

GENESIS ACCEPTED



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The article on Melchizedek in issue Number 1 was the one which raised most eyebrows. This was hardly a surprise to me but I don't want to give the impression that readers were flocking in with comments both pro and con. They weren't. One sister wrote: *'Melchizedek could not have been a man for he had no parents, no beginning of days nor end of life, no genealogy.'* She wasn't at all upset with me because she concluded: 'Thank you again for making us think'. One brother emailed me and said that he thought I'd got it right, whilst another brother sent me a copy of an article he'd downloaded which had as its title, 'The Mystery of Melchizedek Solved!' This was a nice coincidence, save that his had the positive exclamation mark after it, showing absolute certainty, but mine had the modest question mark, humbly demonstrating the intellectual openness that my conclusion just might not be right and that readers would definitely be allowed to have their own opinions on the matter. This

article concluded that Melchizedek was none other than the pre-incarnate Christ. The brother who sent it to me mischievously said that he was uncertain which 'authority' to believe. So I told him!

Not controversial

I feel certain that some comments received, that what I write is sometimes controversial, or that 'we don't always agree with what you write but...', principally had this article in mind. It actually should not be considered 'controversial' since there is no 'given' opinion, either in the church or within Christendom as a whole down the millennia, as to who Melchizedek actually was. Therefore to conclude that he was Shem could be challenging and debatable but should not cause controversy since it is not a salvation issue, nor does any great teaching appear to hang on the identification.

I deliberately included it in Number 1 because it best demonstrated why I called the magazine *Genesis Accepted*. Accept the genealogies as being true and accurate, as written, and Shem leaps into the frame because he outlived Abraham and was the founder of the Shemites (Semites) of whom Abraham was an exalted son. Disregard the genealogies as being either incomplete or distorted—people don't live to be 600, etc.—and there can be no case made out at all for Shem. (The man who concluded that Melchizedek was the pre-incarnate Christ did not consider my option in order to discard it. Maybe he'd never heard of it, or maybe he doesn't believe the accuracy of the text in Genesis. Both positions, which are quite normal amongst the denominations, would definitely have coloured his conclusion.)



Jerusalem, where Melchizedek was once king/priest

Brief history of the article

In 1982 I was privileged to publish my first book, *Speak Through The Earthquake, Wind And Fire*. Now that could be classed as controversial in its conclusions and underlying premises! (See the [advert for it elsewhere in this issue](#).) In its pages I placed a diagram of the genealogies of the patriarchs as given in Genesis 5 and 10 (see page 7, Fig 6). At that time I had no notion whatever about the identification of Melchizedek but was surprised to note how both Noah and Shem were still alive when Abraham was born, and that Shem outlived Abraham and could have known Esau and Jacob.

Then in 1988, when I'd retired from teaching and was working as a book representative and salesman for a small firm of local, i.e. Liverpool, publishers, I bought a book from a shop I used to visit in Southport, entitled, *Ancient Israel, Myths and Legends*. It was here that I first learned of the Shem link to Melchizedek. These legends dated mainly from around the First Century and were part of Israel's folklore when Jesus was alive. They are not biblical though they deal with all sorts of biblical subjects and are quite fascinating. Here Melchizedek/Shem, as the book calls him quite naturally, was featured and it was this which prompted my studies to see just if this could be true. I even wrote an article for *Truth for Today* (Vol. 23:2) about it and had absolutely no feedback on it at all! Not one eyebrow was raised that I knew about, let alone the 'flock' of three that were raised by the *Genesis Accepted* article. So the conclusion was not mine, though the research and case presented most definitely is, and I believe it to be true. However, (unlike the other writer who usurped my title, save for the ?), I did consider the supernatural options for Melchizedek and rejected them.

Melchizedek as a super man

The reasons for supposing he was not a man but some sort of spirit being, like an angel or the pre-incarnate Christ, do not lie in the Old Testament account at all. There he is introduced without fanfare in a totally normal fashion (Genesis 14:17-20). This alone would make it atypical and cause us to ponder since all other 'spirit' visitations before Christ are surrounded with important messages or callings and never simply with blessings. When reading these accounts you know you are dealing with something strange, cf. Genesis 18:1-19:1, where the Lord appears to Abraham along with two angels. Abraham saw three men. One was the Lord. He stayed back as the others went on to Sodom and Abraham bargained with Him to save the city. The other two were called men until 19:1 identifies them as angels. Thus of the three men Abraham saw, one was the Lord Himself and the other two were angels. The same author, Moses, makes no special identification when he speaks of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 7:3

The supernatural understanding springs out of one verse in Hebrews 7:3. This says of Melchizedek: *'He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest for ever.'* This obviously is an important verse and must be taken very seriously. We can't pencil it out simply because it upsets our theories.

The Jewish understanding was that it was Shem he was dealing with and the Hebrew writer must also have been aware of this. The fact that Abraham had to know who Melchizedek was, and that Melchizedek's priesthood was superior to his own (vs. 7), is a powerful clue. This would be a most consistent view were it not for He-

brews 7:3, which upsets the applecart.

One of the problems when we deal with imagery and metaphor in Scripture is that we are dealing with a book written thousands of years ago for a Middle Eastern audience. Their mode of expression is not always consistent with ours. They loved hyperbole, exaggeration for effect, and Jesus was a master of its form. Unfortunately we, with our more literal reading of the words, sometimes fail to recognize it for what it is, for the words can have a literal interpretation. Sometimes we manage the exercise successfully; if we didn't we should be able to identify honest Christians by the fact that they limp around with only one foot, one hand and one eye. Read Matthew 18:7-9 to see what I mean.

Is this one of those flowery verses never intended to be taken literally, or do we have to stick with the words exactly as written? I wish to contend that this is not intended to convey that Melchizedek was a complete man of mystery, since they knew who he was, but that the writer was expressing qualities in Melchizedek which made him an important messianic Old Testament figure.

Accept, for the moment, that he was Shem. Here was a man who belonged to another world, whose birth was lost in the mists of time. We know who his father was but nobody knows his mother's name. He grew up amidst wickedness such as we have never known. He did not know clouds or rain, mountains, ice and snow, or seasons. He witnessed their introduction into the physical world. The land was one whole super-continent and all language was one, when he was born. Indeed his language disappeared at Babel and it's possible thereafter he could not communicate even with Japheth and Ham and possibly Noah. He'd been around for so long that he was a man of mystery with tales to tell of life before the Flood, of Methuselah, his great grandfather, whom he knew and who knew Adam. Now not only had his world changed, his name and function on Earth, as priest/king of Salem (Jerusalem) had also altered. The picture is clear: Melchizedek was not of this world at all, for the post-Flood world was nothing at all like the pre-Flood world. (We will put more flesh on this picture of the antediluvian world in later issues of the magazine.) So I want to maintain that this is not to be understood literally but rather is a lovely example of metaphor, used in genuine Hebraic style for effect. However, I have other reasons for rejecting the supernatural interpretation of Melchizedek's identity, because I think that understanding creates far more problems than it solves, apart from doing violence to Moses' presentation of him in Genesis.

