

# GENESIS ACCEPTED



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# Walking with God

I think we all have daydreams about heaven and what it will be like there. These dreams usually include sharing our existence with those whom we have loved, and in them we especially look forward to being reunited with those whom we loved who have already died. For me, of course, that includes my Mum



My Dad (50) in 1961: d. 1972 (60)  
My Mum (64) 1977: d. 2009 (96)

and Dad, and some very close and dear brethren. I also naturally strongly desire to be with Barbara, my wife, and also with my children, Sarah and Arthur and their families. This means that I am motivated to pray that they, though now living thousands of miles apart from us, will finish the course and remain faithful. I do pray at times that God will help them to that end and use me, if necessary, somehow to be a part of their faithfulness. They both know, because I have told them frequently, that I ultimately don't mind if they become rich, successful and famous or not but I do care deeply that they remain faithful as Christians. They will spend a good deal longer in eternity than they ever do down here no matter how long their lives may be.

## Biblical worthies

But I also look forward to meeting and chatting to faithful worthies of the past, biblical worthies I'm talking about now. Leaving the Lord Himself out of such a wish-list for He is at the top of mine, and top of every Christian's list too, by right. At the top of my list is Noah. I've so many things I'd like to ask him about: 'Why he was 500 before he became a dad?'; 'How many brothers and sisters he had and how many of them drowned in the Flood because they wouldn't listen to him and go into the Ark with him?'; 'Who was his wife and was she related to him before they married?'; 'The same question too

about his sons' wives and where they came from?'. Of course there's a million questions about life before the Flood, the make-up of the Earth, its climate and vegetation, the dinosaurs, and so on and so on. These questions I've just listed are simply the tip of a massive iceberg – oh, and did he ever see an iceberg, and what did he think about the Ice Age? What did he really do for 349 years after the Flood and did he ever meet up with Abraham on Earth? A wonderful, marvelous man who was the world's worst preacher, in terms of success for God, not once but twice, yet he remained faithful: once at the Flood when only seven believed him and listened to him, and then at Babel when the vast majority of his offspring rebelled again and a small remnant was raised up once more, this time through Abraham. What a failure, yet what an example of faith!

## Three who 'walked with God'

Noah was one of three men in these very early days of whom it is said either that they 'walked with God' or that they were upright, righteous and blameless. The other two are Enoch and Job. Of Noah we read in Genesis 6:9, 'Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.' Of Enoch we read in Genesis 5:21-24: '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.' And of Job we read in the opening verse: 'There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.' (Job 1:1). There is no implication that these accolades indicate that they were sinless. In fact, oddly enough, God corrects any such thoughts we might have in the case of Noah, for after just having blessed him by bringing him and his family through the most astonishing ordeal imaginable for over a year, God has this to say about this group of righteous people, headed up by Noah, 'The Lord said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth."' (Gen. 8:21). No, they were righteous, and upright, and they walked with God in a very special



All but one have now graduated to Glory

Back: Robert McDonald, Tom Kemp, Will Steele, Fred Day, George Hudson.  
Front: Walter Crosthwaite, Frank Worgan, Len Morgan, Albert Winstanley, Len Channing.

way, but they were not sinless. There is a difference.

## What does 'walking with God' mean?

So, what did it mean then, and what does it mean now, to walk with God? I'm frequently invited to print a notice of a baptism in the *Christian Worker* which requests that we all pray for him or her, as they begin their walk with God. It's one of those easy things to say but what is the substance behind the request? Just that they remain faithful, attend meetings especially around the Table faithfully most weeks, or does it go deeper than that? Let's pop back again to those early times for some answers.

We need to remember that none of the ancient worthies had a Bible to guide them in righteous living. One of the men, Job, was a post-Flood person but the other two began pre-Flood and their blessings came because of their faithfully walking with God in those antediluvian days. We have no direct biblical evidence to work on so we have to winkle out answers based on fragments and stray strands. That does not mean that we are going to be guessing wildly, but the exercise, I hope, will be interesting and instructive.

