it!

Therefore we see, one cannot conclude things from the surface of the matter, only God knows it through and through. But this is a fact—that the succeeding generations will be affected for good or worse because of the practices of their ancestors.

Now, if the children continue repeating the sins and faults and bad habits of their parents, their effects will continue to show its ugly face for another three or four generations. But if remedial actions are taken, then by the third or fourth generation they will be omitted. That is the law God placed in our nature.

Paul summed it up beautifully, when he wrote:

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he

also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. (Galatians 6:7, 8)

So, neither are the “wages” of sin passed on, nor is the “guilt” of sin borne by the succeeding generations, but the “natural consequences” of sin—the tendencies to do evil, the weakness, the sickness, the attitudes, passions, etc., are passed on.

There is another way of looking at this passage, and this applies to any tragedy that strikes. At any given period of time, for most people, there are three to four generations of people alive in a family, i.e., children-parents-grandparents-great grandparents. Sin affects all the members of the family who are alive.

If a tragedy strikes a member of the family, all the members—three or four generations—suffer together! But the “natural tendencies” to do evil will pass on to the succeeding three or four generations downward, from “fathers upon the children”! (Exodus 20:5)

9

Why didn't God punish Lot's daughters for their base act with their father? (See genesis 19:30-38)

Lot opened the floodgates of evil to his family by choosing to dwell in wicked Sodom. He did his best in trying to keep himself pure, therefore God delivered him ultimately. Peter wrote:

And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds. (2 Peter 2:7, 8)

The initial selfishness that he displayed in choosing the advantages of this world had, an adverse effect, on his own family though!

When the herdsmen of Abraham's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle strove, Abraham suggested that the two families separate.

He asked Lot to choose which way he wanted to go, and Abraham would choose the opposite way. Instead of giving his uncle the best land, he selfishly chose what he cherished and left the seemingly simpler place for the one who would be the heir of the kingdom to come!

And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east:

and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly. (Genesis 13:10-13)

Lot chose to dwell in a city that was "exceedingly" sinful. And he had to pay a heavy price for it. He lost his wife; and his two daughters lost their husbands in the judgment of God upon Sodom. He finally came out of Sodom penniless. That is what selfishness does to a person finally.

The base acts of his two daughters just reveal how insensitive to sin they became after living in immoral Sodom! They made their father drunk, and committed their shameful acts.

And they made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. (Genesis 19:31-33)

The beauty of the Bible is the Holy Spirit, who is the divine Author, frankly records, not just the good deeds of God's people, but their bad deeds and weaknesses as well are honestly chronicled! The Bible is unique—it is a practical book. God has seen it fit, in His divine wisdom, to record not just the victories of God's people, but also their failures! It is honest in its contents.

The Bible presents the heroes of faith as real people—men of like passion as we are. James writes:

Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are. (James 5:17)

This gives us hope! If God could deal with such kind of people he can use us too, who are no better! His grace is sufficient!

Lot was innocent of this sin, but was guilty of another sin. He was innocent because "He perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose" (Genesis 19:33). He was guilty for taking intoxicating wine. (The fresh juice of the grape, which is also called wine in the Bible, is a blessing (see Isaiah 65:8), but the fermented one, the Holy Scripture condemns). It is written of the fermented wine:

Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise. (Proverbs 20:1)

This sin of Lot in partaking of the wine was a means for the devil getting Lot into the bigger trap. The following night the younger daughter takes the advice of her elder sister and deceives their father again.

Did God instruct to do this? Or were they doing the will of God? No! The Word of God, which never changes, declares:

None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover their nakedness: I am the LORD. The nakedness of thy father, or the nakedness of thy mother, shalt thou not uncover. (Leviticus 18:6, 7)

The very fact they first made their father drunk shows that their father would not have approved to it, if he knew what they planned to do, as it was wrong in God's sight.

If we see the context we come to know that Lot's daughters were not sensually minded. They were just using their human wisdom to save their posterity, instead of relying on God's providence. Since everyone in their city and the surrounding cities was

destroyed, they feared that their generation would end as there may not be a chance to get married again to someone of the same faith.

Listen to their reasoning:

And the firstborn said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth: Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. (Genesis 19:31, 32)

They did not trust God to provide husbands for them. They took the reins into their own hands and brought trouble all the way down.

The names of their children that were born to both of them were Moab and Benammi. The Bible says Moab is the "Father of the Moabites unto this day", and Benammi is the "Father of the children of Ammon unto this day". (Genesis 19:37, 38)

The Moabites and the Ammonites were enemies of their relatives—the children of Israel—the chosen nation. There were constant battles. On one occasion we read:

And they slew of Moab at that time about ten thousand men, all lusty, and all men of valour; and there escaped not a man. So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. (Judges 3:29, 30)

Lot's descendents finally departed from the living God and served strange gods. Their gods were:

Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon. (1 Kings 11:33)

This is the terrible result of the sin of Lot's daughters! Their punishment was indeed seen right through. Their evil course opened doors for an evil

path right down the ages. If only they had repented and turned to God by serving Him, their history would have been different!

10

What does this verse mean, "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force"? (Matthew 11:12)

For four hundred years the children of Israel heard not the voice of God through His prophets. After Malachi, came John the Baptist to herald the coming of the promised One. He preached with power and zeal, fearing none. It was prophesied of him:

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. (Isaiah 40:3, 4)

Just before his birth, angel Gabriel told Zacharias his father:

And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. (Luke 1:16, 17)

When we look at the gospel record we indeed see the Baptist fearlessly denouncing the sins of the people, bringing in a great reformation. The publicans and the common men who were "violent" in the sight

of the "pious" Pharisees, accepted the message while the religious men rejected it. The Bible record declares:

And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him. (Luke 7:29, 30)

There was a great stir and holy zeal everywhere to grab the light of heaven that was shining their way. Satan was astir too. Through the seemingly pious religious leaders, he was trying to keep the people away from the light. But scripture declares:

Every man presseth into it. (Luke 16:16)

That is what Christ meant when He said:

And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. (Matthew 11:12)

There is a war that rages behind the scene. It is a spiritual war. Only the ones who "press" forward can be victorious. Every kind of war is violent, and there is no exception to this war of wars. Unless we are "violent"—having holy zeal and determination—we will never win it. We have got to strive and press forward every inch in this spiritual battle. If we are hoping to be victorious doing nothing about it, we will be devoured by the roaring lion. We have to strive. The Master Himself said:

Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. (Luke 13:24)

We strive and wrestle it out not physically with our fellow humans, but spiritually with the powers of darkness. The apostle wrote:

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. (Ephesians 6:12)

Are we into the battle? Are we fighting it out? Are we moving forward? Are we resisting every advance of the enemy? Are we prepared to die for the Master if need be? Christ and His apostles and the prophets and the godly of all ages have set us an example of being willing to die than give up. The apostle Paul wrote to the Hebrews:

Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. (Hebrews 12:4)

As Jacob wrestled with God and was determined not to let Him go until He blessed him, so also every child of God needs to be determined. As the widow was persistent and determined till the judge attended her case, so are we to press on till we be victorious. (See Genesis 32:24-30; Luke 18:1-8).

We need to be determined, pushing forward, persistent in all spiritual matters, if we are to enter the kingdom of God. This is what Christ meant when He said:

The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. (Matthew 11:12)

11

Didn't Jesus say to cut off the hand, and pluck out the eye, if it offends and causes us to sin? (See Matthew 5:29, 30)

Let us read what Jesus said:

And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. (Matthew 5:29, 30)

If you take it literally you have a problem. In the previous verse Christ talked about adultery being committed in the heart by a lustful look. He said:

Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. (Matthew 5:28)

The problem therefore is not with the eyes but the heart! Will the plucking out of the right eye solve the problem? Was only one eye wicked and one eye holy? Will the cutting of the right hand solve the problem of sin by the hand? Won't the left hand sympathize with the right hand, as it was also a companion in all wicked works done by the other hand?

Is a lustful look of adultery the problem of the eye? Didn't Jesus Himself declare where the real problem is?