The Angel Option

Angels, as we know, are ministering spirits sent to serve those who are to inherit



The angel visits Mary (Luke 1)

salvation (Heb. 1:14). They come with urgent messages (Acts 12:7-9), made glad tidings of great joy (Luke 2:10), announced the coming birth of both John the Baptist and Jesus (Luke 1), blocked the path of Balaam and his ass (Numbers 22:22ff) and so on. Every time there is urgency in their dealings and usually fear in the hearts of those to whom the message is being given (Luke 2:9).

If Abraham's meeting was with an angelic being, it was like no other in the Bible and it struck no 'mighty dread' in a troubled mind. He's on the way home and his men need feeding as they pass Jerusalem. Out comes the king/priest Melchizedek and provides for them, blesses Abraham as he goes on his way, Abraham bows to him and gives him a tithe, and off he pops. It was all very civil and 'normal'.

This king/priest of Salem had an established ministry serving God Most High, and you don't do that on a fleeting visit. God never sent an angel to remain for months or years on Earth. I think the longest any angel remained here was about 24 hours in the Sodom incident.

But there is another objection to the Angel hypothesis and that is that angels are always messengers not intermediaries. A priest stands between God and man and intercedes for him. Intercession is simply not an angelic function and this is important to recognize. Paul warns against people who would want to include angels in a spiritual hierarchy (Col.2:18) and there are heretical sects who would love to have Melchizedek as an angel, thereby making him a type of whom Jesus was the antitype. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jesus is the Archangel Michael who was the first born, not the firstborn, of all creation. (The difference is that 'first born' means the oldest or first created but the

'firstborn' means the pre-eminent one, Col. 1:15-20). If Melchizedek could be identified as being an angel, so too could Jesus by association, so for all these reasons I rejected the Angel Theory.

The Pre-incarnate Christ Option

This theory too poses more questions than it answers. There is no doubt that the pre-incarnate Christ, the Second Person in the Trinity, the Word of God, did come down to Earth during Old Testament times. The passage cited above where Abraham bartered for Sodom is one such instance. There seems little doubt that it was this figure whom Adam and Eve used to meet in the Garden before they sinned and from whom they hid because they were naked, once they had sinned. Such visitations are called 'theophanies', and make an interesting study in their own right. However, like angelic visitations, they never occurred over a long period of time and, once again, we have to acknowledge that Melchizedek was an established king/priest in Salem. For this to be Christ would defy the normal pattern of these theophanies.

However there are other objections. This was a priesthood which was established forever so why did Jesus have to come to establish another one if He'd already set one up? This everlasting priesthood was based on the Noachian covenant which indeed has never been revoked and its promises still hold good until the world ends. The Law which Jesus 'nailed to the cross' (Col. 2:14) was the ceremonial Law of Moses. Christ did not have to come to establish Noah's covenant and to act as one of its priests; indeed this would be almost an insult to Him to make Him just one priest amongst many. What was more natural than that one of Noah's sons assumed the king/priest mantle after Noah's death and maybe acting as a separate, independent priest once Babel had divided the nations? If Christ could establish a legitimate, everlasting priesthood before the Cross, why was the Cross necessary in order for Him to establish another, legitimate, everlasting priesthood? Couldn't God make up His mind how he wanted to do it? If Christ came and established an imperfect priesthood once, why do we have confidence that second time around He got it right? He cannot be both the type and the antitype, the earthly figure and the heavenly reality. He cannot be both a messianic figure and the messiah.

Conclusion

No, Melchizedek has to be a normal human being. If he is not Shem and I am wrong in my identification, he must forever remain as an unknown, mysterious figure. That is a legitimate understanding of the situation; however, I find this to be most unsatisfactory when there is a logical candidate in Shem, who fits the bill perfectly once the truth of the Genesis record is accepted.

The Earth, Unique by Design

The universe is vast, if we assume for now that the scientists are accurate in their measurement of the distances involved in space. There is no accurate measurement of the number of stars there are nor indeed of the number of galaxies either, and that's only in the observable universe. It is said that there are 100,000,000,000 stars in a galaxy and 100,000,000,000 galaxies, which would make for 10,000,000,000,000,000,000 stars in total, but in reality who knows?

God told Abraham that *'I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore'* (Gen. 22:17), thereby telling us that the number of stars is of the same magnitude as the grains of sand, count them if you can. Since people in Abraham's time, and Moses' time, could not count more than about 5,000 stars at best and could not have known about the vastness of space, this is one very good instance of the scientific accuracy of the Bible, which you would expect if God, who knows the truth, inspired it in defiance of the known facts at the time of its writing!

Christians, however, want to maintain that the Earth is specially created and designed as a home for mankind. Surely, some like to argue, it is unreasonable to suppose this? It is such an insignificant microdot on the map of space, why should it be thought of as special?

Looking at the wrong map

Suppose that a friendly alien came on a flying visit to Earth and asked you to show him around. You produced a map of the world and suggested to him that you pay a call on London. He expressed surprise and said, "Why go there? That's only a small dot on the map. Let's go to this big blue area over here called 'Pacific Ocean', which occupies about half of the world." You then have to persuade him that, big though the Pacific Ocean is in comparison to London, it is a rather boring place with not much to see happening on a quick visit. London, despite its size, is where there is a concentration of interesting things going on and is one of the places where human life can be seen to its fullest extent. Our alien, having picked up radio signals from NASA, and being more 'hip and cool' than we staid British, might prefer to go to New York, but that is also only a dot on the map—and an even smaller dot in square miles than London—so the



point is equally made.

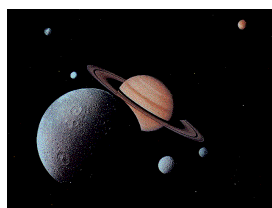
When we think that the Earth is only a relatively unimportant microdot in space, we are making the common mistake of equating size with importance. If we could look at a map showing concentrations of things like love, hate, happiness, grief, etc. the Earth would loom large and the galaxies disappear. They would be seen to have some interest but nothing which *really* matters. In fact, vast though galaxies are and immense though some stars are, nevertheless they are extremely simple.

*'In the stars, hydrogen nuclei are combined to form helium, and the nuclei of other simple atoms may also be formed by the fusion process. The Earth with its complex structures and host of living forms required an input of a great deal of information for its creation. So from the perspective of creation, the stars are simpler than the Earth and relatively less significant.'*¹

But is it reasonable to assume that in the vastness of space there must be other planets like the Earth where life has evolved? Surely the right conditions for life must exist elsewhere in the universe? Wouldn't our 'map' of the universe showing concentrations of love, hate, joy and grief, etc. indicate other places where these are to be found?

