

GENESIS ACCEPTED



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The Myth Of Uniformitarianism!

One of the most exciting things imaginable for the believer is to know you are living during a time of the fulfilment of biblical prophecy. Have you ever wondered how the world was prepared by God for the arrival of Jesus? On many occasions in the Gospels we encounter people who were eagerly looking for the coming of the Kingdom. Jesus sent disciples out to preach that the coming of the Kingdom was at hand, and He mentioned the need to pray for its arrival, specifically in what we now usually refer to as 'The Lord's Prayer' - 'Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done...' (Incidentally, since the Kingdom 'came' on the Day of Pentecost fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus, and will be given back by Him to the Father at the end of time (1 Cor. 15:24), so His prayer has been fulfilled and is, therefore, redundant, at that point at least. We now have no need to pray for something to come which has been with us for nearly 2000 years!) But why were they looking for it at that time especially?

It was because they knew full-well that they were living in the times predicted by the prophets for the establishment of the messianic kingdom. The prophet concerned was Daniel and the main prediction is presented to us in chapter 2, where we read of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the metal idol and the four kingdoms it foretold. It was very obvious and clear that at the time of Jesus they were living in the fourth kingdom - the iron kingdom of the idol's legs, but with feet of an iron and clay mixture - and during the course of which we read: *'...in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.'* (Da 2:44-45). Any Jew in Jesus's day with an iota of faith in his make-up could be in no doubt that this was the right time for God to make good on His promise in this prophecy. That their expectations were somewhat different from the kingdom which actually came is not to be denied. That most religious Jews today still look for its fulfilment on the 'old' terms, does not negate the excitement aroused in Jesus's day when a good candidate for the 'job' of messiah appeared on the scene - and several dreamers apparently came along, making extravagant claims for themselves, even attracting followers.

Jesus had rivals!

The prophecy for our day

I think it is true to say that most Christian believers do not fully understand the nature of the exciting times we live in by virtue of a prophecy being fulfilled in our day. It is tucked in there near the end of the Bible in one of the less popular Letters in the New Testament. We firmly believe in the prophecies of the return of Jesus at the end of time to claim His own, and we look forward to it, but without the excitement of immediacy. Some evangelical believers were greatly excited in 1948 when the Jews returned to Israel and they saw this as a fulfilment of prophecy, and the sign of the beginning of the end times. All sorts of fancy theories infiltrated into Christendom at large, with talk of 'rapture', 1000-years' reign of Christ on Earth, Armageddon, and so on, in what we can lump together as premillennialism. When examined in detail, this is nothing more or less than the old Judaising heresy in a modern disguise - don't buy into it! (May I interrupt the narrative here and say that most Creationist societies are deeply committed to premillennial theories? Though I'm whole-heartedly behind them when it comes to Genesis 1-11, and subscribe to their literature and main cause, once they migrate down the Bible they become more and more suspect theologically, being both Calvinistic and premillennial at rock bottom. They also seem incapable of answering the question 'What must I do to be saved?' in a biblical manner. At this point I believe they sell their contacts short and mislead them about salvation. Read their material on Genesis and learn from it but be very wary once you get beyond that.)

So what is the prophecy we are currently living through? It comes in Peter's Second Letter, chapter 3: *'This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles, knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.'* For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and



through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.' (2 Pe 3:1-7, emphasis ours).

Peter wrote this about 1800 years before it began being fulfilled and it is in full swing today. Scoffers scoff at those who believe in the Genesis record of a deluge which destroyed the world. Noah and his ark are part of the pleasing myths of Genesis 1-11, so they maintain. Note that 'they **deliberately ignore**' this truth. The evidence is there for them to see plainly and recognize, so their ignorance is wilful. Their reasoning is that *'all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation'*. In other words the situation, as far as the physical nature of the world is concerned, has always been the same, nothing untoward ever happens, except maybe the occasional local crisis, but basically the world drifts along on a sea of unending serenity. Thus rocks erode slowly and particles are carried gently down to the sea where they gradually build-up over countless millennia into rocks again. The planets, including the Earth, rotate sedately and predictably on their orbits and spin on their axes - there's nothing to worry about here during our fleeting lifetimes against a backdrop of countless millennia since creation - currently set at 13.8 billion years (or 13,800,000,000 years if you stick to the British numbering system - as I prefer to). This doctrine of gradualism completely pervades modern geology and is known as 'uniformitarianism'. This may seem like a bit of a mouthful but the idea is quite easy to understand. The axiom which drives it is that 'The present is the key to the past'. Processes we observe today can be extrapolated back in time, as far as you like, for nothing changes here. I was drilled into this bed-rock dictum by our Geology pro-

fessor in the 1960s, and it is still the same. It is solidly believed but never questioned or examined. It is considered to be a 'self-evident truth' which can never be challenged - at least not if you want an academic qualification and a career in Geology.

But is it true? We get the occasional shock like a tsunami, massive earthquake, or volcanic eruption, which temporarily shakes our faith in the notion of 'unending serenity' but the memory soon fades and they are considered local blips, upsetting at the time, but not nearly sufficient to shake the foundations of the axiom of uniformity. We can allow for such 'minor' inconveniences but they play no part in our general interpretation of the world we live in and how it came to be, so it is said. Let us examine this and see how it stacks up against the evidence.

Brief background

As with most things which really change perspectives on a grand scale, they do not appear as if by magic from nowhere. The nineteenth century was when this doctrine of uniformity placed its hands around the throats of the intelligentsia until their minds were squeezed into a new conformity, from whose grasp we still have not broken free. For millennia life had moved slowly forwards and little changed to shake the world. Then the Agricultural Revolution drastically altered farming and made many peasants both landless and homeless. This was followed by the Industrial Revolution which changed most of society in the West from a rural to an urban population. Political upheavals disturbed the very fabric of some countries and many were deeply disturbed particularly by the French Revolution and the ensuing wars which followed it. As the Duke of Wellington remarked, Waterloo was a close-run thing. A period of calm, with change, yes, but slow, controlled change was desired. Yet there were still revolutions in the 1840s and all sorts of social upheaval with



Thousands of galaxies photographed by the Hubble telescope

which to contend. The geologists were coming up with gradualism as the geological norm and Darwin built on this in the biological realm. If the socio-political world was in turmoil at least the scientists had 'tamed' the natural world. That became something at least to rely on. And as the pace of development bounded along until today it flies along at almost break-neck speed, people cling to the 'comforts' of science with a positively religious fervour which ignores the evidence, in favour of a blind faith. Uniformitarianism is a faith-system not an empirical fact. Scientists can only use it to interpret the facts but cannot design experiments to test, prove or falsify it. And, as Karl Popper maintained, if it cannot be falsified it is not a science but a faith.