## The case of Noah

Noah was the tenth generation from Adam. That's not a massive distance from the godliness of our initial parents, yet by that time the people had become so evil and corrupt that God regretted ever making them. What an indictment! 'The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them." But Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord.' (Ge 6:5-8). It may surprise you to

know that if we assume that each couple from Adam to Noah only had six children - a very conservative estimate indeed - by the time of the Flood there would have been about 1,500,000,000 people living on the Earth and only one was righteous and walked with Him. (That's why I referred to him as the world's worst preacher, or 'most unsuccessful preacher'.) So how did it all go wrong, so amazingly wrong? This is not just a falling away, or an indifference to the things of godliness and righteousness, this is massive evil on a grand scale. We know that Cain killed Abel and that his children were violent and wicked but there was a godly line through from Seth to Noah. What happened?

### The source of early sin

In the Garden of Eden before the Fall, the Lord used to walk and talk with Adam and Eve. We haven't time to do the study now but this was not just a spiritual walking and talking; it is obvious that Adam and Eve walked and talked with what they recognized as a fellow being in human form. We believe it was indeed the Lord Himself, whom we now know best as Jesus, the Second Person in the Trinity, the Word, who met them. After they had sinned they tried to hide from Him - you can't hide from a spirit being which comes just like a wind. When Cain killed Abel he hid the body and hoped the Lord wouldn't notice. Again their walking and talking was with a human-like manifestation of God. (Many Christians don't realize that the Lord was very active throughout the Old Testament and didn't just appear as if by magic at Bethlehem in the reign of Augustus Caesar and Herod the king.) For these very early patriarchs such visitations were necessary both for companionship and instruction. How else did Cain and Abel know that they had to make a sacrificial offering on an altar if they hadn't been told, or if it was Adam who taught them, how did he know? It's quite possible that when we read that both Enoch and Noah 'walked with God' that they too did so as Adam and Eve had, with the Lord Himself in human form, and that this is why this expression is applied to them and to nobody else in the whole of Scripture. They both delighted in His company. I can't say for sure.

### Tradition and legend

Now we have to step outside of scripture for some help here. The Jews have books which deal with these times from their ancient past and in the *Book of Jubilees* - which is readily available in translation from Amazon, and elsewhere no doubt - we read that God sent angelic help to instruct in things like metallurgy (smelting and making bronze and iron tools and instruments), music, farming, medicines and poisons, and so on. These angels were called 'Watchers' and they

were guardians of the people for their benefit. They also taught Adam how to write, and there's sufficient evidence in the Bible to believe that Moses used Adam's account of creation and the Fall, etc., for his first four chapters of Genesis. Enoch, in fact, was known as 'Enoch the scribe' and we have no problem divining that Noah kept a log in the year of the Flood. Humans could write almost from the start; it was a skill God gave to them. The Jews believed that Noah took many important books on board the Ark for instruction after the Flood.

However, the strongest legend - for we must call them that if the source is not from the Bible - is that during Jared's time a third of these Watchers came down to Earth and instead of helping, as they were supposed to, they followed Satan and corrupted the world far worse than just careless sinfulness could account for. The reason for their fall was simple: lust! Here we can come back to the Bible. *'When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. Then the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years." The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown.'* (Ge 6:1-4). *'Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth."'* (Ge 6:11-13). 'The Sons of God' is a euphemism for angels and these angels lusted after women and left their proper place in the heavens to marry them, and so corrupted the Earth that this unholy alliance filled the Earth with violence. So much so that God determined to put an end to it. Now I am quite well aware that this explanation does not sit easily on many scholars' shoulders but it is the only one which makes sense to me and fits all the evidence from both Testaments. I've dealt with these things in depth in articles in various *Genesis Accepted* numbers (see Number 6: 'Sons of God', and Number 7: 'Angels as created beings').