No evidence

Scientists occasionally come up with wobbles in the motion of distant stars and presume that they could indicate the presence of planets moving around them.



Some of our planets

Nothing has ever been proven and there are other explanations for these perturba-

tions. Wishful thinking, however, makes them want to find life on other planets because they can't accept philosophically the implications that we might just be living in a unique setting. Astronomers do not know for certain of any other planetary system. True they now believe that they have detected some stars with a planet going around them but not a planetary system like ours, and all the ones they think they have discovered are definitely not conducive to life; none are like our Earth. So what are some of the Earth's unique features?²

Size

The Earth is an oblate spheroid. In other words it is not a perfect sphere, rather it bulges out at the Equator and is slightly flattened at the Poles. This is caused by its speed of rotation. Its equatorial diameter is 7,926 miles and its polar diameter is 7,900 miles. If these were to vary by only ten per cent either way, life would be impossible. A ten per cent reduction would reduce gravity to the point where most of the atmosphere would escape into space. Only heavy gases such as carbon dioxide and argon would remain, and ice and snow would grip the surface. A ten per cent increase would double the weight of the atmosphere and we would be inundated with water.

Distance from the Sun

Again, nothing seems to be perfectly spherical and the Earth's orbit is no exception. It is an ellipse with an average distance of 93,000,000 miles from the Sun. This is just the right distance for life because of the temperatures it generates. The mean is 15°C (59°F). Venus, our immediate neighbour nearest to the Sun, sizzles at a mean of 470°C, whilst Mars, the next planet further out, freezes at an average of -50°C. There is little room for manœuvring here.

Orbit and Rotation

It is all very well being the right distance from the Sun as far as temperature is concerned; however, the speed of its orbit and daily rotation are absolutely critical. The year is long enough to allow crops to grow and ripen but is not too long to make existence hazardous until the next harvest.

The Earth's diurnal rotation of about 24 hours is even more critical. A longer day would mean that the surface would heat up far too much in the day and plummet to depths of coldness far too deep at night. A shorter day, produced by a quicker speed of rotation, would create devastation via the horrendous wind systems it would generate.

An interesting aside is well worth noting here. The rate of rotation is known to be decreasing, probably caused by the drag of



The Earth, beautifully designed for its purpose

the oceans due to tidal influences coming from the Moon. It measures about 30 seconds a century. The days would lengthen by five minutes in 1,000 years. By reversing the process in a linear fashion and extrapolating back in time, the Earth would have been rotating in minutes only about 300,000 years ago and would have bulged so wide at the Equator, and been so flat at the Poles, as to resemble a disc rather than an orange. If the Earth is billions of years old, its rotation should have ceased! Since the rate of slowing down is likely to be exponential rather than linear, it argues that the Earth cannot even be anything approaching 300,000 years old, let alone the 4.5 billion currently claimed for it.

The Atmosphere

The atmosphere is composed of about 21 per cent oxygen while all other planets have only a trace. This appears to be ideal. A greater amount would make the atmosphere

very much more inflammable and too much less would mean that fires would not burn. Its presence also means that the ozone layer, between 12-30 miles approximately above the surface, would not exist and we would be subject to life-destroying ultra-violet radiation. All life would cease in about two hours if the ozone layer was destroyed, hence the interest being shown in it by environmentalists.

The presence of oxygen means that it can combine with hydrogen to form water. The Earth has sufficient to create oceans and these oceans play an immense part in making the Earth habitable for mankind. The liquid state is exceptional in nature. Most of the universe consists of flaming gases or frozen solids.

Some 70 per cent of the Earth's surface is water and this has a moderating effect on climate. The seas act like giant storage heaters. Less water would result in much wider temperature variations. They are also a vast life-sustaining reservoir: a major source of food from plankton to fish. Evaporation provides rain which sustains life on land.

This liquid has another unique property vital to life. It expands as it approaches freezing so ice forms on the surface and floats thereby providing an insulating layer for fish. They can therefore survive under

the ice. If it behaved like most other liquids, it would contract on freezing and sink to the bottom. In time this would build up because the Sun's rays could not penetrate to melt it in summer and, apart from a little surface melting, the oceans would be massive blocks of ice, thus rendering the Earth uninhabitable. It is no wonder God devoted a whole Day of Creation Week, Day 2, to perfecting water!

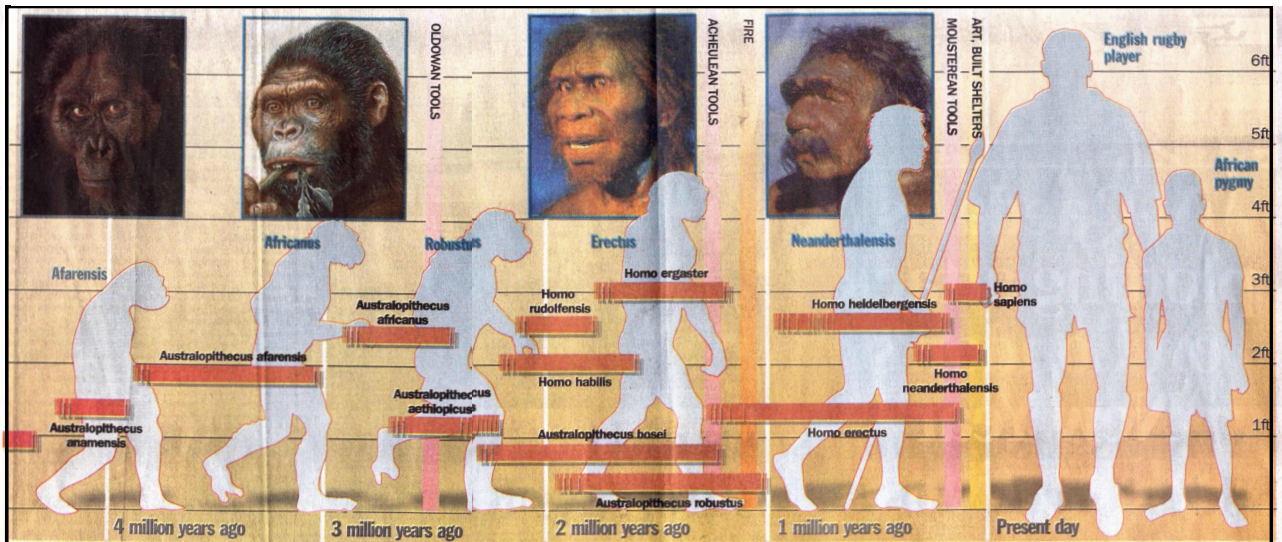
Conclusions

We have concentrated on some of the features appertaining to the Earth directly. The Sun had to be the size it is too. If it were bigger, the Earth would need to be bigger also, and we have already noted just how critical size is. If the Sun were smaller, again the Earth would have to be smaller and could not hold its atmosphere. We could go on. However, though none of these factors on their own would be sufficient to sustain an argument in favour of special creation, putting them all together and calculating the odds of them all occurring in the one place to produce the Earth as we know it by accident, takes much more faith to believe than it does to contend that God designed and created it as it is. The atheist would like to think that he does not need to rely on faith. He's wrong; he does! In fact he needs a good deal more faith to sustain his belief in the non-existence of God than the Christian does to sustain his belief that 'in the beginning God created... the Earth'.