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. (Matthew 15:19)

The real problem is not with any part of the body, but the heart or mind, which is the seat of sin and a foul fountain. That is why God said:

My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways. (Proverbs 23:26)

For the eyes to observe God's ways the heart has to be given to Him. That is why Jesus is pictured standing and knocking at the door of the heart. (Though it doesn't mention the word "heart", it is understood as the heart is what He is looking for as seen in Proverbs 23:26; for it is the throne room of our life.) He said:

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. (Revelation 3:20)

The greatest deception is not from outside but from inside. The sinful heart is our great enemy, as it is Satan's agent inside our body. The prophet wrote:

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9)

Satan wants our heart, and God wants it more. Satan wants it to bring us to ruin, and God wants it to give us life and peace and pleasure and happiness forever. The devil uses the senses of the body—the seeing, the tasting, the smelling, the feeling and the hearing to control our hearts and minds. But God, through the heart, controls all our senses. When the heart is pure by God's grace, all the thoughts, words and actions are pure as well. God works from the inside to control the outside but Satan works from the outside to control the inside.

The cutting off of the hand or foot or the plucking out of the eye will not solve the problem of sin. Since Satan uses these avenues to make us commit evil and sin, Christ was advising us not to give the members of the body to be instruments of the devil. Our hands, our eyes, our feet, our tongue, our ears and all our body parts need to be guarded and protected from the evil one as he uses these avenues to make us corrupt. These parts need to be disciplined and controlled so as to not commit evil acts. And that can be done only from the control room—the heart or mind. When the heart is pure, the whole body will fall in line. Paul wrote:

Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. (Romans 6:13)

Yes, all our members, the parts of our bodies, should be "instruments of righteousness". In the same book, Paul talks about presenting our bodies to God in the best way. He said:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (Romans 12:1)

And Paul tells us how that can be done. It is through the mind.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Romans 12:2)

When our hearts or minds are in tune with heavenly music, our bodies will truly be the temples of God. Cutting off of any part will damage the temple, and inspiration warns against it.

If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. (1 Corinthians 3:17)

But one might say—didn't Jesus say that we truly need to cut off some parts of the body? Yes we need to! And how do we do that? By stopping it from doing evil. By shutting the eyelids from beholding vanity, by refraining the hands from performing evil acts, and by holding back the feet from forbidden ground we cut off the avenues for the body parts to be instruments of sin.

The Psalmist, too, talked about the plucking off of the eyes and feet, etc. He wrote:

Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way. (Psalm 119:37)

Mine eyes are ever toward the LORD; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net. (Psalm 25:15)

But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. (Psalm 73:2)

I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word. (Psalm 119:10)

The metaphoric language of Jesus means this—plucking the eyes is turning away the eyes from vanity;

cutting the feet means refraining our feet from the evil way!

Talking about the eyes—the light of our body—Jesus said:

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. (Matthew 6:22)

When the eye is looking at the right things—that is, at God and His Word, and at virtuous things—the entire body is lit up. So also when our hands and feet and other parts are focused on bringing glory to God, it fulfils the true purpose.

Yes, the literal "cutting off" of it, will not solve the problem, for the problem is with the heart that has to be cut off from sin. A new heart has to be planted. That is exactly what God does. It is written:

And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live. (Deuteronomy 30:6)

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. (Ezekiel 36:26)

When the heart of the problem is addressed and taken care of, the whole issue is solved. Once the new heart is in place, do not allow the members of the body to be instruments of unrighteousness.

With God's help fight it out. It is worth dying physically than sinning constantly!

12

Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34).
How can this be?

Jesus is called as, "The Prince of peace" in the prophecy of Isaiah (Isaiah 9:6). When the Prince of peace was born as a man in Bethlehem's manger, the angelic choir announced His unfathomable birth to the shepherds saying:

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. (Luke 2:14)

Christ came to bring God's peace to us. He came to give us everlasting peace. Sin brought guilt and separation and death. By His spotless life and vicarious death, He brought peace and reconciliation between God and man. The apostle wrote:

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:1)

Peace with God is the important thing that we need!

When we are in harmony with God, it brings true peace in our lives. God's Word and His holy law becomes our delight, and in keeping them is great peace, as the psalmist declared:

Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them. (Psalm 119:165)

There might be a storm around us but peace will be within us when we have Jesus residing in our hearts. That peace cannot be described in human

language; it only has to be experienced. Paul penned it this way:

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7)

The scripture is clear throughout, that Jesus has come to give us peace—peace with God and peace within. But there is a devil around, with his demonic forces; and most of the people on planet earth, too, are on his side. When we leave the fold of Satan and join the fold of God, this lion starts to roar. The devil becomes upset and he makes his displeasure known clearly. He will use all his agents and all his means to cause confusion and perplexity because he is losing a soul from his prison house of sin and death. That is the reason, the Prince of peace said:

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. (Matthew 10:34)

A sword divides. When truth comes into our hearts it causes division. It divides the wheat from the tares. Many of our family members, relatives and friends, who have not understood this divine act of God, start troubling us. They blame the newborn Christian for all the discomfort created in the home and around. Satan makes things worse. It becomes obvious that all this confusion and trouble began after someone has accepted Jesus and His eternal truth. There is division within the family because of the truth, as truth and lie cannot go along together and light and darkness cannot exist simultaneously.

For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And

what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? (2 Corinthians 6:14-16)

A child of God will not compromise anymore as he used to. Now there is confusion and misunderstanding and hatred from the other side. Unless the whole family comes to the light, it will be tough.

Truth will remain truth. Compromising is a false testimony and all who follow Christ according His Word will face division and opposition in their unconverted family circle. Therefore Jesus said:

I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. (Matthew 10:35, 36)

Truth divides from error while uniting us with the God of truth. Truth brings a sword when the rest of the loved ones are unbelieving. But it also brings in lasting peace in the heart and eternal peace with God. Truth brings hatred to sin and Satan, and brings love to God and His Word. So there is a division caused by truth, and also a unity is caused on the other hand.

Many have left out Christ from their lives because they wanted "peace" to continue in the family. But the "peace" they are talking about is not peace at all. There cannot be true peace without Jesus, the Prince of peace. It is a false peace that is binding them. Jesus warned the ones who think this way:

He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his

cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. (Matthew 10:37-39)

Peace is precious, more precious than gold. For gold to have its true value, it has to go through fire. For peace to be permanent, it has to go through the sword. It will bring in pain that is temporary, but there is eternal and infinite gain!

13

What did Jesus mean in Matthew 11:11 by saying, "He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he"? (i.e., John the Baptist)

According to our Lord, John the Baptist was the greatest person to be born till that period of time. He was not just a prophet, but, "More than a prophet" (Matthew 11:9). All the prophets of the Old Testament prophesied about the coming of the Messiah. Jesus Himself testified to it:

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. (John 5:39)

And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luke 24:27)

Comparing John the Baptist to the other prophets of the Old Testament, Jesus said:

For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. (Matthew 11:13)

John was the last of the prophets before the coming of the Messiah, and was greater than the other prophets in the sense, he not only prophesied about the Messiah to come, but also introduced Him to the world!

John told the public about the soon coming Christ:
John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose:

he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. (Luke 3:16)

Just a little later the Messiah came! And John did not prophesy anymore, but presented Him to the beholding multitude:

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. (John 1:29, 30)

Though John was the greatest of all who ever lived before the coming of Jesus, he did not get to see the work, life, death and resurrection of the Lamb of God. The common people saw it, and thus were more privileged than John the Baptist. Jesus plainly told His humble disciples and followers:

But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them. (Matthew 13:16, 17)

Therefore, only that generation of people who saw God in human flesh was the most privileged of all before His coming and after His ascension, as well. Even though most of them were simple fishermen of humble background they were the most special of all as they saw what all the prophets and righteous men desired to see, but could not. These were greater than John the Baptist, the greatest prophet, because they saw Jesus' mighty acts, firsthand, and heard Him speak the words of life, and associated with Him. That is the reason Jesus said:

Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. (Matthew 11:11)

The "kingdom of heaven" referred to here, is not the kingdom of glory that we will all finally share, but the kingdom of grace which Christ brought to us. Christ plainly tells us that the "violence" the kingdom of "suffereth" was not something that was to come, but something that was around since the preaching of John who was aggressive in his proclamation of truth.