### In Enoch's Day

Jared was Enoch's father and by Enoch's time we catch a little glimpse of how corrupt the Earth was. Cain's descendant

Lamech who was a violent, polygamous, vengeful murdering monster, was, like Enoch, the seventh generation from Adam, so clearly the corrupting influence had well swung into action before them. You can read about this 'delightful' Lamech - not to be confused with Noah's godly dad - in Genesis chapter 4:17-24. Peter tells us in 2 Pt. 2:4, and Jude, in verse 6, that these angels were locked away by God to await their final judgement at the end of time. They will never be released to corrupt the Earth again as they did back then. This corruption was therefore not just sin, bad though that would have been, but demonic in origin and it spread frighteningly, and rapidly throughout the Earth.

### Formal religion begins

Both Enoch and Noah resisted and refused to give in to it. They set their hearts and most importantly their minds on God and His righteousness. So what did they do? They didn't have the Bible for guidance but they must have had had some instruction. We've already noted that Cain and Abel knew about sacrificing, so there was teaching there. Then in Seth's time we read that: *'To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of the Lord.'* (Ge 4:26, emphasis ours). This was 235 years after Creation when formal religious observance came in. So what would it have involved?

Here's where we can turn to Job for a clue. If we look at the opening verses of the Book which bears his name, we see that Job had God absolutely at the centre of his life and thinking. Not just occasionally, or once a week on Sundays, but each and every day. We read straight away that he *'feared God and turned away from evil'* (1:1). Fear God. Jesus told us that this is a very necessary thing to do if we want to remain faithful: *"I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!"* (Lk 12:4-5). Job was well aware that God is sovereign and has the power over life and death. A healthy fear of hell reminds us that God is Lord of life and



The lake of fire, i.e. Hell



**The Broad and Narrow Way**

death and that He has the power to bless or condemn. He may be 'Abba, Father' but He is not soft and gullible. Peter tells us that He doesn't want any to perish (2 Pt. 3:9) but Jesus told us that the vast majority will choose the broad easy road to destruction (Mtt. 7:13-14), and God won't stop them going down it. One day, however, they will pay the price for all eternity. Job was so concerned about his family that when his sons held feasts, *'Job would send and consecrate them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, "It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did continually.'* (Job 1:5). Job had God continually on his mind. He offered sacrifices for his children, and no doubt for himself and his wife too, whether they did it for themselves or not, because he loved them and

he wanted to spend eternity in heaven with them too. Praying for our children and being concerned for them because we fear God and the consequences of drifting away from righteousness into apathy and carelessness comes from a healthy fear of the Lord. We don't have to be cowed and cringing but 'walking with God' means that we reference Him every time we can. We, in our day, are blessed far more than these patriarchs who had to offer sacrifices all the time. This took time and cost lots of money. We can offer our prayers when we like and where we like and ask for the Holy Spirit to help and guide, which is a privilege they didn't have as we do. It costs us very little time and absolutely no money. Do we use it? Do we really believe in it?

**Application**

For Enoch and Noah walking with

God meant fearlessly putting God first, not going under even after demonic pressure, opposition and possibly threats of violence came their way. It meant doing as God asked. There were sacrifices to offer for both sins and for thanks. Walking with God is not having Him in a little compartment in our lives where we dip into it and take Him out, dust Him down and put Him to work for us when we need Him or happen to think on – like a 'going to church at Christmas and Easter' mentality – it's having Him there and involving Him in decisions as the central guide behind our thinking. We work out from God and this involves a constant attitude of prayer and is a 'Father Thy will not mine be done' mentality. It takes time to develop but believe you me it gets easier the more you learn to live like this. And God gave us our times around the Table each week, and we also play our part by providing study opportunities for the strengthening of our faith. The way-side pulpit poster which says 'Seven days without God makes one weak', gets it right. We walk with God every day not just on one in seven, and then only for a couple of hours.