¹ Rosevear, David, *Creation Science*, New Wine Press, pages 141-142, 1991.

² Mostly from *Our Unique Planet*, CSM pamphlet 251, by Geoff Chapman.

All the same species



The Sunday Telegraph 26.12.04

It is one of the best-known stories in science: the evolution of mankind from ape-like creatures to modern humans via knuckle-grazing cave-dwellers. Now it has been blown apart by the first comprehensive

study of all the known fossils, which has revealed that they are probably all variants of *Homo sapiens*. Specimens differing in size and shape have previously been considered as separate species but they all fall within the expected range of a single spe-

cies. What they are looking at is simply variation AND within the normal human range, so these ape-men disappear.

Now all they have to do is get their dating into line with the Bible, as yet another evolutionary myth bites the dust!

METHUSELAH

In a Bible study in Liverpool many years ago now, a brother commented about Methuselah that here was a man who lived 969 years and yet we know nothing at all about him. This set me thinking and, though I said nothing at the time, I now conclude that there is a good deal we can say about Methuselah and that studying his life and circumstances leads down some fascinating avenues.

The Genesis Genealogy

First of all we must put Methuselah into his biblical setting. Here is what we learn directly of him from the genealogy in Genesis:

'When Enoch had lived 65 years, he fathered Methuselah. Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him. When Methuselah had lived 187 years, he fathered Lamech. Methuselah lived after he fathered Lamech 782 years and had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days of Methuselah were 969 years, and he died.' (Gen. 5:21-27).

Now that really isn't very much at all, as our brother rightly pointed out in the study. He was the son of Enoch and father of Lamech, which makes him Noah's grandfather. His dad was 65 when he was born and he was 187 when he became a dad himself. He might well have had other children before Lamech but they are not recorded for posterity.

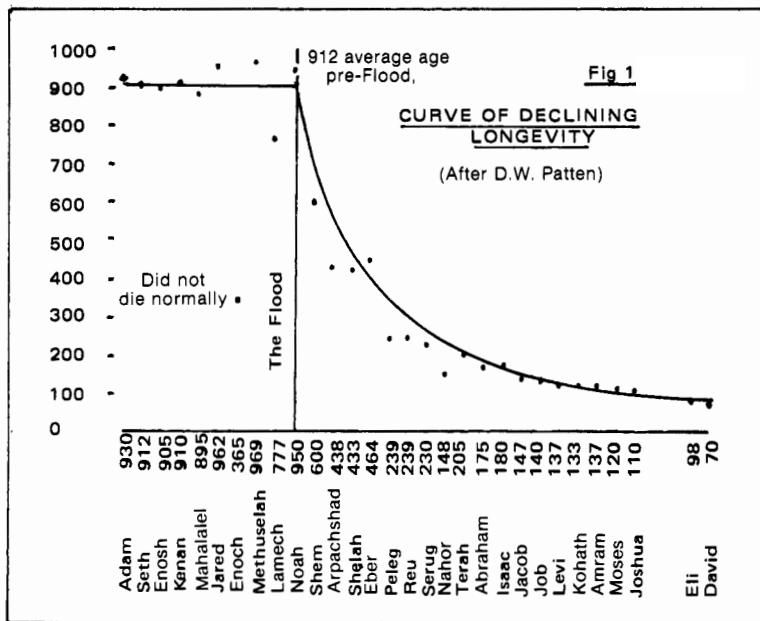
Was he really that old?

Objectors to the accuracy of the Genesis account frequently raise the question of these very long lifespans in the early genealogies. They talk about exaggerations of 8, 9 or 10-fold. Sometimes Christians find it hard to give an answer to this, so let's examine it and see what happens.

If the ages given at death are exaggerations and we are best to divide them by some factor, say 10, to make the calculations simpler, we must do likewise for all the ages cited in those chapters, i.e. primarily 5 and 11 but also elsewhere in Genesis, which include their ages when they became fathers. It is totally inconsistent to play the division game over deaths but refuse to play it re-

garding parenthood.

All the antediluvian patriarchs score



comfortably at death by this method. Methuselah dies just before he is 97, Adam is 93, Noah is 95, and so on. However once we move beyond the Flood, we find that ages at death start to drop dramatically (Fig 1), yet still show ludicrous totals by our standards today. Abraham 'died in a good old age, an old man and full of years' at 175 (Gen. 25:7-8), Isaac clocks in 180, 'old and full of days' (Gen. 35:28-29), and Jacob 147 (Gen. 47:28). Divide them by 10 and none of them make it out of their teens!

But now apply the same thinking to their parenthood ages and the results become absurd. Noah at 500 (50), Methuselah at 187 (18.7), Lamech 182 (18.2) and Jared 162 (16.2) qualify comfortably. Adam pushes his luck at 130 (13) but the rest would have to be supermen: Seth 105 (10.5), Enosh 90 (9), Kenan 70 (7), Mahalalel 65 (6.5) and Enoch 65 (6.5). Abraham, of course, was apparently worried about fatherhood at 10 and Sarah was past childbearing at 9, needing a miracle to revitalize her dead womb! We need say no more. The division method simply does not work.

Since it does not work, some have suggested these ages represent dynasties like our royal houses: Tudors, Stuarts, Hanover, Windsor, etc. Thus the Methuselah dynasty lasted for 969 years under this system.

That might seem to work superficially

but trying to accommodate the overlapping of the dynasties, assuming that Lamech's dynasty began when Methuselah's was 187 years old, is a problem. The record does not remotely read like this and, of course, the rest of the Bible assumes that they were real people not dynasties. Jude 14 talks about 'Enoch, the seventh from Adam' prophesying. He believed that Enoch was a man not a dynasty. Hebrews 11:5 cannot be talking about all the members of an Enoch dynasty being translated into heaven because they all pleased God. Clearly, as we shall see later, they didn't.

Finally it has been suggested that the ages at death are a numerical representation of importance. This would make Methuselah the most important of the antediluvian patriarchs, which can hardly be correct since he couldn't possibly outshine Adam or Noah in importance. The most godly and blessed of them all, Enoch, who was privileged not to taste death,

on this notion is the least important by a mile at 365.

The only answer which fits the facts is that the ages listed are indeed true. That this flies in the face of our experience of living and ageing today, where three figures, though increasing, are still rare, and 120+ almost unheard of (Fig 2), cannot be denied. So what is going on?