The Big Bang

The ironical thing about the notion of uniformity and gradualism is that those who believe in it have to postulate that it began with a monstrous catastrophe some 13,800,000,000 years ago. The biggest explosion which ever happened is said to have occurred and from it has come all the galaxies, planets and life-forms we see today. There are many problems with this theory but it is still being touted as the ultimate origin of the universe because there is no alternative available other than *'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.'* (Gen. 1:1), and this is totally unacceptable to their now naturalistic, humanistic minds.

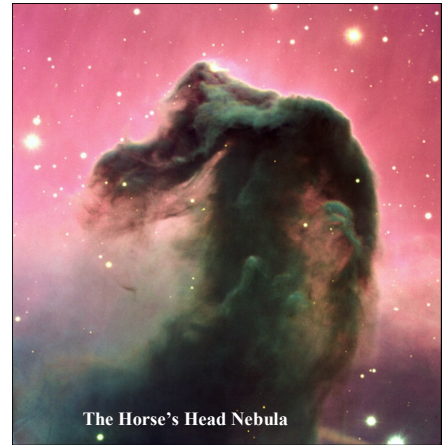
No explosion ever produced order out of chaos. All one ever produces is complete disorder, unless an intelligent mind comes along and puts the pieces back together. This is a testable, falsifiable and empirical fact. Indeed one of the most tested and proven scientific laws is the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which postulates that things move from order to chaos, not the other way around. They call it entropy and the universe is known to be running down towards complete heat death in thousands of millions of years time! The only things which have ever 'defied' this law are the various forms of evolution, i.e. chemical and biological, not because they are seen experimentally to have done so but because they obviously have had to have done so because we are here!

Deep in space and back in time

Having got off to a catastrophic start the forces of uniformity could then swing into action. Gas and rocks could slowly come together to form planets and stars and galaxies out of the debris left from the Big Bang. Debris, as we said, never comes together to form anything, but this did, for we are here sitting on a piece of it. Catastrophes are still allowed to happen but only way back in time

and/or deep in space. This thinking is beginning to slip a little as some scientists are now getting worried about astral bodies flying too close to Earth and possibly inflicting untold damage to it, but this is a relatively new development in their thinking.

So, deep in space and back in time we observe exploding stars or supernova.



Some have left spectacular nebulae behind like the Horse's Head Nebula. These can be admired and studied in comfort and safety because they happened millions of years ago and millions of miles away; we're quite safe from them.

Planets

The gradual forces which created the galaxies are said to have formed our Solar System, about 15 million years ago and our planets about 4.5 million years ago. A whirling mass of gas spun like a flat dish or plate around the Sun and droplets formed which became the planets we know today. Do they show any evidence of catastrophe in their past or are they a monument to unending serenity? Well actually, the reality is that far from proclaiming calm serenity they show quite alarming evidence of disruption and catastrophe. Let's take a look.

The Outer Planets

It is assumed that originally all the planets spun around the Sun in the same plane and in the same direction, i.e. if we could go up over the North Pole and out into space looking down on things from that vantage point, the circulation around the Sun would be seen as being anticlockwise. This is our normal motion. They all most certainly do revolve anticlockwise around the Sun but until the recent demotion of Pluto from the list of planets, they did not all rotate in more-or-less the same plane. Now they do but the eccentricity of Pluto indicates that something dramatic had happened at the edges of our Solar System. Pluto probably began life as a moon of Neptune but something came along, knocking it out of Neptune's grasp and into a very peculiar orbit, which actually comes in closer to the Sun than Nep-

tune for about 11 years. Neptune also has a moon, Triton, which rotates in a retrograde fashion (backwards, or clockwise) and another, Nereid, which has an amazingly eccentric orbit. Clearly something flew close to Neptune throwing Pluto into its own orbit around the Sun, forcing Triton to rotate backwards and Nereid almost to escape, leaving it with a highly elliptical and eccentric orbit. ‘Unending serenity’? Not out here.

Moving in to Uranus we see that its axis has been flipped through 90° and it now spins clockwise, or retrograde, instead of anticlockwise. Such changes do not happen gradually but must happen catastrophically quickly.



Then comes the beautiful planet Saturn with its fabulous rings. Only in modern times since the advent of space rockets exploring deep into the Solar System have we discovered that the other gas giant planets, Jupiter, Uranus and Neptune also have rings, but Saturn’s rings are marvellously visible with very simple optical equipment and have been known about for hundreds of years. So what are the rings? Well, they are mainly ice and rock fragments which were once part of a planetary-like body, or moon, which flew too close to Saturn and was smashed into pieces by the gravitational forces involved. We explained the Roche Limit in *Genesis Accepted*, Number 12, which tells us that any astral body over 200 miles in diameter, coming closer to a larger body will disintegrate under gravitational forces at around 2.5 times the radius of the larger body. In other words it will not smash into the larger body as a solid object but will be torn apart and fragment. Saturn’s rings all lie inside the Roche Limit and betoken a catastrophic fragmentation of such a rocky-icy body, or maybe bodies, whose fragments now form the rings. This is yet another example of swift catastrophe in the Solar System in defiance of the doctrine of uniformity.

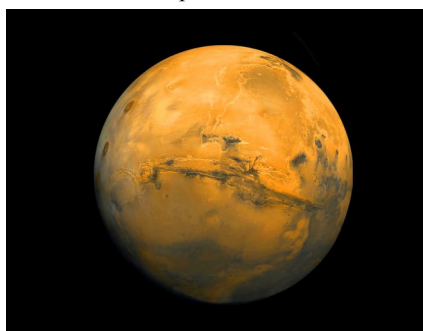
Jupiter comes next. It too has rings and they have a similar origin to those of Saturn. Its giant red spot is thought to have been formed as a result of a catastrophic impact. Jupiter is known to play a

vital rôle in sweeping the skies clear of debris and protecting the Earth and inner Solar System from many collisions. There was great excitement in July 1994 when astronomers observed a comet, Shoemaker -Levy named after its discoverers, crash into the planet. This was the first time such an occurrence had been witnessed but it was far from a slow, gradual event. It lasted from 16th to 22nd because the original comet had already come within Saturn’s Roche Limit in 1992 and had been split into several fragments which were finally sucked into Jupiter and swept up in 1994.