**Conclusion**

These great men of faith were rewarded for their faithfulness. Enoch did not taste death but was translated directly into heaven. It was almost a symbolic gesture from God demonstrating the reversing of the process of falling from His presence by the sinful lust of the angels, as He showed how those who set their hearts on Him will be lifted up by His grace. Noah was instrumental in saving the world from total destruction and provided a picture of the saving action of baptism through the waters – 1 Peter 3: 21 – and Job gave Satan the amazing lesson that it is possible for humans to love God because HE IS GOD despite the worst Satan could do to try to turn his heart from its intention and purpose. All were blessed by the great love and grace of God but they only triumphed because they chose to walk with God, and did so faithfully unto the end.

# Climate Change

You would think that climate change was a new phenomenon the way the media goes on about it. In fact the truth is that our normal weather pattern, and therefore climate\*, is one of change. It would be abnormal if it didn't change! The main difference today is that modern atheistic, humanistic 'experts', who don't and won't recognize God and His sovereignty, tell us that the causes of such changes are man's fault and that 'he' can put it right. Man certainly does have a small part to play and can make a difference at the microclimatic level but he is definitely not in charge.

## Antediluvian weather

Initially the Earth was watered by a mist, not by rain (Gen. 2:5-7). Today we can see the amazing effects of mist watering the ground in northern California where the cool offshore Californian Ocean Current creates mist near the coast and on-shore winds blow it inland. The Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco is famously shrouded in mist at times and to the north we find the giant redwood forests with enormously large trees as a result. It's warm and moist and ideal for massive growth. Sometimes the tree is so huge that a small road can be driven through its base, cars can drive through and the tree is not killed as a result (see picture above). In the moist atmosphere at creation, plants and animals were frequently giant-sized. Geologists are always amazed by the size of ferns, insects and the like, and of course there were giant reptiles too which we now call dinosaurs.

What other clues do we have? The first is that it was very pleasantly warm. Adam and Eve were placed naked in the Garden and it was not intended that they should be clothed. When God provided them with clothes it was as a covering for sin not for warmth (Gen. 3:21). This means that even night-time must have been warm. How could this be? Well, one explanation is that the axis of the Earth was not tilted  $23\frac{1}{2}^\circ$  as it is today. A nearly vertical axis would mean there were no

\* Climate and weather are not the same. As a Geography teacher I used to tell my pupils that 'Climate is what you expect; weather is what you get.' Weather statistics are averaged out in several different ways to produce an understanding of what climate prevails at any one place. The climate is a useful generalisation of the observed weather in that place.



Image search California Redwood Forest

seasons, and it is interesting to note that the creation of seasons and the promise of their continuing stability was made to Noah after he came out of the Ark (Gen. 8:22). And finally the creation of the rainbow seems to indicate that rain was first experienced during the Flood but was only properly observed by people after it, for rainbows are created in suspended water droplets after a storm has passed over and the sun shines behind it. There being no storms and calm moist conditions before the Flood rainbows would not have been seen.

## The CO<sub>2</sub> effect

We noted above that warm, moist conditions help giantism and growth but this is not the whole picture. Our present-day climate gurus are concerned about increasing carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in the atmosphere causing global warming. We are then supposed to panic at the thought, but why? What would be its effects?

There would be two major effects: an increase in global temperatures bringing more land into production in the higher latitudes and greater crop yields per acre. So why are people getting concerned about it today? Simple! Most major cities are coastal cities and would be under water if all the ice were to melt. Sea level would rise by some 250ft (about 80 metres) and the population of many countries would have to be redistributed. The cost would be enormous and some countries would lose their political and economic clout and influence on the world's stage. The map (right) shows what would be left of the British Isles were this to happen. Without trying too hard to assess the impact the cities of London, Liverpool, Manchester, Bristol, Southampton, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Newcastle and Hull would vanish. Nip across the Atlantic and New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco and so on would go as would just about every city in Australia since they are mostly all located on the coast. The fact that we could feed the people of the world with greater ease, providing selfish politics did not get in the way, as inevitably they would, does not matter. Politics is power and politicians will do more-or-less anything to preserve their power base so we have to fight global warming, don't we?