And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence. (Matthew 11:11)

The most crucial period in the history of the world were the three-and-a-half years of Christ's public Ministry—the period when He got baptized, overcame in the wilderness the three powerful temptations of the devil, preached, healed, died and rose, thus defeating the devil.

The kingdom of God that Christ set up was not a physical kingdom but a spiritual one. The people in the B.C. period looked forward to it and we in the A.D. period look backward to it.

A couple of verses will make it clear that those years—especially the closing scenes in His earthly ministry—were the central part of the "Kingdom of God". Jesus preached:

The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. (Mark 1:15)

Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. (Luke 17:21)

("Within you" or "among you" as the Bible margin has it.)

How privileged were those disciples to behold the Prince of life, face to face! By faith we, too, can behold Him, and we also have a blessing in store!

Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. (John 20:29)

14

On which day was Jesus crucified? It is believed by some, to be Wednesday! Is that true?

Well, some are of the opinion that Jesus died on Wednesday and not Friday. But there is no dispute regarding the day of the resurrection, as it clearly declares:

Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week. (Mark 16:9)

Since it does not specify that He died on the sixth day of the week, some have concluded it to be Wednesday. They base it on the following text:

For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Matthew 12:40)

Some want to take it literally as three complete days and three complete nights, thus ignoring the other texts which states "The third day", "In three days", etc. (Luke 18:33; John 2:19).

Let us assume it to be three complete days and three complete nights. We have texts in the Bible that tell us the time of Jesus' death.

And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour... And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. (Mark 15:33, 37)

Jesus died at the "ninth hour", Jewish time, which is 3 pm as per the Roman time standard.

The Bible tells us that Jesus rose before sunrise on the first day of the week.

Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week. (Mark 16:9)

And John adds:

When it was yet dark. (John 20:1)

If some want to take three days and three nights as literal and not according to the Jewish understanding, then they have some explaining to do.

Jesus died at 3 pm and was buried immediately after that, before sunset (See Luke 23:52-56). If Jesus died on Wednesday, 3 pm, then He was buried on Wednesday before sunset. How many nights do we get from Wednesday evening? Wednesday night, Thursday night, Friday night, and Saturday night—that becomes 4 nights! (Or if the Jewish method is followed—counting from sunset the beginning of a new day—then that evening Thursday began. So it is Thursday night, Friday night, Saturday night and Sunday night). And how many days do we get if Jesus died on Wednesday? We get a part of Wednesday, whole of Thursday, Friday and Saturday. That becomes more than 3 days! It becomes 3 days and 4 nights! If one thinks Jesus died on Thursday, then it is 3 nights and 2 days! But Jesus said in Matthew 12:40, "Three days and three nights"!

The fact is—Jesus died on Friday, commonly called "Good Friday" and rose on Sunday, commonly called "Easter Sunday".

One might say—how do we prove that it was Friday? Well, there is sufficient evidence for it. The seventh day of the week is called the Sabbath day throughout scriptures (Exodus 20:8-11). The day before the Sabbath is called the "preparation day" (the sixth day), as the children of God prepared for the holy Sabbath (Exodus 16:5, 22-26). Jesus died on the day of the preparation, the sixth day of the week. The Bible records:

This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus.... And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on. (Luke 23:52, 54)

In fact, two Sabbaths met together the day Jesus was resting in the tomb, and two preparation days kissed each other at His death.

There were seven annual "Sabbaths" in the Jewish religious calendar (see Leviticus 23). And these annual Sabbaths, like birthdays, could come on any day of the week.

For example, look at the feast of Trumpets. God told Moses when it should be celebrated.

Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation. (Leviticus 23:24).

These annual feasts were observed for seven days sometimes, and some feasts just for one day. If it was a seven day feast, the first day and the last day of the feast were called "Sabbaths" (See Leviticus chapter 23).

When Jesus died it was the Passover feast. And the next day after the Passover, the feast of the unleavened bread commenced, and this feast was observed for seven days. The first day of the feast was a rest day and the last day of the feast was a rest day too. No work was to be done. And it was called "Sabbath" (See Leviticus 23: 5-11).

The day Jesus died was the preparation day for two Sabbaths—the preparation for the unleavened bread Sabbath and the preparation for the weekly seventh day Sabbath. But this "preparation day" of the unleavened bread was once a year.

So the weekly preparation day of the Sabbath and the yearly preparation day of the unleavened bread blended together at the death of Jesus. Listen to what John the apostle said:

The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that Sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. (John 19:31)

John called it a "high day"! Why was it so? Because two Sabbaths met together—the weekly Sabbath and the yearly Sabbath.

One might say—the phrase, "An high day", is a reference only to the yearly Sabbath, and it has no reference to the weekly Sabbath. Well, nowhere in the Bible do we have a text to support that argument. None of the yearly Sabbaths were called "high" Sabbaths in itself or in comparison to the weekly Sabbath (See Leviticus chapter 23). In fact we have clear indications in Leviticus chapter 23 that all the yearly Sabbaths were to reflect, and derive its principles from the weekly Sabbaths and not the other way round. The yearly Sabbaths were:

Beside the sabbaths of the LORD. (Leviticus 23:38)

A comparison with an earlier verse in the same chapter makes it clear that "the Sabbath of the Lord" is the weekly Sabbath.

Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings. (Leviticus 23:3)

Also the weekly Sabbath on its own is nowhere called as "high" Sabbath because every Sabbath day has the same blessedness in it.

John was actually talking about the weekly Sabbath when he mentioned the word "Sabbath", in the text:

For that Sabbath day was an high day. (John 19:31)

How do we know that the word "Sabbath" here is a reference to the weekly Sabbath day, and not the unleavened bread Sabbath? Further down in the beginning of the next chapter John wrote:

The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early. (John 20:1)

John is writing about the days of the week and not the dates of the year; he wrote about the first day of the "week". So the context makes it clear that, the Sabbath was the weekly Sabbath and not the yearly unleavened bread Sabbath.

Jesus dying on the preparation day and resting in the tomb on the Sabbath day was not an accident—God calculated it all. He had a reason for everything.

Remember, man was created on the sixth day, and our God decided to pay the redemption price on the same sixth day! And after God created man in the Garden of Eden, the next day He rested from all His labor and created the Sabbath day as a memorial of His great creation. Again He did the same thing. After redeeming man on the Cross on the sixth day of the week, He rested the next day, which was the seventh day of the week, called the Sabbath, as a symbol of redemption. God chose the same day to create and redeem man, and on the next day He rested in both the cases. So the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, is not just the sign and memorial of creation only, but also the sign and memorial of redemption! It

was the same Jesus who created and redeemed man, and, on the same day of the week, He rested to set His divine seal and confirmation!

All speculations should be laid aside as to which day Jesus died. The scripture is clear--it was the day of preparation, which is Friday.

In the evening of the resurrection day, the two disciples told the Lord, (who held back His identity), about the Messiah's death. They said on Sunday evening:

To day is the third day since these things were done. (Luke 24:21)

How can Sunday (the first day of the week), be the third day if Jesus died on Wednesday?

The best proof comes to us when we look at it from the calendar of the feasts. Jesus died on the feast of Passover.

For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. (1 Corinthians 5:7)

And from the Old Testament we come to know the Passover feast date.

In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD'S passover. (Leviticus 23:5)

Jesus rose on the day of the first fruits. The apostle Paul confirms it to us when he calls Christ resurrection as the first fruit.

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. (1 Corinthians 15:20)

From the book of Leviticus we see that the next day after Passover was the feast of the Unleavened Bread (that is on the 15th of the month), and it was celebrated for 7 days. The first day (15th) of the Unleavened Bread feast was called Sabbath. The

Bible says, after that Sabbath, the next day was the first fruit—that is on the 16th of that month.

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. (Leviticus 23:10, 11)

So we have clearly, from scripture deciphered, that Jesus died on Passover the 14th of the first Jewish month, and He rose on the day of the First Fruit, the 16th of that same month.

If 16th day of the month, the day of His resurrection, was on Sunday, the first day of the week, then 14th of that month, was Friday, and not Wednesday!