The Inner Planets

Between Jupiter and Mars lies the enigmatic Asteroid Belt. It is exactly where another planet should be but in fact consists of thousands of fragments of rock of various shapes and sizes all orbiting around the Sun in the normal, anticlockwise direction. The explanation in Wikipedia of how they formed runs like this: ‘The asteroid belt formed from the primordial solar nebula as a group of planetesimals, the smaller precursors of the planets, which in turn formed protoplanets. Between Mars and Jupiter, however, gravitational perturbations from the giant planet imbued the protoplanets with too much orbital energy for them to accrete into a planet. Collisions became too violent, and instead of fusing together, the planetesimals and most of the protoplanets shattered,’ (emphasis in original, in blue, to guide people to links for further study). We note the assumption of the ‘primordial solar nebula’, for which there is no evidence, and the coming together of the pieces which form planets. But here they didn’t because gravity was too powerful.

So let us try another option. Originally there was a planet here, going sedately about the normal business of being a planet, when it encountered another huge astral body which flew too close to it and it disintegrated, having been torn apart by gravitational forces - at least both theories accept the shattering power of gravitational forces! The Asteroid Belt is not evidence of a failed planet but is a monument

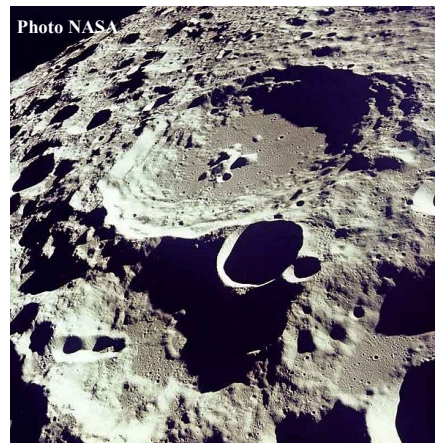


Mars Grand Canyon

to the simple truth that the Solar System has been subject to catastrophic forces, not uniformitarian serenity.

Moving smoothly on to Mars, we see evidence of it having been deluged and canyons (see picture below) and rivers being carved out. There are volcanoes which once spewed lava across its plains. ‘Unending serenity’? Not here.

Come on in to the Moon. Just look at its surface. It is pock-marked with an enormous number of impact craters, and



NASA believes that water is trapped in some of these craters. There are also lava flows, particularly on the side facing us. Quiet? Serene? Not at all. The Moon has been battered by catastrophic forces over its lifetime.

We come to Venus, which is a mysterious planet because it is shrouded in poisonous, dense clouds of noxious gases. However we do know that its rotation is retrograde. In other words at some time in the past it has been reversed, so its catastrophic credentials are intact. It is also amazingly hot due to a runaway greenhouse effect. It is a truly hostile place completely unfit for human exploration, save possibly by space probe.

Finally we come to Mercury. Little is known about it in detail but exploration is coming along. From our pint of view in this article two things indicate signs of a catastrophic past: it is heavily cratered, just like the Moon, and its orbit is the most eccentric of all of the planets which again suggests a catastrophic perturbation at some point in the past.

There is no evidence of uniformitarianism operating in either the galaxies or the Solar System. It’s just a dream of those on Earth who have their own agenda and do not want the discomfort of thinking that there have been massive catastrophes in the past which have shaped our planet’s geology, and especially the one mentioned in the Bible, in Genesis chapters 6-9, with Noah, and an ark full of animals, proclaiming a Divine judgement on sin.

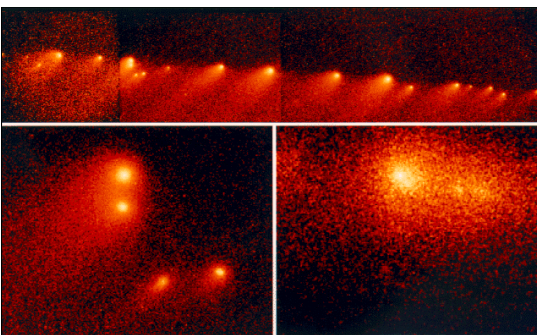
The Young-Earth Dilemma

As our readers know, we take a stand on a biblical age for the Earth which means that we are looking at it being little more than 6,000-years-old rather than 4,500,000,000-years-old. Naturally we need catastrophic processes to explain the phenomena we see and we also need explanations for starlight and the astonishing distances involved in the universe as we understand it. This article is not concerned about starlight and time but creationists are working hard on the problems and we need not fear them. (see *Genesis Accepted* Numbers 7, and 22).

The Bible tells us that there was one tremendous catastrophe which shaped the Earth's surface - the Flood - but it also contains other evidence of lesser catastrophes affecting the Earth from the Flood down approximately to Isaiah's time *circa* 700BC. This is the subject matter of my book, *Speak Through The Earthquake, Wind And Fire*, Countywise 1982. We have looked at a good deal of this over the years in this magazine. The facts are not disputed; it is the interpretation of the facts which has to be decided.

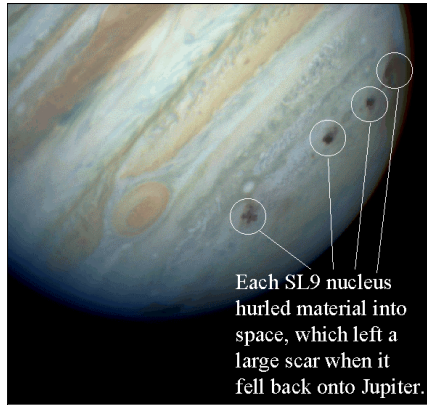
If the Solar System was only created about 6,000 years ago, we have to find a formula, and a mechanism, for producing the catastrophic effects mentioned above. Our answer lies in the realm of astrocatastrophism where a close flyby of a planet-like ice and rock body moved from the outer reaches of the Solar System, encountering many, if not all, of the planets, shedding ice and rock particles, leaving rings around some of the planets, orbits going out of kilter, axes reversing, landscapes deluged with water, and volcanoes erupting under the disturbed gravitational forces. One planet smashed up completely, impact craters pock-marked surfaces and people on Earth became so paralysed with fear about such things that they worshipped the planets as gods, built henge monuments, sacrificed to these 'gods' and so on. We are not going to reprise all of this here because it has been covered in the past.

Earth encounters



Shoemaker-Levy fragments streaming towards Jupiter and 'death' (July 1994)

Photo at incamera.as.arizona.edu



Each SL9 nucleus hurled material into space, which left a large scar when it fell back onto Jupiter.

Shoemaker-Levy left scars on Jupiter after its impact

Photo at www2.jpl.nasa.gov/s19/background.html

Let us return to the Shoemaker-Levy cometary collision with Jupiter in July 1994. Up until then the 'deep in space or way back in time' rule applied in most published scientific thinking about impact events. That they occurred deep in space and way back in time was well known, but that was 'safe'; we were in little or no danger. Then this comet appeared, broken into eighteen or so major pieces and was heading for Jupiter. By tracing its orbit back it was possible to detect that it had at least encountered Saturn and been torn apart within Saturn's Roche Limit in 1992 and what was left was going to die by encountering Jupiter. Suddenly this scenario changed the perception on these issues and subsequently the effects of impact craters and such catastrophic encounters has become less off-beat and far more acceptable in mainstream thought. Photographing the Earth's surface from space has revealed at least 56,000 impact craters on our planet and its very unquiet past existence recognized.