Declining longevity

When you plot the ages of the patriarchs

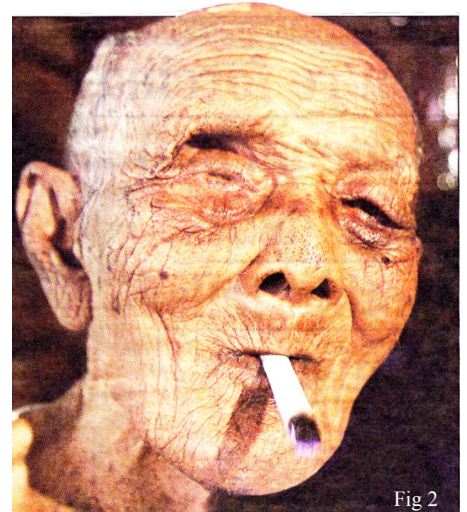


Fig 2

This tobacco-loving Cambodian was 122 when this picture was taken in 2003, just a few days before his death. He was only 12.6 per cent of Methuselah's age when he died. In other words, Methuselah still had 87.4 per cent of his life still to live when he was this age.

Picture from the *Daily Mail*, 21.10.03

on a graph (Fig. 1) a very curious picture emerges. Discounting Enoch, who was a special case, all the antediluvian patriarchs died close to an average of 912 years, with Methuselah leading the way at the top end and Lamech, a mere whippersnapper at 777, bringing up the rear. After the Flood there is a steady but rapid decline, which is in a biochemical decay curve and not linear in form. It took 1,500 years to flatten out to around 70, with the most rapid decrease at the beginning. One does not have to be a genius to realize that a dramatic change took place immediately after the Flood, so the Flood must have altered something to cause this rapid decline in longevity.

The pre-Flood world

There are many facets to conditions before the Flood. Those that concern us in this study are mainly climatic. The originally created climate was very much different than the one into which Noah and his family emerged after that terrible year in the Ark.

One of the things we readily associate with the new, post-Flood world is the rainbow. It was the sign of God's covenant promise never to destroy the Earth again by a flood (Gen. 9:12-17). It's still a magical sight when we see one today (Fig. 3) but imagine how Noah felt when he saw it for the first time. Rainbows were not part of the pre-Flood world.



Fig. 3 - Rainbow over Assynt, N.W. Highlands of Scotland. Quinag in background (1977).

When God introduced Noah to the rainbow, He said that it would come, 'When I bring clouds over the earth,' (9:14). Clouds were not part of the original scheme of things. The ground was watered by a mist (Gen. 2:6) and you don't get rainbows in the sky as a result of mist. You can see them in waterfalls at times, of course, but not, as we said, in the sky. Scientists now know that rainbows occur in suspended droplets of water after a storm has passed over. You don't see a rainbow on an approaching storm. It is a nice symbol to see after the storm to remind us that the Flood is over and gone for ever.

Other things too seem to have been different about the climate. The original Earth was shrouded in a vapour canopy and above it was a much thicker ozone (O₃) layer (Fig. 4), both of which combined to protect people from the harmful rays of the Sun. Not all of the Sun's rays are harmful, of course, but the



Fig. 4 - Vapour canopy with thicker ozone layer in the antediluvian atmosphere

ultra-violet ones most definitely are. This canopy created a greenhouse effect, keeping temperatures very mild indeed. They were virtually subtropical from Pole to Equator. The atmosphere also seems to have had a much higher carbon dioxide (CO₂) content. The effect of this was to slow down maturation rates so all living things did not attain to their full adult status until much older. Slower growth rates and slower maturation rates create giantism and would do so in plants, animals and man. Geological studies confirm that in the Earth's past there was amazing giantism amongst the flora and fauna, and that subtropical species even existed in polar latitudes. Of course they place these conditions way back in time, hundreds of millions of years ago. Ignoring that, we can see that something must have caused the giantism and a high CO₂ content, plus massively effective protection from the harmful ultra-violet rays of the Sun, and a greenhouse effect, are favourites as the 'culprits'. This then slows down the ageing processes, making greater longevity quite possible.

The Earth's axis was probably vertical, not tilted. This would mean that there were no seasons and that there would simply be cooling, very gentle breezes blowing Equator-wards from the Poles, which were not covered in ice. There was minimal atmospheric mixing as strong convection currents were unknown. God established the seasons after the Flood, as indicated in Genesis 8:22.



Fig. 5 - Exposure to even very small doses of extra ozone causes ageing to increase. Studies show that radiologists live around four or five years less than people not exposed to it.

The Flood caused a collapse of the water canopy as part of the precipitation which fell on to the Earth. Other important features too altered at the time of the Flood. The axis tilted; clouds replaced the mist and the weather became nastier with winds and storms, etc. rushing about. There was greater instability in the weather, giving atmospheric mixing unknown beforehand. The ozone (O₃) layer too was considerably reduced and with more mixing its toxic effects adversely affected ageing (Fig. 5). The carbon dioxide content of the atmosphere was lowered. All living things were exposed to harmful radiation in increasingly greater quantities. Ageing speeded up quickly until it levelled out, as we said earlier, some 1,500 years later at around 70.

Obviously the above is a simple summary of the situation. It is a specialized scientific study, way beyond the bounds of *Genesis Accepted* to handle. The important thing to recognize is that longevity on the Genesis scale *is* impossible under the climatic conditions we live in today. We tend to think that these have been normal for all time. Grasp the notion that the world God created for mankind to inhabit was perfectly prepared for him to live happily here for many hundreds of years (see Number 2, 'Musings' for thoughts on what could have happened when time ran out for people, if sin had not entered into the world), and you realize that the Flood not only judged the world that then existed it altered it irrevocably, and the Earth became a far more hostile a place to live in once it was all over. Noah and his family stepped out on to a strange new world unlike anything they had known before. Death, though a reality before the Flood, if somewhat infrequently experienced, became an increasingly significant factor of postdiluvian life, since the Curse began to bite as never before. Their world was lost for ever having been 'buried' by the Flood just as effectively as the land had. Methuselah could have lived to 969 before the Flood but he most definitely could not have done so after it.

Back again to Methuselah

The chapters which list the genealogies of the patriarchs are hardly the most exciting to read in the Bible. However, if studied carefully, they provide us with some interesting information which is not spelled out directly for us elsewhere.

We might care to muse on the ages of the patriarchs and wonder why they had such random lifespans. Why did Lamech die at 777, quite young for a patriarch of this period, or why didn't Methuselah die at 1,000? In truth 969 is a very peculiar total. The answer is simply that these actually were their ages at death. Had Moses been inventing the stories, or jazzing them up for effect, he would never have stopped his oldest man before he hit four figures. The ages given speak loudly for authenticity.

When I first did the exercise and produced a diagram of the results (Fig. 6), I was frankly astonished to see that Methuselah actually died in the year of the Flood. That explains why he didn't make it to 1,000. Since he is in the list of the faithful, and since he didn't go into the Ark, we can assume that he died of natural causes rather than that he drowned. His name, apparently, means, 'When he dies it comes', though I'm afraid I can't pinpoint where I learned this fact to reference it for you.