15

Jesus said in Matthew 12:40 about being in the grave for “Three days and three nights”. Where are the three days and three nights?

In today's language three days and three nights mean three complete days and three complete nights. But for the Jews, who lived in the time of Christ, the same phrase meant different.

For a Jew, one day and one night meant either the full part of the 24-hour period, or a small part of the 24-hour period. (It is called "inclusive" reckoning). You will notice this to be true when you see the words of Jesus in different places about His resurrection.

In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus said:

For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Matthew 12:40)

Here it says, "Three days and three nights". Let us look at what Mark recorded:

And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. (Mark 8:31)

In Mark, Jesus says, "After three days". Now Let us go to Luke's gospel:

And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. (Luke 18:33)

In Luke Jesus says, "The third day". Let us see what John penned down:

Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. (John 2:19)

In John's gospel, Jesus says, "In three days."

We have the same Jesus telling the Jewish people about His resurrection in four different ways. Obviously, it was not about four different resurrections, but about that one and the only resurrection! In fact they had no problem in understanding His statements because that was the way of speaking about days and time, in the Jewish culture.

Remember, if it were not so the Jews would have accused Him of contradiction, but they understood what He said. There were always spies to see if He spoke anything contradictory, for they wanted "to catch him in his word" (Mark 12:13). But they found none. He boldly challenged them—"Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (John 8:46). And Peter, who was all the time close to Jesus, said "Neither was guile found in his mouth", (1 Peter 2:22)}.

We have four different ways of saying the same thing—"Three days and three nights", "After three days", "The third day", "In three days". Please notice that the number is common in all the places—three/third. It does not matter, in the Jewish language, which preposition precedes the number—whether it was "in", "after", "on"; what mattered was the number.

Jesus died on Friday noon at 3 O'clock (See Mark 15:33-37); and rose on Sunday morning before sunrise (see Mark 16:2-6).

Today, we have the names for each of the seven days of the week due to the Roman weekly calendar. But during Jesus' time it was just called first day, second day, third day, etc. Today, according to the Roman system, a new day starts at 12 midnight. But in

the Bible a day starts at sunset (See Genesis 1:5, 8; Leviticus 23:32).

When Jesus died it was still Friday—the 6th day of the week—3 p.m. There were another 3 hours of Friday left (if the sunset was at 6 p.m.). At sunset of Friday another day started (7th day—Saturday). And from Saturday evening's sunset, the third day commenced (1st day--Sunday). Jesus was still in the grave till Sunday morning.

Thus we see that Jesus was in the grave on Friday (3 hours), Saturday (24 hours), and Sunday (10 hours or so). As mentioned earlier, whether a small part of the day, or the complete part of the day, the inclusive reckoning of the Bible embraces both.

In the Jewish calculation it was perfectly right, whether Jesus said—"on the third day", or "after three days", or "after three days and three nights". It all meant the same. We who are not aware of their method of calculation, find it hard. But for the Jews and for the ones who know their method, it is simple.

A person with knowledge of the Biblical time commencement of a new day could wish you a "happy new day" at sunset, while you would wish someone after midnight (the Roman method). Since the Bible is primarily a Jewish book, we have to use the Jewish method.

Let us look at an example to verify this time reckoning. Look at the scene in Pilate's palace after Jesus died. The chief priests and Pharisees requested Pilate to safeguard the tomb saying:

Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. (Matthew 27:63)

They quoted what Jesus said—"After three days". After three days for us would mean the fourth day but

to them it meant the third day itself! Look at what they told Pilate about what to do, and till when.

Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day. (Matthew 27:64)

They told Pilate to protect the tomb, "Until the third day"; that means, till the completion of the third day. So they understood very well "After three days", to mean, "Until the third day"!

Also we know from the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, about the duration of time from the crucifixion to the resurrection day. In the evening of the resurrection day, they said:

To day is the third day since these things were done. (Luke 24:21)

Sunday evening was still the 3rd day from His resurrection!

Therefore "three days and three nights", is same as "the third day" in the Jewish manner of communication!

16

Why did Jesus tell the rich, young ruler in Matthew 19:17, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God". Wasn't Jesus good, and wasn't He God as well?

There is no doubt about the goodness of Jesus. He Himself declared:

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. (John 10:11)

Also, the scripture clearly presents Jesus as God, many times in the Bible. Apostle Paul wrote,

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh. (1 Timothy 3:16)

Now, what could have then prompted Jesus to make that statement to the rich young ruler? Christ was used to this pattern of address - "Master", "Good Master", "Rabbi", "Teacher", "Lord", etc. Some were genuine and meant what they said, but others used it as a cloak to cover their evil plans.

Jesus told His apostles during the Lord's Supper:

Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. (John 13:13)

On a different occasion He told His disciples and the vast multitude:

But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ... Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. (Matthew 23:8-10)

Jesus was indeed the "Good Master". There were some who came to Him genuinely addressing Him as He should be. For example, Nicodemus, a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews, saluted Jesus as "Rabbi". He said:

Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. (John 3:2)

Jesus saw his sincerity and had a blessed dialogue with this senior secret disciple. On another occasion some Pharisees came to entangle Jesus in His talk. The scripture says,

Then went out the Pharisee, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. (Matthew 22:15)

Listen to their conversation, and see how they addressed Jesus:

Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? (Matthew 22:16, 17)

They addressed Him as "Master"; and they were trying to "entangle" their Master! They could not fool Jesus with their flowery words. He saw thorns and not flowers. Christ was cutting straight:

But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? (Matthew 22:18)

He called the ones who called Him "Master", as, "hypocrites", because they did not mean what they said. Elsewhere, the good Lord said:

And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? (Luke 6:46)

Christ doesn't want anyone who doesn't do what the Lord says to call Him Lord! That is the precise reason why Christ told the rich young ruler,

Why callest thou me good? (Matthew 19:17)

This young man came to Christ with a divided heart. He actually came not to learn what the truth was, and to practice it, but came expecting a pampering answer of approval of his self righteousness. He said:

Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? (Matthew 19:16)

And even if he came with good intentions, it is obvious that he came not with an open mind. The Good Master told him the truth, and he did not take the good advice. It was bitter to his selfish soul. Matthew writes:

When the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful. (Matthew 19:22)

He became sorrowful, not because he did not get a good advice, but because he realized that his wretched and selfish heart was not willing to surrender, and do good to his poor fellow humans.

In the Old Testament God instructed people to bring sacrifices for sins, and observe certain solemn feasts that were the shadows of the Cross (See Leviticus 23). But when they lost focus of the truth, and were behaving hypocritically, God said:

When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? ... Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. (Isaiah 1:12, 14)

Though God gave them these ordinances, God told them to stop it because they did not truly believe and want to understand what it meant.

So also Jesus told the rich young man, and still tells all who do not mean what they say, not to call Him "Good Master", if they are not willing to do the good things He teaches through His Word. For it is written:

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. (Exodus 20:7)

17

Jesus said in Matthew 22:14, "For many are called, but few are chosen". Why doesn't He call all?

The famous invitation of Jesus is recorded in Matthew:

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)

Also, we know the most famous text in the Bible recorded by John:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

From these two texts, we clearly see that all are in His plan. If not, it will be unfair on the part of God; and Satan would have accused Him on this point.

Now let us look at the text in question,

Many are called, but few are chosen. (Matthew 22:14)

This statement was made at the end of the parable of the man without a wedding garment. If you notice carefully, in this parable the ones who were called (the Jews), did not turn up for the wedding of the King's Son. And the King sent an open invitation to all. He said:

As many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. (Matthew 22:9)

And all who were available came. It was not restricted to a limited number. He said, "As many as

ye shall find". That is, anyone and everyone who were around.

Many responded to the open invitation of the King. Therefore, Jesus said: "Many are called", in the sense, many gave ear to the call and came even though all had the invitation.

Also in the great final commission, Jesus said:

Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. (Mark 16:15)

The call goes to the entire world, and to every creature. But how many are willing even to listen to the gospel? There are quite a few who turn a deaf ear to the message even without listening to what it is all about. How then can they hear the call of God? But there are many others who give ear to it, and this group falls into that category, "Many are called". Not that God has restricted His invitation to only this group, but that this group was willing to hear the call of God.