In February 2013 there was consternation in Russia when a meteorite was photographed suddenly appearing in the sky and crashing to Earth. The effect was minimal but the panic was real. Just imagine what it would have been like to see a planetary-sized body hurtling towards the Earth. Is it any wonder that ancient man scanned the skies and built observatories to track them and/or see if the Earth's orbit was still as it had been beforehand? That these astral bodies were worshipped as gods is hardly surprising. The fact that the Jews were able to maintain a belief in an unseen God when there was plenty of 'evidence' of threats from the skies is remarkable. That they sometimes weakened and apostatized is hardly surprising, though not excusable in God's eyes.

The huge impact crater in the Arizona desert has long

been known and studied. It is about a mile across and half-a-mile deep. The meteorite, or even asteroid which crashed into this uninhabited part of the Earth's surface must have been both large and explosively frightening. Nowadays regular geological theory accepts the notion that one such encounter killed off the dinosaurs and they have identified the sites of impact craters which have been left behind from such encounters and which could have been where it happened. We do not believe this for there is plenty of evidence to show not only that it was the Flood of Noah's day which killed off most of the dinosaurs but also that some remained alive well into medieval times where they were referred to as dragons (the name 'dinosaur' was not



Meteor Crater (Arizona)



Russian meteorite flashes across the sky (February 2013)



The somewhat smaller crater in Russia than the one mile wide crater in Arizona

invented until 1840). The point is that a catastrophic explanation for major events on the Earth is becoming far more acceptable than it was even thirty years or so ago. The tide is turning and the myth of uniformitarianism is slowly coming apart.

The Wave

There are many examples we could turn to to show that the catastrophic explanation of the history of our geology is far more correct than 'the present is the key to the past'. We are not usually upset by such things though now that our telescopes and other astronomical observations are being made on much more sophisticated equipment there is a growing deeper concern for

the future. Asteroid collisions are at the top of the list with some suggesting that we bomb apparently rogue asteroids into oblivion. But just take another look at the photograph on the front cover of this issue and marvel at what you are seeing. It is a rock formation in Arizona called 'The Wave', where sandstone layers have been carved out initially by water and now also mainly by wind in one small area of desert. There is very limited access to it. The authorities only allow 12 visitors a day and the privilege of going depends on a lottery drawn each day at 9.00 a.m. There is no trail or road there just to keep it exclusive.



Does this look like the product of slow processes where sediment falls to the sea bed over countless millennia - in Jurassic times (200,000,000 years ago according to standard geological explanations)? The layers are cross-bedded sandstones which assumed this visible aspect as the valley was eroded by a stream and further opened up by wind scour. The water-borne deposit notion is quite fine but the beds have been contorted, then planed down to a smooth, level layer on top of which later deposits have formed. This line is almost ruler straight and spirit-level flat, and is called an unconformity (see *Genesis Accepted* Number 23 for a detailed discussion of this geological phenomenon). We have pointed to it on the photograph just in case some do not quite know what to look for.

These cross-bedded sediments could not hold their structure and not level out over time, if the assumed millions of years of development were true. To be



My fossilized fish showing scales, fins and eyes.
(This can only be done with instant freezing in a flood)

'frozen' like this they had to be cemented and solidify very quickly indeed. This is a fossilized landscape. What happened was that the beds were laid down rapidly and, while they were still soft, another rush of water planed their top layer flat, depositing further sediments immediately on top of the still soft, plastic-like flat surface.

All fossils have to be formed rapidly and in the case of fish, where scales, fins and even eyes can be detected, the 'freezing' must have been virtually instantaneous. Leave a dead fish for a day or two and it will be scavenged with great gusto. Yet I paid relatively little for my specimen, pictured below, because there are thousands of them readily available to collectors like myself. The flood which fossilized these poor creatures happily going about their little lives without a care in the world, came catastrophically and not slowly in a calm sea of unending serenity. Our sedimentary rocks generally were not formed slowly but 'speak' of catastrophism not uniformitarianism.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the processes which today slowly sculpt the landscape have not been the norm throughout the Earth's history. The men who suggested it wanted it to be like this largely to introduce the notions of vast ages over millions of years fashioning the rocks, because they did not believe in the alternative picture presented in the Book of Genesis. This sprang out of the Enlightenment, which was basically an eighteenth century intellectual movement dedicated to human reason and the scientific method, as opposed to faith and superstition, and by 'superstition' they usually meant God's revelation in the Bible. Consequently they had to attempt a reinterpretation of the observable facts of geology, which nobody denies, from occurring over thousands of years into millions of years. 'Mother Nature' takes over from 'Father God' as the creative force. Since there were no cameras present to record exactly what happened

in the early days of the Earth, interpreting its history depends on the philosophy brought to bear on the evidence. It is never a matter of completely objective interpretation but one of bias. As Ken Ham has said, 'Everybody is biased. It's not a question of whether to be biased or not but rather which bias is the best bias to be

biased with'. We can either let the reasoning of fallible human beings, who were not present when it happened, dominate our understanding, or we can accept the words of One who was there and who has left a record for us to believe and follow. The question we need to answer in our minds is which explanation best fits the facts and explains what happened. For example, 'If there was a worldwide Flood, what would the evidence be?' The answer comes back at us in a simple song by Buddy Davis, of the 'Answers in Genesis' ministry team, who is also quoting Ken Ham, CEO of 'Answers in Genesis': 'Millions of dead things, buried in rock layers, laid down by water, all over the Earth'. There is abundant evidence that our world has been shaped catastrophically in the past and not just on a local scale but rather globally.

There are several reasons why we have highlighted these things here by bringing together quite a significant amount of material which has been scattered over several previous issues of *Genesis Accepted*. The main one is that you will not read of the idea of astrocatastrophism presented in mainline Creationist literature. They refuse even to consider these possibilities. They do not recognize that the trigger-mechanism for producing these amazing geological effects comes from - or even could come from - a close encounter with large astral bodies such as planetoids - or even a planet or two, depending on which authority is preferred. These ideas are not mine. I'm not that clever. I have merely borrowed and used them and my reason for so doing is that I know that the current Creationist explanations cannot be driven by existing forces within the Earth's crust, as they struggle to maintain. These are minimally two million times too weak to do the job. An astrocatastrophic encounter can comfortably do the job, both on the physical scale and in a very short time scale, depending on how close it came. But more importantly such encounters provide wonderful explanations of mysterious events in scriptures, opening up the Old Testament especially in ways which you might not think possible, and, incidentally, explain many of the abiding mysteries in the observable remains of our prehistoric ancestors, e.g. the meaning and purpose of Stonehenge, and the like (see *Genesis Accepted* Number 16).