Methuselah's death

The Flood occurred in the second month of the year on the 17th day (Gen. 7:11), which would probably be our November, so we can assume that Methuselah died in the first month, or approximately our October, of the year 1656AM (*Anno Mundi* as it should technically be called), after Creation. Noah and his family would no sooner have buried him when they had to concentrate on getting into the Ark. There would be little or no time for mourning; they would be too busy. Nevertheless there must have been tremendous sadness for them because of this, and for other reasons we shall note later.

Methuselah: a help and encouragement to Noah

It is common for us to think that Noah was entirely alone preaching for God and building the Ark, apart from the help his sons would have given him once they were old enough to do so. Well he had his grandfather at least with him and encouraging him right to the end. Actually he had his father, Lamech, with him too until five years before the Flood, so Noah would be guided, encouraged and advised by both of these fine, godly ancestors. Lamech's premature death, however, means that Methuselah lost his son, maybe his only godly son, so he knew the agonies this would bring. Noah lost his dad and he lost him before the Ark project was complete. Did he question God and complain that He took him just as he needed him most? Noah too was as human as we are.

Family disappointments

Methuselah would no doubt have rejoiced at the great faithfulness of his grandson Noah, and of Lamech too. He would be proud that he had not failed to teach at least some of his family about the good things of God, and that they had followed him. However, he was like most godly men. Though some followed the Lord under his teaching, many, probably most, did not. This would have caused him great sorrow. We don't

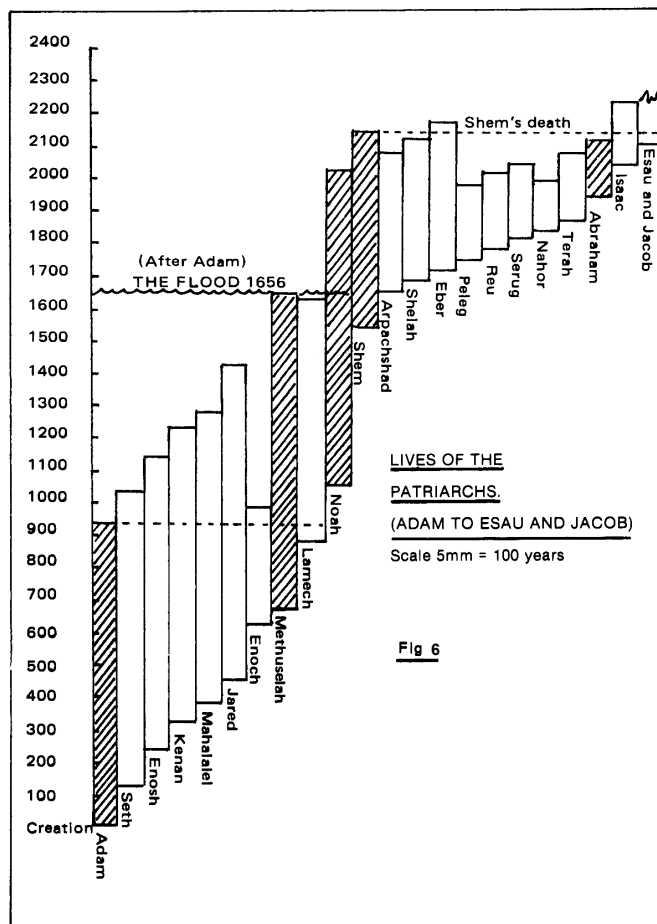


Fig 6

know how many children he had. The Bible simply says that he 'had other sons and daughters'. Therefore we don't know how many grandchildren and great-grandchildren, etc. he had either but they must have numbered hundreds. Yet none of them who were alive, as New Year 1656AM arrived, supported Noah in preaching righteousness but were amongst the scoffers and mockers who were soon to drown. At least he was spared the agonies of witnessing that! So as a father, head of the family and teacher of the things of God, he had mixed fortunes with his successes and failures, just like us all. Though he was faithful in his day most rejected him and came to mock what he stood for. That must have hurt. He may have been a great patriarch but he too was a normal human being.

Methuselah's upbringing

His father was Enoch and Enoch was truly a special man in God's eyes. All the Genesis record says about him was that he 'walked with God' (Gen. 5:24), but that says a tremendous amount. He was the only patriarch to whom the phrase, 'and he died' was not applied. The Hebrew Letter actually elaborates on this (Heb. 11:5) telling us that he was translated into heaven without tasting death. To lose his father at a relatively young age of 300(!) must have been a blow but since Enoch was privileged not to die, Methuselah could rejoice in that. Enoch had other sons and

daughters, so Methuselah too had siblings and was raised as part of a large family. Whether only Methuselah followed him in godliness, or not, we don't know—we could guess that many would have been godly and died before the Flood—but what we do know is that the majority of his descendants too were amongst those who scoffed at Noah and his preaching, and drowned.

The perfect link man

When Methuselah was born, all of the antediluvian patriarchs we know about were still alive (Fig. 6), apart from Abel, of course. Adam was his great-great-great-great-great granddad yet they shared 243 years on Earth together. Sitting at the feet of all of them must have been a wonderful learning experience for him but sitting at the feet of Adam, and presumably of Eve too, must have been the most special of all. From them he would learn all about Creation, the perfect world in Eden and how it all came to be spoiled. We have no idea where he lived in relation to Eden but, had he wanted to, he could have gone and approached it and found

his way barred to the Tree of Life by cherubim, thus confirming the stories as true. (We presume Eden perished in the Flood.)

He also spent 600 years with Noah and 100 years with Shem, whom we know outlived Abraham and could have known Esau and Jacob. Both Noah and Shem would no doubt retell the stories they learned from Methuselah so the links from Adam to the Jews were indeed very few. It is no wonder that their histories are accurate, especially as compared to the legends of other ancient, postdiluvian nations. Methuselah linked the whole of the antediluvian period perfectly.

His world

We have become indoctrinated by the evolutionary notions of development not only in genetic ancestry but also in anthropological and social development. We are taught that mankind has risen slowly from primitive grunting creatures, who were first of all hunter-gatherers, lived in caves and used stone tools, then they worked in bronze and finally iron, after which we enter into historic times. That this is wrong can be seen from Genesis.

Adam was created with a sophisticated language which he used on Day 6 in Eden, before Eve was created, to name the animals. After the expulsion from Eden, Adam, who was still a vegetarian, became a farmer. His job in Eden had been to tend the garden (Gen. 2:15), so he was a farmer or market gardener

from the very beginning. God's curse on him after the Fall (Gen. 3:17b-19a) would have been totally inappropriate to a hunter-gatherer. God was talking to a farmer and this farmer trained his eldest son, Cain, to follow in his footsteps. Abel, as the second son, had the lesser task of shepherding. Noah was a farmer (Gen. 9:20), when he wasn't building the Ark, and it is reasonable to assume that all the godly patriarchs of this period were farmers. Cain had to switch to being a nomad after he murdered Abel (Gen. 4:11-12) because God was not going to bless his toils as a farmer any more.