Some of them after listening, don't respond. But there are a few who respond, and get converted to the gospel message. These are the ones, who are referred to as: "Few are chosen".

That does not mean that the ones who respond positively to the message, will naturally be saved. They have started well; they need to end well too. Peter admonished the believers who accepted the gospel invitation to do something more. He said:

Make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. (2 Peter 1:10)

They were to make sure to respond to the call and also by being in the faith and growing in it. Jesus too, said that starting well is no good; one should end well too. That is what matters most!

But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. (Matthew 24:13)

Also He warned the ones who have responded to the message not to relax and take it easy as most of the Christians do. He said:

Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. (Luke 13:24)

This is what it means "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14).

Does God call and choose people arbitrarily? Not at all! We have already seen that His invitation is extended to all people. All who respond to His invitation, they are the "called" ones, and all who make sure their calling they are the "chosen" ones for heaven. That's very fair. All can fit into it if they want to. But the sad part is, ultimately, only a few will be chosen because the majority will be unwilling to sacrifice and fulfill the conditions of salvation, which is indeed little compared to the great sacrifice of Christ!

Peter wrote of God's desire:

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

John the Revelator penned down the all-open invitation that he heard:

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. (Revelation 22:17)

18

The four gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—are not always in harmony in the narration of many things! Therefore, aren't they contradictory in nature?

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John wrote primarily to specific groups of people.

Matthew was focusing on the Jewish community. Therefore you will notice Matthew's gospel having a lot of Old Testament quotations. The Jews needed the Old Testament scriptures for proof to believe Jesus was the Messiah.

Mark was focusing on the Latin group, basically the Roman population. They were ruling the then known world. They were men of action and power. Therefore, Mark has focused a lot on the power and miracles of Jesus.

Luke was the only non-Jewish writer in the New Testament. Luke was a gentile convert, a physician by profession (Colossians 4:14). He was very systematic in his approach. He was writing primarily to the Greeks. He pens down most of the parables of Jesus. The Greeks loved these deep and wise sayings.

Finally, John wrote his gospel. Bible scholars believe it to be the last book written in the Bible, even after the book of Revelation. The aged John writes basically to the Christian community, the ones who have now, for long, been in the faith. His gospel is much different from the rest. The most precious verse of the Bible, John 3:16, and many other beautiful verses, are all found in his gospel.

All these four writers wrote at different points in time from different places to different groups, yet they have many things in common. One would concentrate on a particular matter and highlight a particular incident to their audience, while another writer, talking about the same incident, would concentrate from another angle.

Don't we have today's newspapers, too, reporting a particular incident from different angles? One journalist highlights a particular thing; while another leaves a few points out and cover different minor information which his counterpart probably thought was not necessary for his audience. These are not contradictions but variations in viewpoints and coverage of the same event from different angles. So also it is with the four gospels writers.

The “repeat and enlarge” principle is followed in the Bible throughout, especially in the gospels and in the prophetic books like Daniel and the Revelation. It was the Holy Spirit that brought to their memory and directed them what to highlight and what to leave out.

One might say—why was it necessary to have four gospels? Couldn't the Holy Spirit just use one writer to highlight all the main incidences?

Well, the life of Jesus on earth was the most blessed thing to have ever happened to the human race, in fact to the whole universe—God becoming man! That is the center of the gospel. The Holy Spirit saw it fit that many writers write from different viewpoints on this grand story and make a great impression on the readers of the gospel.

When nearly the same story is told by different writers and from different angles, to different groups, it makes it very interesting, and it truly carries a lot of weight. Don't all the leading newspapers and magazine cover the most important incidents that

happen even today? The same it is with the life of Jesus and the coverage by four gospel writers. Even though four different people wrote it at different times, the accurate and harmonious narration of all testifies to the truthfulness of their accounts!

Finally let us see what the apostle John had to say regarding the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen. (John 21:25)

19

What does John 5:4 mean—"An angel troubling the water"? Does God work in this manner?

Let us read the passage:

Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. (John 5:2-4)

A very interesting incident indeed—an angel "moving" and "troubling" the water for the healing of various diseases!

Think for a moment—will God work this way? Only the first one to step into the water would be healed. Was it fair? Look at the plight of the man who complained to Jesus:

Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. (John 5:7)

This poor cripple has been waiting for his opportunity for the past thirty eight years! Was it an angel of the Lord doing this strange act at "a certain season"? It says "an angel" and not "an angel of the lord".

We know from the Bible that there are two kinds of angels—holy angels and evil angels (See Revelation 12:7-9). The Bible warns us of the devil appearing as an angel of light, or an angel of God. Paul wrote:

And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. (2 Corinthians 11:14)

When the Bible talks about a prophet, it could mean either a true prophet or a false one. Sometimes the Bible specifies, like Jesus said:

Beware of false prophets. (Matthew 7:15)

Sometimes there is no mention whether it is a true or a false prophet. Only the local context and broader context of the entire scripture makes it clear.

The true prophet, Jeremiah, was condemned to die by the "prophets".

Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die. (Jeremiah 26:8)

Obviously it cannot be that those "prophets" who condemned Jeremiah, were God's prophets. For God's prophets will all agree and will have the same mind and unity.

Again, we have a confrontation between Jeremiah the prophet, and Hananiah the prophet.

Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah; The LORD hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. (Jeremiah 28:15)

The LORD did not send Hananiah. Obviously, Hananiah was not a true prophet, though the Bible records of him as "Hananiah the prophet".

Paul wrote to the Corinthian church about the millennium judgment. He said,

Know ye not that we shall judge angels. (1 Corinthians 6:3)

Because Paul just mentioned "angels" and did not specify whether they are "good" or "bad" angels, does it make us believe that he was referring to the "holy angels"? No! We realize from the other parts of scriptures that it is the fallen angels that we are going to judge, whom God has reserved for judgment and condemnation. Jude sheds light on the same subject.

And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. (Jude 1:6)

When the Bible mentions "angels" or "prophets", we need not conclude that they are always God's angels or prophets.

For sure God would not send His angel to conduct this "lucky dip" in the pool of water! Only the strong ones stood a chance here. If God did this, He would be promoting the Darwinism theory of the "survival of the fittest"! But God is love; He cares for all. This angel could not be from God. An evil angel was fooling the people with miracles.

It is the same today too. Many people attribute the healing that comes from the devil, to God. Jesus Himself warned us of this deception of the devil:

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. (Matthew 24:24, 25)

John the Revelator adds:

For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles. (Revelation 16:14)

The people thought it was an angel from God and therefore they went there to receive the healing. But the Bible doesn't say it was an angel of God, it just says "an angel".

20

Can Satan read our minds? If not, how does he feed our minds with thoughts of temptations?

From the Bible we understand that only God can read the thoughts of His creatures. He declares:

I know their works and their thoughts. (Isaiah 66:18)

The Psalmist adds:

The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man. (Psalm 94:11)

During the time of Noah the world was corrupt. God decided to put an end to life on earth, and spare only those who would repent.

And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. (Genesis 6:5)

Their very thoughts were evil. It was all as an open book before God. Paul said:

Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. (Hebrew 4:13)

The dark chambers of our minds are as an open book in the sight of the Lord.

The Bible writers mention that all our thoughts, words, actions, intentions, etc., are all written down in the books of heaven to be retrieved at the time of the final judgment. Daniel recorded:

I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of

his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. (Daniel 7:9, 10)

We know not exactly what kind of books they are; but for sure the holy angels maintain an unerring record—an assignment given to them by God. Those divine books are very sophisticated, no doubt. If man can capture a person's action on video camera, why can't the holy angels capture our thoughts, words, actions, motives, live on some sophisticated photographic books of heaven?

One might ask—does an all-knowing God need to maintain any record books? Well, God doesn't need any records for Himself. But God is not alone in heaven; angels are living in heaven too. And sin started with an angel in heaven. And God wants to convince all the holy angels, and also all the other intellectual beings in the universe, about all the details of sin. Therefore He makes these angels to keep a record of every person in this world for a purpose. Not just for their benefit but for our benefits too.