Studying in this area is exciting because once you do so you realize that we are actually living in the times of the fulfilment of Peter's prophecy, which once again reinforces our faith in the inspiration of scripture. But also on a personal level for me, as time moves on from the 1970s when I first took on-board these concepts, it's satisfying that those who once ignored them are now being forced to reconsider that there really could be something in them after all!

Lot: a great man of faith

People's ignorance at times can be quite breathtaking. My classic encounter of all times occurred in the early 1980s, in a Merseyside comprehensive school, and was with a small group of about six very slow learners, all boys, who tried ever so hard but were truly educationally hopeless. I'd taught them about the nine planets the previous day – there were nine then; Pluto had not yet been demoted – and I thought I'd begin the next lesson with a simple review. Eventually we got to the nine and even got them in order – triumph! I'd succeeded, so I thought. Then one lad cut me right down to size. Trying ever so hard to show an intelligent interest he piped up, 'Please sir, which planet do we live on?' Poor lad, even the others laughed and heaven knows they had nothing to laugh about.

I was reminded of this in the middle of April 2013 when reading in the *Daily Mail* an item extracted from a book written by a book-seller about the daft questions they get asked at times. The one which stuck in my mind was about the man who came in and approached a member of staff: 'Please, I'm looking to buy a Bible for my mother; can you tell me the author?' There was no record of the reply he got, though I'd have been curious to find out. As time goes on, our society gets more and more ignorant of the Bible and its contents. Look at any popular quiz show on television: simple Bible questions to us defeat even smart contestants, let alone the air-heads. There are many factual errors in people's minds about the contents of the Bible, from the 'apple' in Eden to the 'three' wise men visiting the 'stable and the manger' – none of them over serious – but also there are popular misconceptions surrounding characters too. Thomas was a great apostle of faith not a miserable doubter; Mary Magdalene, poor lady, was not a reformed prostitute, but even amongst serious biblical scholars some characters can be persistently downgraded and spiritually maligned. I want to look at one such here and declare once again - for we've looked at him earlier in *Genesis Accepted* Number 15 - that he was both a righteous man and a great man of faith, though you wouldn't know it from the 'press' reports he gets. 'No' he wasn't perfect, and 'Yes' he had faults and weaknesses, but then don't we all? Yet over the years we have allowed ourselves to focus on his weaknesses and have forgotten his strengths. He's usually billed as a weak, compromising loser who got what he deserved. The man I'm referring to, of course, is Lot, of Sodom and Gomorrah fame: the nephew of the mighty Abraham, and who is condemned or downgraded mainly because he failed to be as spiritual and godly as his uncle

and mentor. But then how would our faith and lives measure up if placed under a spiritual microscope alongside Abraham's for comparison?

Beginning in the middle

I want to start looking at him in the middle of his biblical story with a little-considered vignette in Genesis chapter 14. When we read this chapter and preach from it, most attention is drawn to the mysterious king/priest Melchizedek who lived in Salem, which we now call Jerusalem. His priesthood and spiritual superiority to Abraham, who bowed down to him and offered him tithes and gifts and was blessed by him, make him both a wonder and an enigma. His priesthood is pivotal to the New Testament argument, in Hebrews, in explaining the priesthood of Jesus. Melchizedek has to be Shem, the son of Noah, and this was/is fully covered in *Genesis Accepted* Numbers 1 and 3, so that's that one sorted, as our earlier readers will testify! (I wrote that 'tongue-in-cheek' because that is simply my conclusion based on my study and I'm happy for people to disagree with me – though they'd be completely wrong, of course, if they did!)

Rescuing Lot

No, it's the rescue of Lot and the recovery of all his possessions by Abraham which speaks volumes about the great faith of Lot, though that might not be too immediately obvious from the narrative in Genesis 14. Not only does Abraham rescue him, he also returns him back to home base in Sodom, and therein lies the clue to Lot's faith. The king of Sodom, Bera by name, and four neighbouring kings had been oppressed by other, more powerful, Mesopotamian kings. I think all of them were probably petty potentates in fact, but after a dozen years of this they rebelled and, after about eighteen months, retribution fell on the rebels, who were defeated in the Siddim Valley, and Lot, and all that was his, were swept up in the aftermath and carried off up north. Abraham got to hear of it, gathered his own troops together, all 318 of them, chased after the enemy, put them to rout and returned the silly upstarts to their old homes. Let's look at the map above.



Details from the map

The first thing we notice is just where Abraham and Lot lived. Assuming that this is roughly where Sodom was located (and that's quite a debate), at the southeast end of the Dead Sea, Mamre, where Abraham lived, was about 45 miles northwest, if you were a crow. It was a longer detour for uncle and nephew to get together for a chat occasionally but they were not living massively long distances apart, and, though separated for economic reasons, they were in contact and obviously took an interest in each other. Of course Abraham knew, or must have known, what life was like for Lot in Sodom, but it was initially he who felt they would be better living apart. Then Lot is captured and dragged north by the overlords. They get as far as Dan, which is about 120 miles away, before Abraham catches up with them. He defeats the enemy and thoroughly routs them, cashing them further away by over 30 miles. It's at least 150 miles back home. There's kings, possessions, which means livestock, servants and families, tents, and the like to move, as well as his army. The strategy, planning and military acumen involved is not like that of a small, lightning guerrilla force but something much more ponderous. How long it

took, we don't know but one thing is absolutely certain, Abraham and Lot had plenty of time to chatter to each other, exchange views and stories, and work out what was still best for both of them. And despite all of the sin-problems in Sodom Abraham returned Lot there, right back into the middle of it. He did not suggest that Lot settle elsewhere for his spiritual good. Is this the action a strong, concerned, religious elder would do to a weak, compromising family member for whom he had the ultimate spiritual oversight? It's quite clear from this story that a) Abraham was still very much the overlord and master of his nephew's life, b) that he cared a great deal about him, c) that he had absolute confidence in him to return him into the spiritual pit of Sodom, because he knew Lot was strong enough to cope.