But it is with Cain's descendents that we catch a glimpse of the sophistication of the people of those days and how they lived. Jubal 'was the father of those who play the lyre and pipe' and Tubal-cain 'was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron' (Gen. 4:21-22). So they had music and worked in metals to a very sophisticated level. Bronze is a mixture of copper and tin and finding tin to mine is not easy, and finding out how to make the metal is even harder. But then obviously they knew about working in metals, including precious metals, since the record detailed those metals found in Eden (Gen.

2:11-12). Presumably just as God gave Adam a language so He also gave him skills in mining and metalwork to pass on to his sons, as well as the knowledge of farming techniques.

Methuselah was not born into a primitive world but quite the opposite. It had amazing skills and knowledge and levels of civilisation we hardly ever would imagine for those times. It was after the Flood, which created both a genetic and developmental bottleneck, that things became more primitive until the dispersal at Babel confirmed it: people in some language groups were deprived of certain skills and so dropped backwards into what we think of as a primitive, archetypal pre-historic lifestyle. There is good evidence that by the time Noah entered the Ark he could write (the account of the Flood reads like a log) and that Noah lit the lower decks of the Ark by a form of electric light! (See *Speak Through The Earthquake, Wind And Fire*, G.A. Fisher, 1982, pgs 49-50).

These antediluvians were not primitive at all. However, Methuselah was able to witness increasing violence in society. For

all their sophistication they became astonishingly wicked. Cain's descendents were particularly vile and boastfully violent at times (Gen. 4:23-24), and by the time Methuselah died, and Noah entered the Ark, he could well have been going in fear of his life. Truly he could yearn for the past and say that 'things weren't like this in my day.'

Conclusion

We have come a long way from just a brief mention of Methuselah in Genesis 5. What seemed like a good observation from our brother in the Liverpool study turned out to be very different in reality. Admittedly some of the observations would apply to almost all the antediluvian patriarchs, especially the ones we know nothing much about, i.e. Enosh, Kenan, Mahalalel and Jared about whom we could not say nearly as much. Nevertheless Methuselah is a fascinating man to study and one of the lessons we can learn is that by application, and using only the material and implications from the biblical text, we can construct quite a surprisingly detailed picture from what, at first glance, seems very little evidence. Methuselah is not quite the man of mystery we could have assumed him to be.

The Sin of Sodom

"WHAT WAS THE SIN OF SODOM?" I might ask.

"Well, I think it was sodomy, otherwise known as homosexuality," you might well politely reply, whilst thinking, 'What a daft question to be asking!'

But in actual fact homosexuality was the consequence of Sodom's sin not the cause of it. Now that might well raise a few eyebrows but I believe it to be true.

Homosexuality in Sodom

There is, of course, no doubt that the men of Sodom were homosexuals. Genesis, in a fit of hyperbole, tells us that all the men of the city were clamouring for the bodies of the two angels who were being given hospitality by Lot, and were outside the door of his house. Either it was a very small city indeed or the exaggeration was intended to indicate that a huge majority of the men, a sort of lower-class rabble, were there. The king is not mentioned as having been part of this lusty rabble and it seems unlikely that Lot's intended sons-in-law were there either. However that's speculation and not part of the point of the question.

The men were probably bisexual, having wives and children but lusting after other men on the side. That Lot thought it was a good idea to offer them his virgin daughters by way of compensation might indicate that they liked women too and weren't usually too particular which gender they approached to exercise their lust. But this time their bisexuality failed because obviously the angels were just too good-looking for them to resist. We cannot conceive of an ugly angel and these two certainly were not ugly. There might also still have been some semblance of decency in them because Lot's daughters, though engaged to two men of Sodom, were still virgins so no attempt had been made to pre-empt the privileges of marriage in their cases, unlike so many today who seem to see no point at all in waiting. Apparently they were not present when Lot made his magnanimous gesture, or, if they were, they raised no protest at their beloved ones being offered up for rape. What a mess! What a sorry story! Nobody comes out of it with credit, though Lot, apart from the daughters' incident, came closest.

Ezekiel's testimony

Sometimes it is helpful if we can turn for greater enlightenment to other biblical passages where comment is made on the subject at hand. If we only had the Genesis account, we would have no choice but to assume that Sodom's sin, which brought down God's wrath on them, was indeed homosexuality. But when we turn to Ezekiel we find him in chapter 16 ranting on

against the sins of Jerusalem in no uncertain terms. There, from verses 44 to 52, we find Sodom entering the picture and in verses 49-50 he says: '*Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. They were haughty and did an abomination before me.*'

So this presents a different picture of what led to Sodom's downfall: pride, plenty and prosperity, the latter two not in themselves sins, but allied to an uncaring heart for those in need, made the Sodomites selfish, arrogant and unloving, thinking it was all down to themselves. They were completely self-centred.

Judgement on selfishness

The Lord doesn't like this. Turn your minds to Matthew 25: 31-46 and that famous scene of the separation of the sheep from the goats. What was it which divided them? Selfish, unloving, uncaring attitudes in those with plenty to those in need. The 'goats' were not accused of being adulterers or homosexuals, robbers, murderers or thieves, just of not noticing needs, of not loving and caring, of being self-centred:

Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and

you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matt 25:41-46).

This was the sin of Sodom and, in a small, localized way, the fire of hell fell on it to its destruction.

Sodom's prosperity

That the people of Sodom were indeed prosperous can be seen from the famous incident where Abram and Lot part company. *'Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered, everywhere like the Garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt in the direction of Zoar.'* (Gen. 13:10). They lived amongst lush pastures and had a comfortable living. Lot recognized the area for what it was and chose the easy life when his uncle gave him the choice but the easy life usually does not lead to God; it so easily leads to self-centredness and uncaring, unloving attitudes which brings God's condemnation. Our experience of life in the prosperous West shows that as people become more comfortable and wealthy, so they forget God.

The lush Jordan Valley and Dead Sea area

The lush comfort of Sodom in Lot's time may seem odd to us today. Where it once stood is now deserted salt flats and the whole



The Dead Sea area where Sodom once stood

region is wasteland. If Abram had given Lot a free choice of where to go in our time, nobody in his right mind would choose this area. So what has changed?