## The Flood

The Flood changed all this. New climatic effects became the norm. Things never seen before like lightning and storms were common. How frightening they must have been initially to the eight survivors. It was not for nothing that God established the beautiful rainbow sign of His covenantal promise that, no matter how severe the storms might be, never again would He destroy the Earth by flood. They must

have needed that reminder far more than we do today but the sight of a rainbow still thrills us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, some 4,500 years later.

## Later climate changes

About 100 years after the Flood came the massive climate change of the Ice Age (which we have already detailed in previous issues - see numbers 12 and 13). This was climate change on a huge scale. The Flood also was indeed a remarkable and unique event. By comparison, therefore, any later climate changes were small-beer, as they say. Nevertheless they did happen and one at least played a most dramatic rôle in the history of the Jewish nation because it brought Jacob and his sons down into Egypt where they flourished into a nation until the Pharaoh took exception to them being there and enslaved them. Had there been no climate change they would not have been there and their history would have been very different. But then we have to suspect that the hand of God played an important part in that story for it definitely was not a case of God helping them to make the best of an



unfortunate bad turn of events. He predicted it, laid plans to use it and brought those plans to fruition.

## Conclusion

Records show that there have been mini-Ice Ages and warmer periods than today in the past. It's not new, or abnormal, as we said at the start. What has changed is the arrogance of mankind who has pushed God out of the picture and now wants to 'play' God. 'He' wants to 'play' and 'his' political leaders now ensure that we pay!

# Angels on School Hill?

The Festive Season is awash with angels, as we all know; they're everywhere. Most people of the world, and sadly some Christian believers too, nowadays don't believe in the spirit world of angels and demons, heaven and hell. Well, they might just have a slight inclination towards there being a place called heaven – and that if there is then they will be going there – but the devil and hell are decidedly out of bounds and off limits. However they'll occasionally tolerate angels, especially at Christmas.

So, once a year at least angels are dusted down off the shelves and stuck on top of trees, stories are told of Zechariah, a godly priest, being visited by an angel telling him that Elizabeth, his old and barren wife, will soon be expecting a boy - who became John the Baptist. Then her young virgin relative, Mary, was told by an angel (Gabriel, by the way, is never referred to as an archangel, but only as 'the angel of the Lord' in the Bible, but we're happy to acknowledge his traditional higher status) that she too would have a miraculous baby - and He was Jesus, of course. Her fiancé, Joseph, then needs an angelic visitation in a dream to persuade him that Mary was not in any way remotely a 'fallen woman' but was exactly the opposite, being the most perfect and wonderful woman who ever lived - (with one obvious exception, he says, loyally!) - which, paradoxically, was why Mary was pregnant out of wedlock, and that he, Joseph, would be honoured indeed by marrying her and acting as the earthly father to this heavenly babe. Later, Joseph had another angelic-prompted dream to flee from Bethlehem with Mary and Jesus to escape the wrath of Herod. As if this wasn't enough, the full nativity story is bathed in angelic splendour with shepherds harking to their heraldic chorus which filled the sky with their glory, as they, the shepherds, were busy washing their socks by night, as we often sing. We love it; it's magic – a wonderful, wonderful story only made better by the deep involvement of angels. Could you imagine Christmas without angels? No, of course not!

## Angels in their place!

But for many, including many Christian believers as we mentioned earlier, though they accept the presence of angels in these stories from the Bible, they don't have a true sense of their current reality.



Mary is visited by an angel

They belong firmly to the past. It's almost like fairies, elves and goblins; we've grown up now and 'put away childish things' with modern psychological explanations for many of them, in which our ancestors quite positively and actively believed, but this is not for the modern, rationalistic, scientifically sophisticated mind of 21<sup>st</sup> century mankind. So angels have been side-lined and largely forgotten. If they ever existed, they've earned their pensions and are now resting from their labours, a spent and forgotten force. If we are inclined to think something like this, we have lost the understanding of what angels do and were created for, and whether we honour and appreciate their service or not, they are still as busy as ever working on our behalf for God and doing His bidding.