The popular myth about Lot

Now let's go back a little and see what bothered me once more, and which prompted these ideas. As most of you know, I support several Creationist societies. I am very happy to commend their work on the first 11 chapters of Genesis but very much find them wanting once they start moving down the Bible, until the point where you want to ask the most important question of all: 'What must I do to be saved?'. There they give the usual, evangelical, unbiblical reply of believe on Jesus as Saviour (that's fine), repent of your sins (equally fine), and then go into your room and pray a prayer of dedication – they will supply a sample of the type of thing you need to pray – and you are born again, leaving your room as a Christian (totally wrong, misleading, and selling sincere contacts completely short at the most significant point of all). Baptism, therefore, positively and deliberately plays no part at all in salvation on their understanding of the Bible. We'll leave it at this simple warning, which I have given before, to beware of what they teach beyond Genesis 11.

Pulling Lot to pieces

As part of my involvement in Creationism I receive emails from one source each day, and this includes excellent updates on Creation, once a month, but also, as a bonus, I get a daily homily, or happy thought: some good, some useless and some downright wrong. I want to present you one which I received on 7th March 2013, entitled 'Tragic Lot':

'One of the most tragic figures in all of Scripture is that of compromising Lot, Abraham's nephew, who renounced the land of promise for the sinful society of Sodom, ultimately to lose everything of importance. His slide into apostasy [is] traced in Genesis 12-19....

'Lot is first mentioned as travelling with Abram and Sarai from their homeland to

Canaan in obedience to God's command (Genesis 12:4-5; 13:5). A petty problem arises which surely could have been resolved (13:6-10), but Lot chose (v. 11) to walk in the counsel of the ungodly. "But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly"(v. 13).

'Lot soon found a home in the city itself, not content to merely herd his flocks in the fertile valley. By standing in the way of sinners, when Sodom was attacked by enemies, he was captured (14:12) and later rescued by Abram (vv. 14-16).

'Lot's identification with wicked Sodom did not end there, as it should have, for when the city's wickedness was beyond God's forbearance, Lot was found sitting in the seat of the scornful, a leader of the city, sitting in the gates with the town fathers (19:1). Lot was a "just" or "righteous" man, "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked"(2 Peter 2:7), but his actions (Genesis 19:8) and his lack of spiritual influence even within his own family (vv. 14-16, 31-38) testify to the horror of such a compromising lifestyle.

'May God grant us all the persevering faith of Abraham and not the compromising faith of Lot.' JDM (emphasis ours).

Putting Lot back again!

Now, I don't know which Bible this man, JDM as he signs himself, reads but it doesn't seem to be the same as mine. I highlighted some bits in red to make it easier to pick out the salient points as we take just a brief look at them. The first compromise is that Lot '*renounced the land of promise for the sinful city of Sodom*'. Did he? The family all came south from Haran into Canaan and while there God told Abraham that all of this would be his inheritance one day. No boundaries are described and the lower Jordan valley with Sodom in it was certainly a part of such a blessing. Sodom actually lay in the 'land of blessing'! Lot did not reject it at all. When the choice was made Lot was only considering the fertile nature of the valley, not that it was not part of the promise of God – because it was. When Abraham made his godly offer to his nephew he did not pass comment on the sinfulness of the people there, probably because wherever they settled amongst the Canaanites they would be walking into sinfulness on a grand scale. The Canaanites worshipped Moloch, amongst other gods, and Moloch required child sacrifices. Their complete sinfulness before God was one major reason why He demanded their total extermination when Joshua finally took their land and the Israelites finally settled there. The choice for Lot and Abraham was not between 'the land of Promise' and 'a sin soaked city' but one of rampant sin wherever they settled. The gloss in Genesis 13: 13 '*Now the men of Sodom were wicked,*

great sinners against the Lord' is just that – a gloss by Moses not necessarily a statement of known fact. Abraham and Lot had not long come back north out of Egypt and there's no need to assume that they then knew that Sodom was particularly sinful, above and beyond that of any other city. Moses is here preparing us for what is to come regarding the fate of Sodom in the bigger story, just as he glossed in the fact that '*(this was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah)*' in 13: 10.

Lot did not make a compromising choice, just a selfish one. Had he chosen the other way, godly Abraham would have gone to the area of Sodom. He was not blessed by God because he made a godly choice of the land of promise but rather that he showed a loving, godly spirit towards Lot when he could have pulled rank and demanded that Lot take his chances in the poorer country. But Abraham was not that sort of a man.

Now JDM covers himself in glory: '*A petty problem arises which surely could have been resolved.*' You get the impression that he thinks this was a little spat and they could all sit around a table, discuss it and sort it out. Having looked into chapter 14 already, we catch a glimpse of the realities involved. '*When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, 318 of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.*' (Ge 14:14). So Abram had a personal army of 318 trained men. They would have had wives and children. There would have been other non-trained servants under his command and shelter. This man was not a simple sheep farmer with a small retinue; he was a powerful potentate, a sheikh on a grand scale. Lot's crew may not have been as large – he had no family to start with – but the problem was a huge one and wise Abram decided that the best thing was to split up. Was Abram too an ungodly, compromising man? Did he not have the acumen to sort out a petty squabble? The narrative in Genesis tells us that it was Abram who initiated the parting of the ways, not Lot. I'll leave that one there.

So, '*Lot chose to walk in the council of the ungodly*'. Really? That was not why he chose the valley around Sodom. He could well have seen the choice, as far as sin was concerned, as being between a rock and a hard place. If all of this was known about Sodom the question has to be asked, and stressed, why spiritually stronger, wiser, godlier Abram allowed his weak nephew to put himself into such a situation? That seems like very bad leadership from the spiritual elder of the family, but he had no fears for Lot's spiritual safety and nowhere is Abram chided for his lack of godly guidance, thereby it appears allowing his nephew to be compromised. Then, as we've already seen, he not only

allows Lot to go back, he places him there. Nothing has changed. Could the reason be that this is just a figment of JDM's overactive imagination?

Lot at Sodom's gate

So why was Lot sitting at the gate of the city when the angels arrived, in chapter 19? It was not because he was all friendly with the people, but rather just the opposite. In chapter 19 the men of Sodom were quite up front about it; Lot was NOT one of them and they knew it. After Lot refused to give them access to his male guests – the angels – and even offered them his two virgin daughters (not exactly to his credit in our eyes), they replied: “Stand back... This fellow came to sojourn and he has become the judge! Now we will deal with you then with them.” (Ge. 19:9). He was there at the gate to offer hospitality to strangers who had come into town and needed a bed. This was a basic rule of hospitality, which obviously Lot knew that the people of Sodom simply ignored. It was being sup-

plied by him because he was righteous and grieved by their sinfulness.