When the redeemed saints get to heaven for the millennium judgment, they will want to know why many of their "good" friends and loved ones could not make it to heaven. And these accurate record books of heaven will help because God likes to prove everything in this great controversy with Satan. Paul wrote,

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and

will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God. (1 Corinthians 4:5)

Only God can read the thoughts of all his creatures, and the holy angels who are assigned the task of recording our lives' records, are given the power to do so. Also, some of God's people were given, on occasions, the power, by the Holy Ghost, to read the thoughts of the wicked people. Peter was given the power to read the thoughts of Annanias and Sapphira (See Acts 5:1-11)

The devil and his angels have no power or capacity to read the human mind. It is a great science of how this great machinery, called the mind, works. Men are trying their level best to device instruments to read the human mind. In vain are all these efforts. It is beyond the reach of man and the devil too.

One might say—how do we know that the devil is powerless in regard to the reading of our minds? The classic story of Daniel chapter 2 exposes the instruments of the devil, and in reality, exposes the devil himself. The magicians, astrologers and sorcerers are Satan's mediums of communication. God has nothing to do with these people who perform supernatural feats. They get their help from the enemy of God to perform tricks. God spoke against them and commanded the children of Israel not to spare them (See Deuteronomy 18:10-13.) In this classic story in the book of Daniel, King Nebuchadnezzar was given a dream from the God of heaven. He forgot the details of his dream. He called all the agents of the devil to tell him his dream and the interpretation of it. They failed. They asked the king to tell the dream and these liars would then make up their own interpretation. (See Daniel Chapter 2 for the whole story).

God gave Daniel the same dream, and he communicated it to the King, who was astonished. With this simple dream, God exposed the devil and his agents. Daniel told the king:

As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed. (Daniel 2:29)

Since the devil could not read the mind of Nebuchadnezzar, a heathen king, he could not tell the dream to his agents—the magicians, the astrologers and the sorcerers! Only God can read our minds.

But we need to realize that though the devil cannot read our minds, he can feed our minds and then study our minds by the actions and words that we bring forth. Feeding the mind is not a big deal. Don't we feed the minds of other people too?

When you tell a child to read a book, are you not feeding his mind with the contents of the book? When you talk to someone, are you not feeding that person with some information? Through the sense organs of our body, the devil feeds our minds with evil and temptations. Once he feeds us with his stuff, he observes us carefully and thus he can know what we could be thinking about. Can't we humans too, do the same? Once you tell someone of some tragic news, can't you guess, almost accurately, what that person is thinking about?

Satan has been studying carefully the human behavior for the past six thousand years. He knows, with his very vast experience, nearly exactly how the human mind functions. Not because he can read it or scan it, but by feeding it and with careful observation. Thus he makes people believe that he too, can read our minds!

He can almost accurately tell what we are thinking of by his shrewd methods.

There are times where the devil's calculations do not work, and he falters. Nebuchadnezzar's dream was just one example. God registered it directly on Nebuchadnezzar's mind, and Satan had no clue as to what it was, as there were no external manifestations. It was an internal communication from God to the human mind.

Once something is fed in the human mind, it gets registered permanently. The thoughts can flash back anytime. That is the mechanism of it. It is very complex. But, by the grace of God, we can push back the evil thoughts and suppress it every time it comes up. Of course the devil has a part in flashing back the thoughts that he has fed, by feeding our thoughts frequently.

One might say—if the devil can feed our minds he should be able to read it too! Not necessarily. Don't we have human devices that work the same way? For example, we have audio players, and video cassette players that can only play and not record. Also we have CD ROMs, which cannot write, but only read. If man can device such methods can't God just restrict the devil to just feeding our thoughts?

Do not ever think that the devil is all knowing. He has his limitations. He could not even read the message written by God on the Babylonian walls! (See Daniel chapter 5). All his magicians and his men failed again—not in just reading the human mind—but even in reading and understanding the plain letters inscribed on the wall!

The devil has his boundaries. When God codes something, even this "great" fallen angel is clueless.

Praise God for His ways!

21

If God made man in His own image, how are there different races and colors of people?

A race is defined as a group of people with certain common inherited features that distinguish them from other groups of people. All men of whatever race, are currently classified by the anthropologist or biologist as belonging to the one species, Homo sapiens. This is another way of saying that the differences between human races are not great even though they may appear to be so i.e. black skin vs white skin, curly hair vs straight hair. All races of mankind in the world can interbreed because they have so much in common.

In the beginning, God created just two people—Adam and Eve—in His own image.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. (Genesis 1:27)

Adam and Eve were made perfect. But that, unfortunately, is not the whole story. Sin entered the world and everything changed. The animals, for example, were vegetarians then. The Bible record declares:

And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. (Genesis 1:30)

After sin entered the world, that order changed—there were drastic changes in the animal kingdom, plant kingdom, in the climate and in the very body of man.

Even when we look at man from the physical perspective we see a lot of changes that have taken place since the fall. For example, Moses talks about a giant who was sleeping on a bed size of thirteen-and-a-half feet. And the bed was made of iron!

For only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of giants; behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron; is it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon? nine cubits was the length thereof, and four cubits the breadth of it, after the cubit of a man. (Deuteronomy 3:11)

As time passed, the very physical structure of man started changing dramatically. Today's man is less than six feet on an average.

And before the flood man's life span was nine hundred plus years (See Genesis chapter 5). But now, the average lifespan is around sixty years!

If Sin could hit man's physical height and age, it should not surprise us that sin has touched the very genes of man.

After the flood, God gave a specific command to Noah and his family to reproduce, and cover the earth.

And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. (Genesis 9:1)

But soon after the flood, the descendants of Noah, instead of spreading out in different directions to cover the earth, as God commanded, decided to build a tower and a city and be in one place. It was here that God had to intervene and scatter them in all directions of the earth by confusing them with language and communication.

The Bible tells us that the whole world after flood was speaking one language. But after the flood, at the

tower of Babel, we see the beginning of different languages and the segregation of the people.

And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech... the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth. (Genesis 11:1, 9)

It was at this point of time the segregation began. The people started to group themselves and that is how races finally began.

It is possible that Adam and Eve, our first parents, would have had the same skin color, with different shades of it. They were living in the same geographical location. But Noah's three sons and their decedents, who were scattered abroad, would have had varying skin colors, and it would have further been distinct as they settled in different climatic conditions.

This distinguishing feature in color is primarily due to difference in amount of the pigment, melanin, in the skin. This melanin protects the body by absorbing ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sunlight which falls on the skin. Some moved to hotter and some moved to colder places, and accordingly the pigment of the skin adjusted itself to give the light and the dark skin colors.

It is interesting to note that if a pure white European is married to a pure black African, the color of skin of the offspring is usually intermediate brown called "mulatto". If two mulattos are married, the offspring can be any of 9 colors, from pure white to pure black!

Some races have more fat in the layer of the eyes, and some have less. The Caucasian eye has only one layer of fat. The eye of the Mongoloid, however, has a double fold of fat giving it an almond appearance. This doubly insulated eye has probably been very useful in

cold snowy winters, and in protecting the eye from snow reflected UV light. Both the Caucasian eye and the Mongoloid eye have fat. The Mongoloid eye has more of it.

We thank God that the plan of salvation embraces the whole world. Every color, race, language and tribe, and whatever distinction there might be today, is embraced in God's love.

In Christ Jesus,

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)

22

Why did Jesus, the Creator of all things, curse the fig tree for not bearing fruits, when it was not even the season! (See mark 11:12-14)

The cursing of the fig tree by our Lord was done at the end of His ministry on earth. Mathew records,

Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away! (Matthew 21:18-20)

Mark records the same incident and gives a little more detail:

And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it. (Mark 11:12-14)

It might look strange that Jesus cursed the tree, which had leaves, but no fruit. And Mark says, "For the time of figs was not yet"!

To understand the reason for this let us look at a parable that Jesus told about a fig tree:

He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down. (Luke 13:6-9)

We get insight from this parable about how our Lord works. In this story, He told about a fig tree that did not bear fruits for three years, and then He wanted to destroy it. It would be unfair to chop a tree if it just does not bear fruits for one year. But for three continuous years it did not bear fruit. And most likely it was never going to bear fruits. The fig tree that Jesus cursed was in the vicinity of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem was the central place in Jesus' ministry on earth for over three years. Every year Jesus would have seen this fig tree just blossoming only with leaves. That particular year when he cursed it, he wanted his disciples to see and learn from this live demonstration, something that would soon take place. Jesus would not have destroyed it if it was bearing fruits but this tree, was deceiving people with only leaves.