## A question of integrity

I was initially prompted into these thoughts by an e-mail I received from a brother, who often loves to nit-pick and bring me to task for taking what he feels are presumptuous liberties in my articles in *The Christian Worker* just so I can be controversial. This time it was the December 2013 article about a man knocking on the Pearly Gates and being quizzed by an angel about his right to enter heaven, which triggered this brother into action. It was entitled 'Was it 'Heaven' or was it 'Hell'?' He was upset with me for boldly declaring that angels were not created to love God and don't know how to love. I felt I had to point out to him that I don't

make statements like that just off the top of my head to be controversial but that conclusions like that are conclusions reached after much study, and that I haven't the space in *The Christian Worker* to explore all these things in depth. That notion actually wasn't my idea but one I read while studying books on angels, and I thought about it and then took it on board because I believe it to be right. He suggested passages where angels might well have been showing love, though the Bible never gives any hint that they were. He obviously has not studied angels in depth, their nature and why they were created. He also apparently wants them to be just like humans in their dealings with God, but a simple look at them will reveal that they were created to be nothing like humans at all. About the only thing we share with them is free will, either to do the Lord's bidding or not, and that rebellious angels will be cast into hell with Satan and mortal unforgiven sinners at the judgement whilst loyal angels will be forever in heaven with the Lord and the saved.

## Reference angels in depth

I'm not going to attempt a fuller study on angels here today because we covered this in *Genesis Accepted* Number 7: 'Angels as created beings', but they were spoken into existence at the beginning of time and don't reproduce in heaven (they're always depicted as being of the male gender anyway which might help to explain things further), are immortal, witnessed God's power, majesty and might in creation, don't 'walk' by faith but by sight, and consequently are not offered salvation through Christ's sacrifice because that is given by grace through faith, and faith is another attribute of mankind which they don't have in their make-up. They praise and worship God, whom they both see and know, and do His bidding in the world. The Hebrew Letter tells us, via a rhetorical question: '*Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?*' (Heb 1:14). Their main function especially since the Fall, in Genesis 3, is to serve for our sake. By looking at angels as glorified humans, our brother has little concept of the wonder of man and why we are both the pinnacle and glory of God's creation. Let's see why.

## Made in God's image

When God said he would make man in His own image, what did that involve? Well, it doesn't mean that God has two eyes, a nose and a mouth. God is spirit, we learn (John 4:24), which means that for the Son of God to become fully human, something amazing had to happen at His incarnation and birth. Angels are spirit beings and like God cannot die, but Jesus had to come to join with us and do just

that – become subject unto death, as Paul puts it, ‘*even death on a cross*’ (Philp. 2:8). But we also read that ‘*God is love*’ (1 John 4:8, 16). This is the basic essence of God’s nature. He is love. Therefore to be created in His image definitely involves the capacity to love and be loved, as *the* basic part of our nature too. If we could not love, we couldn’t be made in His image and this is why, though we don’t have the power, the knowledge, the wisdom and might of angels, we are still the highest creatures in all creation, for we have love within us. Therefore, though weaker and mortal, nevertheless we are to judge angels (1 Cor. 6:3) and that we alone were deemed worthy of salvation after we had sinned. God so loved the world that He gave us His Son (John 3:16), so we could love Him, believe in Him, and be saved by Him. The capacity to love trumps everything, but the price of our salvation was death on a Cross. Jesus didn’t die for the angels, as we said, but He died for those who could and would choose to love Him.

Angels, though powerful and knowledgeable, did not, and do not, understand everything. They didn’t understand the prophets and their prophesies, for example (and neither did the prophets who were prophesying!). Peter tells us that: ‘*Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.*’ (1 Pe 1:8-12, emphasis ours). Angels didn’t understand about salvation, though they longed to look; they didn’t need to understand because it wasn’t to be for them, and besides which if angels could know the full outworking of that plan so could Satan, and the last thing he would have encouraged Judas to do would have been to use him in the plot to have Jesus crucified. So the mystery is now revealed but it had to wait until after the Cross, the resurrection and the defeat of Satan.