We must remember that while these patriarchs were pounding the lands of the Bible, northern latitudes like our own were in the grip of an Ice Age. The exact timing of this is not easy to determine but its effects were dramatic on biblical lands. It pushed the wetter climate zones Equator-wards. Egypt, under today's climatic regime, could never have produced the great civilisation which it did. In Moses' day all sorts of things grew where now they cannot. The North African coast, now desert, was full of lush corn fields and down to the Romans was the main grain supplier for the Empire. The wilderness in which the Israelites wandered was

not nearly as hostile as it would be today for them. With the retreating of the ice so the climate altered subtly and, allied to poor farming techniques over centuries, turned lands 'flowing with milk and honey' into semi-desert wastes. Some could be reclaimed with irrigation but the region where Sodom stood will always be a waste. It will stand as a reminder of God's judgement on that sinful city, and on Gomorrah.

So why the homosexuality?

To answer this question we must turn to Romans 1. When people in their arrogance forget God, sometimes God pulls away from them and leaves them to their own devices. That famous passage has this to say:

'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.'

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonouring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

For this reason God gave them up to dishonourable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameful acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient

to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God's decree that those who practise such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practise them.' (Rom 1:18-32, emphasis added).

Warning and conclusion

Does this resonate today? It should. The people of Sodom were living in thoughtless, selfish comfort and ease. Peter tells us that Lot's soul was grieved by all the wickedness he saw (2 Peter 2:7-8) but he was not so grieved that he decided to get up and leave. Nevertheless he retained his integrity and the people knew it because they charged him with not being of them. *'... they said, This fellow came to sojourn, and he has become the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them.'* (Gen 19:9). He did not approve of their wicked ways and found, not only do they approve those who practise them, they also condemn and attack those who try to uphold God's values. Those who stand up and point to things that are wrong today are finding the same thing happening.

It is not too difficult to see what happened in Sodom. Here they were living in a favourable spot and doing very nicely by the standards of the day. In their ungodliness they suppressed the truth about God and, no doubt, 'exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images...' So God 'gave them up... to impurity, 'the dishonouring of their bodies among themselves' and dishonourable passions'. Once He did this all moral restraints were lifted and they went away from natural relations into unnatural ones. Their women became lesbians and their men homosexuals.

Once this happened, as natural morality was stood on its head, all sorts of wickedness came in. Peter said that Lot 'day after day... was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard.' (2 Peter 2:8). What was included in Paul's list when this happens: envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness, gossip, slander, hatred of God, insolence, haughtiness, boastfulness, inventing of evil, disobedience to parents, being foolish, faithless, heartless and ruthless? This is the end product of turning away from God and approving sinful practices, which in Sodom's case found open expression in homosexuality. This was not the cause of their sin but the product of it, and it all resonates with our society.

It would be easy to be a prophet of doom and predict that God will rain some sort of fire on our heads too. Homosexuality is the product of men and women deliberately turning away from God. Sodom was destroyed because He could not find ten righteous souls there. Thank God for Christians. He could well be holding back for the sake of the elect. One day, when Jesus comes, there will be a fiery judgement on the sin of Sodom.



Special Offer to Genesis Accepted Readers First

GA readers are being offered this book first for only £1.50, which includes posting and packing. *Speak Through The Earthquake, Wind and Fire*, was a ground-breaking book, which I published in 1982, covering a spectrum of events in the Old Testament from the Flood, through the Exodus and Joshua's Long Day to the problem of Judges, Elijah at Carmel, Uzziah and Jonah, down to Hezekiah. It examines the imagery of terms used to describe Satan and also comes into the New Testament to look at 'The Day of the Lord', with special reference to Matthew 24.

It presents a challenging and radically different understanding of many of the miraculous events of biblical history which will open your minds to fascinating avenues of study and thought. You will never view them in the same light once you have read this. Many of the basic ideas presented in it will appear from time-to-time in GA, so you will have a greater understanding when they do, if you've read this book.

I have been able to purchase 100 new copies for 60p each. The postage is 83p so the round figure of £1.50 will cover all costs. With 96 readers currently taking the magazine, you can have the first opportunity to avail yourselves of this cut-price offer. (If you see me personally, you can have one for the 60p I paid for it.) Once I am satisfied that all my GA readers who want it have been served then I'll offer it through the pages of the *Christian Worker*, so hurry before stocks run out! Send to the Editor **now** for your copy.

G.A.F.

P.S. You can also buy it through Amazon but it will cost you nearly £9.00 for the privilege!

WRITING FOR GA

This is now the third issue of *Genesis Accepted*. By now you will have got the flavour of what I had in mind when I launched it and the style I am looking for. I did mention some of these things on page 1 of Number 1 but it's always difficult to explain your thinking succinctly. I reasoned it was best to produce some issues first so that readers could see the finished product and get the drift more accurately.

In 1977 I launched a new magazine called *The Eye-Opener*. It was intended to occupy a niche in the brotherhood's literature which was not being filled at the time—there's no sense in duplicating things already being done. The original idea was that brethren, in Liverpool primarily and others, would write for it. That was my fond hope but it didn't materialize. I believed in it and so I was left to write it all myself, though I got excellent editorial help from Frank Guillou and Ray Turnley. On its brief re-launch in the 1990s, Steve Whitehead helped me edit it and he also wrote things for it, yet overall the material was usually mine, either in article form or garnered from newspapers and magazines.

When it came to *GA* I recognized from the beginning that as I fervently believed in it so the bulk of the writing would have to come from me.

It was never intended to be a Graham Fisher ego trip. I launched it when I did because I am battling with some health problems which I thought might turn me into a relative cripple before too long and I wanted to work for the Lord as best as I could. Writing seemed to be the favoured option, especially under those circumstances. (Happily I've now found a doctor who claims he can cure the problem, however we must wait and see.) I'd had the ideas for this magazine floating around in my head since 1993. I took the plunge last September fully accepting then that in all probability the bulk of the writing would have to come from me.

As I said in my introduction in Number 1, I will welcome brethren writing for *GA*, if they feel so moved. I will not be looking for this but will be happy to receive it if it comes. You will have to accept my editorial hand on what you submit but then that's always what an editor is for anyway.

I am looking for articles which will cast new light on a subject; an angle you won't get from a commentary; thoughts you have had or have gleaned from unusual sources. I will always look to place illustrations in them, in colour if possible. If you cannot send me illustrations, I will seek to provide them. They brighten up the magazine. Any aspect of *Genesis*, all 50 chapters, come under this remit but Creation topics will, of course, loom large for obvious reasons.

The readership will inevitably be brethren, so faith-sustaining and faith-building is paramount. However, unlike *The Christian Worker*, it is not edited as an in-house magazine so should be fine for non-Christians as well. I think of the readers as friends, as well as brethren, part of the great family of God, so a relaxed style, as you would use when writing to friends, will make articles more pleasing to read. Above all I want them to be enjoyed because then the message gets through effectively. Therefore let's make them interesting.

Finally, I don't put copyright on the Lord's message. One reason why I bind them as I do is so that they can easily be photocopied.

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All quotations are from the *English Standard Version* of the Bible (Anglicized version, 2002), unless otherwise indicated.