The fig tree represents the nation of Israel. The vine and the fig tree were often symbols that God used to represent His nation. They were used simultaneously, many a time, as the following scriptures reveal.

But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree. (Micah 4:4)

Through Zechariah, the Lord declared:

In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree. (Zechariah 3:10)

To prophet Jeremiah, the Lord gave a beautiful illustration of the two groups of His people and likened them to "good figs" and "evil figs":

The LORD shewed me, and, behold, two baskets of figs were set before the temple of the LORD, after that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, with the carpenters and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon. One basket had very good figs, even like the figs that are first ripe: and the other basket had very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad. Then said the LORD unto me, What seest thou, Jeremiah? And I said, Figs; the good figs, very good; and the evil, very evil, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil. Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good. For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up. And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their

God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart. And as the evil figs, which cannot be eaten, they are so evil; surely thus saith the LORD, So will I give Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his princes, and the residue of Jerusalem, that remain in this land, and them that dwell in the land of Egypt: And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them. And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, among them, till they be consumed from off the land that I gave unto them and to their fathers. (Jeremiah 24:1-10)

The Lord Jesus waited patiently for the past 1500 years (from the time of Moses, when the nation was brought forth to the Promised Land, till His coming as the Messiah,) for the nation of Israel to bear good fruit. But, by the passing of time, they only proved to be backsliding deeper into apostasy. It has always been the case when a person, a city, a country or the world at large, crosses the limit of God's longsuffering, God would bring a halt to the wickedness by His swift judgment, which was long pending.

For example, look at the cases of Sodom and Gomorrah and the period before the flood. The nation Israel now reached the cut-off point as a representative nation.

The Lord Himself came as, "Immanuel", to be, "God with us" (Matthew 1:23). For three and half years, He did all that He could to bring them to repentance and bear the fruit of the Spirit. Though a few accepted Him, the vast majority did not.

Before His crucifixion, Jesus mourned aloud on the Mount of Olives, beholding Jerusalem temple, and He wept:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. (Matthew 23:37, 38)

As the fig tree faced the wrath for being fruitless, (which was a symbol of that country,) the nation of Israel would also be "desolate" for being fruitless.

When would they face the wrath of being cut-off? Jesus said:

Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. (Matthew 23:36)

In A.D. 31 they rejected the Messiah by crucifying Him. And in A.D. 34 the leaders of Israel killed Stephen, the deacon, who was supposed to be the first Christian martyr. From then onwards the gospel reached the gentiles and to the entire world. The Christian church took the place of the nation Israel. It was in A.D. 70 that Jerusalem's temple was destroyed by fire by the Roman army.

Are we bearing "the fruit of the Spirit"? If not, what happened to the fig tree, and to God's chosen people, will happen again. Jesus said:

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man

abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. (John 15:4-8)

23

Why did Jesus ask His disciples to buy a sword? He said: "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one" (Luke 22:36).

Indeed it is a very interesting statement made by the Prince of peace!

Was Jesus telling them to buy a sword for offence, self-defense or did He mean something else? He said earlier:

Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also... Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. (Matthew 5:39, 40, 44)

The real battle is not with fellow humans but with the prince of demons. The apostle Paul penned down clearly, these wonderful words of truth:

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. (Ephesians 6:12)

We are to be equipped in this great warfare. Look at how the apostle relates the earthly armor to the spiritual.

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. (Ephesians 6:13-18)

You have the "whole armor"—breastplate, shield, helmet, sword, etc. It is not the literal weapons, but rather "the breastplate of righteousness", "the shield of faith", "the helmet of salvation", and "the sword of the Spirit"!

Jesus told each of His disciples to possess a sword. Which sword? Was it literal swords that He bid them have?

Many times we see when Jesus spoke figuratively people got Him wrong. Even the learned Nicodemus misunderstood Christ regarding being born again. When Jesus talked about the spiritual birth, he took it literally.

Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? (John 3:4)

On another occasion, when Jesus said that all must eat His flesh and drink His blood, the multitude

took it literally and misunderstood Him so badly that most of them never followed Christ after that! John records:

The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?... Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?... From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. (John 6:52, 60, 66)

Coming back to the question of the “swords”: was Jesus talking about the literal swords to be taken? If He meant the literal swords why did He rebuke Peter for using the sword against His enemy, and why did Jesus heal the injured man? Behold the scene.

Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. (John 18:10)

Look at the compassion of Christ even for His enemies who came to kill Him!

And he touched his ear, and healed him. (Luke 22:51)

Notice how Jesus reacted to Peter's method of protecting his Master:

Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? (Matthew 26:52, 53)

A legion in the Roman army division was around 6,000 soldiers. "Twelve legions of angels": that is, one legion for each of them—Christ and the eleven

apostles. (Judas had already joined the enemies of Christ, and was leading the other band!)

Christ did not need any earthly defense; the mighty heavenly air force was at His disposal if He wanted to. In fact we see the enemies of Jesus falling down, powerless, just before they arrested Him.

Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground. (John 18:3-6)

The power of the divine Christ most likely flashed forth through His human flesh, as it happened also on the Mount of Transfiguration where the three apostles of Jesus fell down on their faces seeing His glory (See Matthew 17:1-7). God was giving His murderers another chance to let them know that the One they were about handle and crucify was no ordinary Being!

Before telling His disciples about the fierce battle ahead in Gethsemane and Calvary, Jesus cautioned Peter about the attack of the devil on him.

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the

cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me. (Luke 22:31-34)

Peter and the rest had no idea as to what exactly Christ spoke. They had so many preconceived opinions about the future. Peter truly loved the Lord. We can see it when he took the sword to defend his Master! But he trusted his own strength and wisdom. Therefore he finally, denied his dearly beloved Lord. When he realized what he had done, he wept bitterly!

And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly. (Luke 22:61, 62)

Peter and the rest failed during the crucial hour of test and temptation because they did not understand the Word of God! They did not put on the whole armor of God, but rather had the physical armor!

Which sword did Christ mean? Obviously He did not mean the literal sword as he rebuked Peter for using it. The scripture reveals the true sword.

The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:17)

Revelation talks about the sword that Christ will use, as His weapon, to defeat His enemies finally:

And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations. (Revelation 19:15)

The sword that comes from His mouth is His Word!

Even in the wilderness when He was battling it out with the devil, Christ used the "sword"—the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. For all the three fierce temptations that Satan assailed Him with, the

weapon of Jesus was the Word of God—"It is written!" (See Matthew 4:1-11)

Christ was asking them to get ready for the fiercest battle that was just ahead of them. He was asking them to get equipped.

After telling the disciples to get prepared for the battle, Christ showed them what He meant, by taking them to the Garden of Gethsemane, for a powerful season of prayer, and the battle with the forces of darkness.

Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. (Matthew 26:36-38)

Instead of watching and praying, the disciples were overtaken with sleep. Jesus battles it alone! And He comes to check how the disciples are fairing in their battle, and, lo, they are already knocked out!

And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. (Matthew 26:40, 41)

Peter had a sword, but the wrong sword! What he was told to have was, the spiritual sword, to fight the battle in the garden of great temptation. They were to "watch and pray" to escape temptation. But they slept, and therefore Peter fell into temptation, and to the enemies' trap. And to make up for the spiritual sword, he wielded his literal sword!

One might say—Jesus said that the two swords which they had were "enough". Therefore it is obvious that He was referring to the literal swords! Let's read that passage,

And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough. (Luke 22:38)

Please note, Jesus did not say "the two swords were enough", but said, "It is enough". If Jesus meant about the literal swords, how could two swords be enough for twelve people if they were going to war? And if Jesus meant just two swords were enough then He would be contradicting His own words earlier, where He told all of them should have a sword each! He said earlier:

He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. (Luke 22:36)

Therefore, "It is enough", means, to wind up the conversation, as it was also time to go and start praying! And the next thing they did was, to march to the site of spiritual warfare.