So angels are servants, doing God’s will and largely for our benefit. God does not wish that any of us should perish but that all should reach repentance (2 Pt. 3:9). They are still very much involved in our lives and maybe one day we’ll get to know more about this.

### Footprints in the sand

I’m sure many of you know the story which was very popular in the latter part of the last century about ‘Footprints in the sand’. I’ll retell it just in case you’ve never heard it, or have forgotten it:



*‘One night a man had a dream. He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the Lord. Across the sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene, he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand; one belonged to him and the other to the Lord.*

*When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand. He noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints. He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times of his life.*

*This really bothered him and he questioned the Lord about it. “Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you, you’d walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints. I don’t understand why when I needed you most you would leave me.”*

*The Lord replied, “My precious, precious child, I love you and I would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you.”*

### Prayer for angelic help

Of course, this is only a made-up story to make a lovely point, yet I believe that the Lord still carries us at times, and I believe that His angels are the ones who do His bidding in this. The notion of guardian angels is biblical (cf. Mt. 18:10) and there is no mention in the Bible that they have been pensioned off and withdrawn from service. Every time any of the family go on a plane I literally pray that

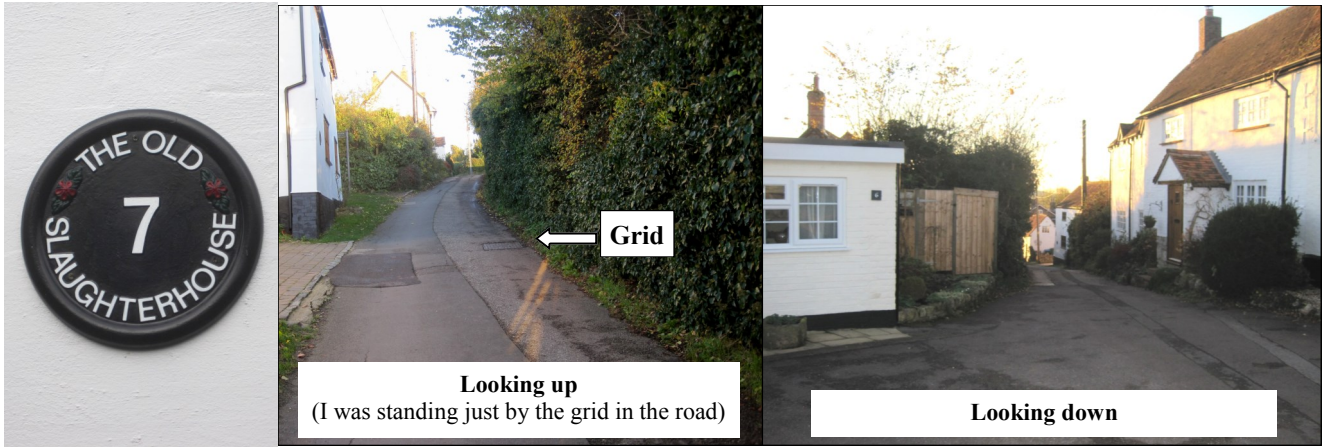
He will put angels on the wings to take the plane safely to its destination, and I don’t blush or feel ashamed of doing so – and Barbara tells me that she does the same. She sort of imagines them standing on the wings and balancing there during the flight.