Our parallel situation

We live in times when it is getting harder to maintain our spiritual integrity. We see sin and sinful attitudes coming at us from our peers, our government, society in general, where wrong is now right and right is viewed as wrong, (cf. Romans 1:32) and we could find ourselves being persecuted by losing our jobs, even possibly going to prison for standing up for God's Word, and calling sin for what it is – SIN. Lot had the same problem only in spades. He DID NOT crumble or compromise, and we need to look again at his story as an example to us and remember that God went to great trouble to rescue him when the heavens literally fell in on Sodom.

Godly, righteous Lot

This was not a man at ease with a convenient compromise but one who was tormented spiritually where he was. How

do we know? How do I know that he was righteous and faithful? Righteous and faithful, not perfect. It is not my imagination. Peter tells us the truth in his Second Letter chapter 2:7. Here Peter is encouraging Christians to remain faithful for God is able to look after His own. Casting around Genesis for examples, he picks on Lot in these words: ‘If he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials.’ (2 Pe 2:7-9). Does this sound like a compromising, apostatising spiritual pygmy, drowning in his own sinfulness? Not a bit of it. No, he wasn't an Abraham but then few of us are, or have been. God rescued Lot not just because of Abraham but because Lot was a righteous man; Peter said so and I'll back Peter not JDM.

No Children in Eden

The great Lakes poet, William Wordsworth, wrote a short poem, *My heart leaps up*, or *The Rainbow*, which led to a big falling out with his friend and collaborator Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who criticized it unmercifully. Wordsworth was enchanted by Coleridge's son Hartley, who probably inspired his thinking about the wonderful innocence of childhood. He developed the ideas more fully in his *Ode: Intimations of Immortality*, which he began on 27th March 1802, one day after writing the shorter poem. Here is the cause of the falling out:

My heart leaps up when I behold

A rainbow in the sky:

So was it when my life began;

So is it now I am a man;

So be it when I shall grow old,

Or let me die!

The Child is father of the Man;

And I could wish my days to be

Bound each to each by natural piety.

William Wordsworth
(26th March 1802)

It was the the seventh line which caused the trouble: ‘The Child is father of the Man’. Coleridge simply could not get his head around that concept. How could the child be the father of the man? Obviously it was biologically impossible and

he felt it was also psychologically and emotionally impossible too. Children lack wisdom, knowledge and maturity. But Wordsworth was thinking about the pure innocence of a child who loves and trusts unreservedly in the perfection with which it is born. As it grows up that almost ‘Divine innocence’ is shed until the only way we can see what we have lost is to look at a child and wish we still had it. That is how God originally intended us to be and as adults, if we are to recapture some of such a concept in our own lives, it is the child who has to teach us - whether Wordsworth would have put God into the picture as I have done is debatable, but that's the thinking behind it on which I want to dwell here.

Consummation, Creationist style

Regular readers will be aware that I have frequently counselled caution concerning the teaching of the various Creationist groups. My two major problems are, as I've mentioned many times, their unbiblical answer to the most important question we could be asked by an earnest enquirer: ‘What must I do to be saved?’

The other is that they teach the seven ‘Cs’ of creation, the final one of which is ‘Consummation’. As an idea there is nothing wrong with that but what they mean by ‘Consummation’ is the premillennial scenario of the Rapture, the 1000-years reign of Christ on Earth and the recreation of the Earth back to its perfect Edenic state. In this recreated situation there is no more sin, of course, nor pain, nor sorrow. The creation, which as Paul wrote in Romans 8:21-22, ‘... will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now’, and will be fully restored. This means that nothing will rust or rot and entropy will not exist (entropy is the known observable movement of things from order to chaos in the natural world). The animals will all return to their docile, non-predatory state and the nastiest will be nice again.

This idea is lifted straight out of Isaiah chapter 11 in a famous few verses where we read:



*'The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the
young goat,
and the calf and the lion and the fattened
calf together;
and a little child shall lead them.
The cow and the bear shall graze;
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
The nursing child shall play over the hole
of the cobra,
and the weaned child shall put his hand
on the adder's den.
They shall not hurt or destroy
in all my holy mountain;
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge
of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.'* (Isa 11:6-9)



It's a lovely picture and seems to hark back to Eden before the Fall and is interpreted as an indication of what it will be like in the restored Earth at the end of time. I sometimes remember my son, Arthur, when he was a little over two, being on holiday with us in Crete where a large Alsatian dog was living near to our villa. The innocent child had no fear of the huge, to him, dog who could have had him for breakfast, but dog and boy were perfectly together as often only a child can be with a strange animal. The dog sees no threat from the child and the child sees



none from the dog. The picture of them above contentedly enjoying each other shows exactly what happened, and wouldn't it be lovely if the world was always like this? But is this what the passage in Isaiah means or is talking about?

Isaiah 11 and 12

We cannot print all of chapters 11 and 12 here but it is recommended that you read them. Both are very short chapters. Immediately you read them all, and not just the verses we have quoted, you see the context and that it has absolutely nothing at all to do with the end of the world and what it will be like. Prophetic passages are sometimes very difficult to interpret because the people of Bible times did not think in the same sort of patterns as we do today. We are often more literal in our understanding than they are. Consequently we can often say what the passage is not saying but may find it very much harder to say what it is saying. There is a general rule of thumb regarding Old Testament prophecy: it never refers to the end of the

world. The furthest it goes into the future is to the time of Christ and the First Century AD.

Immediately we read of the subject of the passage being Jesse's descendant and the wonderful effects He will have, drawing Israel together. There's no need to feel that this is referencing any other than the Lord Jesus Himself yet clearly this is not a reign, such as the premillennialists would believe in, because He is calling and proclaiming things to all sorts of people. Clear passages tell us that when He returns all His enemies will be destroyed. In any reconstituted Earth only the people of the Lord will be present (assuming for now the truth of the reconstituted Earth). There is no doubt in my mind that this passage is referencing the church and the Gospel times, not the end times. But the reason why it is viewed as an eschatological scenario is because the premillennial view, which drives this thinking, does not see Jesus as reigning now. His Kingdom was postponed because of the Cross and the church was hastily substituted for it until the time is right for Him to come again and finish off what He started in Palestine nearly 2000 years ago. This is not to be a study of premillennialism and the above is a very rough-and-ready summary only, but the skewed thinking about the Kingdom leads to skewed thinking about the end of the world. Essentially they see it as a time when Jesus comes to establish His Kingdom and rule the world in peace and love, whereas the Bible tells us that the Kingdom came after the cross and we have been transferred into it (Col. 1:13). **He will actually be giving it back**