And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough. And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. (Luke 22:38, 39)

Also Christ wanted to end that conversation, as they were not in a position to understand what He was saying. Jesus told them earlier:

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth. (John 16:12, 13)

They were not to have the two literal swords, but the two-edged sword, which was the symbolic

representation of the word of God, their weapon, in spiritual warfare!

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword. (Hebrews 4:12)

This is the powerful weapon that Jesus our Master wields against His enemies.

These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges. (Revelation 2:12)

And this is what Christ meant when He said, carry your swords!

One might again say—if Christ meant the spiritual sword why did He say, "buy" a sword? He said:

He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. (Luke 22:36)

Well, this method of conveying spiritual messages in a literal way, was not new. Jesus used the illustration of selling something to buy another thing, even in His parables.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. (Matthew 13:44)

To get something spiritual, we have to "sell" or give up the things that are an obstacle to its possession. It is only when we give up our selfish ambitions and motives will we be able to "buy" or receive the heavenly gift. Though spiritual things are free we are to "buy" it, as the gospel prophet, Isaiah, too speaks of the invitation of God regarding "buying" things for free!

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and

milk without money and without price.

(Isaiah 55:1)

Jesus told Peter just before the temptation in the Garden, to strengthen his brethren later when he got converted. And when the apostle got converted, he admonished God's people to give much attention to the sword—the Word of God—which he lacked before. He wrote:

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts. (2 Peter 1:19)

Are we carrying the sword everyday? We need to! But not the literal sword that Peter once carried, instead,

The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:17)

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

24

Why did Jesus say that we need to "hate" our father and mother before coming to Him? (See Luke 14:26). Isn't that against the fifth commandment which states, "Honour thy father and thy mother"? (Exodus 20:12)

Our Lord Jesus made a very interesting statement when He said,

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:26)

Did Jesus really mean that we must hate our parents, loved ones and our own selves? Didn't He Himself command us to love our enemies? He said,

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies. (Matthew 5:43, 44)

Yes, in our opening text, we read that Jesus told us to hate our own life. But elsewhere

He said,

Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. (Matthew 22:39)

How can you "love your neighbor as yourself", if you don't love "yourself" in the first place? Paul also said:

For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it. (Ephesians 5:29)

One of the commandments in the greatest law in the Bible declares:

Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. (Exodus 20:12)

Paul quotes this law and says it has a promise in it:

Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise). (Ephesians 6:2)

Therefore it is clear from God's Word that, our parents need to be loved and not just that—but to be honored! In one of His confrontations with the religious men of Israel, Jesus strongly advocated loving and honoring one's parents. He told the Pharisees:

For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. (Matthew 15:4-6)

It is clear that Jesus believed and taught to love and honor our parents who were instruments in God's hands, for our birth.

What then could Luke 14:26 mean? The context is important. Just before He made this interesting statement, He told them a parable—the parable of the Great Banquet. See Luke 14:16-24. In this parable:

A certain man made a great supper, and bade many. (Luke 14:16)

When the supper was ready, the invitees were told to come. But many had excuses:

The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. (Luke 14:18-20)

This parable was a symbol of the "marriage supper of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:9).

Are not people in real life making genuine excuses for not following the truth and obeying the commandments of God? People are putting God's invitation second. But did not our

Lord say what should be first? He said:

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matthew 6:33)

None can take the first place—whether it is our parents, our loved ones, or even we. The Apostle Paul wrote,

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price. (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20)

The psalmist also reminds us that not only do we belong to God but everything that He has created as well.

The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. (Psalm 24:1)

God has the moral right to ask us to place Him first, even before our own selves or anything or anyone else in this world. For two reasons God has a right to tell us this. Firstly, He is our Creator,

Redeemer and Sustainer—He knows in doing so, the enemy can be resisted because our focus is on Him, we will be safe. Secondly, He set an example in this—He loved us more than His own self, more than His own life! He died that we might live. He denied self, took up the cross for our sakes! Doesn't He therefore have the right to tell us to follow His actions because after all, He knows that following His ways will lead us to be transformed into His image so we can be powerful witnesses to our neighbours by taking up the cross of godly love and long suffering? John said:

We love him, because he first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

The word "to hate" our father and mother, and ourselves, does not mean to abhor and detest. We get the meaning of it when we hear Jesus elsewhere about the same topic.

He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. (Matthew 10:37-39)

To "hate" father and mother, and self, and anything else, means we are not to love anyone "more than" Jesus! God is always first.

God has to be worshiped; our parents have to be honored. Yes, God comes above our parents for our own sake that we may never fall under the influence of human folly. If parents tell us to do things contrary to the word and will of God, then our priority is to obey and do the will of God. Jesus said,

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. (Matthew 22:37, 38)

25

If the book of Revelation is so important, why isn't it given in plain and understandable language?

Precious things/gifts are always wrapped and given! God has wrapped His precious gift of the message of Revelation, with metaphors.

Let us look at the background. John was on the Isle of Patmos for preaching about Jesus.

I John...was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. (Revelation 1:9)

In the book of Revelation God was outlining the future of many things—the church, the major world kingdoms, the political conditions of the world, the various spiritual and political wars, and even the things pertaining to the Roman Empire, which had exiled John. And if the message of Revelation was given in plain and straightforward language, the Romans would not have permitted it to go out of Patmos.

John was to send the message of Revelation to the seven churches. The Lord told him,

What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia. (Revelation 1:11)

It had to first pass through the searching eyes of the Roman guards who would check what message this prisoner was sending across. But when they read it, this coded book made no sense to them, and they understood nothing! John wrote about some beasts coming out of the sea, some dragon fighting a Lamb, a serpent chasing a woman and bringing a flood of water to drown her, an image talking and killing people, etc.

It seemed to them, a fairly tale book but for God's people, it was clear. For the symbolic language found its interpretation in other parts of scripture.

God had already given the "keys" before He gave the "locks".

For those who have not studied the rest of the scriptures, the book of Revelation becomes a concealed book, just as it was for the Roman guards at Patmos. But for a Bible student, it's a revealed book.

The words of Revelation are like the parables of Jesus—where the sincere seekers can see and the rest cannot. Listen to this interesting dialogue that Jesus and His disciples had.

And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand... But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. (Matthew 13: 10-13, 16)

God wants only seekers to find the treasures hidden in His Word. He does not want superficial readers, who put no real effort to study His Word, to discover anything. Jesus said:

Seek, and ye shall find. (Matthew 7:7)

It means, if one does not seek, he will not find it.

Solomon also penned down similar words:

Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. (Proverbs 2:2-6)

The book of Revelation is only for His people who are earnestly seeking hidden treasures. To the rest it, will be like the parables of Jesus, which the Pharisees hardly understood.

The original Greek work for "Revelation" is "apocalypses" meaning "disclosure or revealed!" It is a revealed book for God's people. It is,

The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Revelation 1:1)

It is symbolic in its presentation. But these symbols are explained elsewhere in the Bible. Out of the 404 verses in this prophetic book it is believed that 278 verses have a direct or indirect reference to the verses in the Old Testament. That is 68.8% of the book is built on the language of the Old Testament scriptures!

So if one has not read the Old Testament and the other parts of the New Testament, for sure the book of Revelation will remain a closed book instead of being a revealed book as its name suggests.

One need not speculate about anything in this great book. For example, the word "Lamb" appears twenty seven times in Revelation, and only four other times elsewhere in the New Testament! Only the ones who have read John 1:29 will know who the "Lamb" is! The same is with the rest of the symbols that are contained therein. For example,

And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. (Revelation 13:2)

These four beasts that are amalgamated into one are found in Daniel chapter 7. And it is in Daniel 7 we are told,

These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. (Daniel 7:17)

Also, we need to remember that the book of Revelation is not the first book of the Bible; it is the last in sequence. Therefore if one begins to read the Bible and starts with Revelation, for sure he will not understand any of it.

Only to the ones who are familiar with the rest of the books of Holy Scriptures will this great book be as a revealed book!

Contact Details:

michael@clearbibleanswers.org

michaelpedrin@gmail.com

www.clearbibleanswers.org