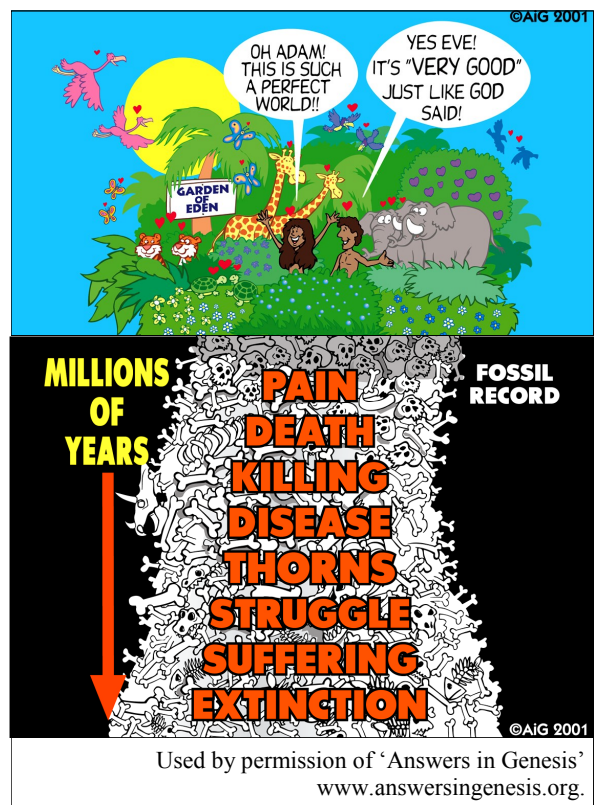
to the Father at the end (1 Cor. 15:24). Nowhere does it ever say that the Lord will actually set foot on this Earth again. The closest He gets will be in the sky as He gathers the saved to Himself from the graves and those left live on the Earth (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

Edenic perfection

But isn't this Isaiah passage actually harking back to Eden for its imagery? At first it might appear so. The animals are tame, non-predatory and are herbivores. This certainly accords with Eden. Death did not just come to the human species when Adam and Eve sinned, it affected the whole of Creation. When digging for fossils geologists discover all sorts of signs of predation, illnesses like rheumatic and arthritic conditions, fractures, tumours and the like. Had these happened before the Fall and Eden been built over a fossil graveyard, how could God have pronounced His Creation 'very good' when obviously it wasn't? (The cartoon from 'Answers in Genesis' (below) amply illustrates the absurdity of Edenic perfection over a fossil graveyard scenario.) It was sin which brought death and there was no sin, and therefore no death, whilst Adam and Eve were in Eden.

The problem

So what is the problem? Why couldn't Isaiah be harking back to Eden for his imagery? Well, it's the child. The key figures here are the child and the babies and the rôles they play in the safety and innocence of their situation. There were never any children in Eden! We have no idea how long Adam and Eve spent in Eden before they fell into sin but the Bible



Used by permission of 'Answers in Genesis'
www.answersingenesis.org.

indicates that Cain was both conceived and born after the Fall and the expulsion from the Garden. It wasn't that they were forbidden to have intercourse in those early days it's just that they didn't - or if they did, Eve did not conceive right away.

The child in heaven

For this to be a picture of heaven we would also have to accept that there will be children and babies there too. That is not our understanding of the situation. It is very hard for us to imagine just what will happen when the Lord returns and we receive our new, resurrected bodies. In 1 Cor. 15:35-55 Paul goes into quite some detail about our resurrected bodies. They will be spiritual and not of flesh and blood; they currently bear the image of the man of dust (Adam) but then will bear the image of the man of heaven (Jesus) (verse 49). But how 'old' we will appear to be is not specified.

Jesus told us that there will be no marriage in heaven for we will be equal to the angels, who neither marry nor are given in marriage (Luke 20:34-36). Therefore there will be no children born in heaven. Reproduction will have ceased. Those who have died, and are worthy to attain to the resurrection (Luke 20:35) will be in a fully prepared spiritual body and the human concept of 'little children' and 'babes' will have disappeared. We will be recognizable but our new bodies will be invigorated, perfect, neither deformed nor aged. It also seems perfectly logical that those whose lives here were cut short will have their bodies in full and perfect maturity, otherwise some will be fated to remain as babies or children for all eternity, (just as others would have equally been fated to be old and decrepit), which is not the picture of perfection we would want to carry with us for ever. I'm quite attached to my body for now but if you could see it and know what problems it has you would easily understand that I have no desire to take it with me into heaven if I don't have to, thank you very much!

If I were to ask the biblical quiz question: 'How many people were saved when the Flood came in Noah's day?', the smart, unreflective answer would be 'Eight'. Wrong! There would have proba-

bly been tens, if not hundreds of thousands saved by that dreadful event. Estimates of the world's population at the time of the Flood, based on each couple only having six children - which is a very conservative estimate indeed - would work out at 1,500,000,000. That's about the same as the population of the world in 1850. How many of them were under the age of moral responsibility, and therefore had not reached the age of accountability when they drowned is impossible to estimate, but because they died in innocence we understand they will not be held accountable of sin, and therefore will find themselves in Paradise simply because they died before they had time to grow up and rebel against God. We cannot place an absolute age on this moment, which will vary from person to person, and only God knows the state of somebody's soul at death, but the Flood was no doubt merciful to many thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands, who, had they been allowed to live would have died in their sins and not in innocence.

The child and the church

How do we 'know' about the innocence of childhood and its situation or standing in the mind of the Lord? That question, of course, is very easy to answer. Jesus confronted the disciples who had been arguing about who was the greatest: *'At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me..."'* (Mt 18:1-5). Jesus saw in children the innocence, trust and love which typified the true members of His church. As children grow older and mature they lose that innocence because of sin, and thus they lose their position in the Kingdom. This does not mean that children are incapable of doing wrong. They're not. They can do wrong with amazing fluency at times but, as Paul wrote to the Romans, *'sin is not counted where there is no law'*, (Ro 5:13). Sinning involves understanding so the younger the child the less it understands and therefore

the closer it is to the perfect state which applied in Eden. The adult has to look at the child to learn from it just what it is that God expects from the Christian in attitude, humility and trust. When we see a baby we want to smile. It's a lovely sight and there is something pure which



Our daughter Sarah, 1985

draws most of us in. In the baby we see what we should be and must strive to be. We therefore learn so much of the things which really matter in terms, not of this life, but of the next. The child becomes our teacher.

Conclusion

Whether William Wordsworth realized it or not is immaterial. He was right and Coleridge was completely out of line: 'The Child **IS** father of the Man'. Jesus said so!

The presence of babies and children in the images drawn for us by Isaiah confirms quite conclusively that this passage has no reality drawn from Eden and simply cannot refer to heaven, or a reconstituted Earth no matter how we might imagine that to be. We must not be carried away by a wish-fulfilment scenario based on premillennial misplaced thinking no matter how sincerely and earnestly it is hoped for.

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Cover picture: The Wave - rock formation in Arizona, USA