### Saving my son from death

I can recall several times in my life when I was aware of having some sort of divine, or humanly inexplicable mystical help, which, as a man of faith and belief in God’s care and protection, I have to put down to angelic intervention. One was when time seemed to stand still for me as a two-year-old Arthur, my son, darted off the pavement behind me as I was fiddling with my car engine and I’d temporarily forgotten he was there. I became aware of a car speeding up the road and he was about to dart into its path. The street was narrow and there was only one clear pathway up the centre for the speeding car, there being parked cars on either side. I knew clearly, logically and deliberately what I had to do so I carefully stuck out a leg, hooked my foot around his legs, and, as he measured his length on the tarmac behind me, the speeding car, driven by an idiot youth, flew past his head with only inches to spare. It was a cool, calm, collected, deliberate action by me. My heart never even skipped a beat, yet he would have been a red blot on the road had I not done so. The whole incident could only have taken no more than a second, or even tenths of a second, from my spying him leaping behind me towards certain death and my doing what had to be done, yet to me time stood still and my action was calmly calculated. It was amazing. I never even blinked as I picked him up off the road for I had been in control of the situation, but I now can still go weak at the knees as I think about it. God sent me help. Time to me seemed to stand still so I could do what was needed. I said to Barbara afterwards that God may well have a wonderful plan to use Arthur in His service when he grows up, for by rights he should have died at the tender age of two. I still believe that God could well have saved him for a purpose of which I may never live to see the outcome.

### November 2013

But I now want to share with you a very recent, inexplicable experience I had while out walking in North Marston, the village where I live. I can describe what happened, and how I felt and feel about it, and I can tell you now that when I arrived home and told Barbara I burst into tears because of the implications behind it. I feel I can sharing it with you because we are ‘family’ in the Lord. I wouldn’t share it with scoffers or cynical unbelievers, and I’m doing it here to encourage us all to realise that the ministry of angels is very powerful and potent, though we can’t



School Hill (North Marston, Buckinghamshire) where the 'incident' took place

demand it or dictate to God when or how He must use them. God does care for us; those who love Him and serve Him, and He will not forsake us but at times will carry us.

I have two major problems which inhibit my walking: two bad hips, and heart-failure. The heart people want me to exercise as best as I can to try to keep things lubricated, as it were. I'm told not to overdo it but to see what I can do, so I try to go out when I can and have a few very short circuits I can do from home. The length of the longest one is about six-tenths of a mile, and whichever way I go on any of them, long or short, it involves me climbing to some degree. The hardest and highest climb sees me getting up to the village church which is set on a hill. There are two approaches to it. One is relatively gentle but longer, and the other is short but surprisingly quite steep.

On this day I decided not to do the full six-tenths circuit but to do a half circuit, which took me up to the church. I set out and I really didn't feel like doing any circuit at all, let alone a short one going up the hill. I felt bad but I decided that the spirit of my Mum must be in me somewhere so I wouldn't give in and let it beat me. I struggled to the village pond; that's all of about 150 yards or so, and nearly turned back. Taking frequent breathers - to admire the scenery you understand! - I eventually decided to go up the short, steep hill but not to carry on to the school and go around the back of the church, but rather to take a short cut in front of the church and coast home downhill. Here's where the photos help. I made it to about a third of the way up the hill and stopped gasping for breath. (The house where I stopped is actually delightfully called 'The Old Slaughterhouse'.) I know where I was because there was a service grid in the road where I was standing (you can see it marked on the photo). I was so played out at that point that again I debated with myself whether to go back downhill from there, but again, foolishly, I refused to give in and remember taking one pace

forward to continue going on up the hill.

I remember absolutely nothing about what happened immediately next. When I came to my senses, I was at the top of the hill outside the church. I'd taken the right turn before the church to go on the short cut, which I rarely ever do but had decided to do that day. Not only was I there, I was no longer exhausted. I wasn't panting or puffing and my hips were not hurting me at all. I felt energised and frankly amazed. I have no idea whatsoever about how I'd made it up that hill; how I'd come to turn the corner I'd intended to; and how I came to feel like a new man ready and able to walk reasonably easily and, for me, relatively quickly, home. Usually when I get to the top of the hill, whichever way I've approached it - steep or gentle - I need to sit and take a breather outside the school which is there just beyond the turning I'd taken. I didn't need one. Something remarkable had happened to me. I went back a day or two later and measured the distance I'd travelled up the hill to where I ended up and I measured out 107 paces going downhill so my strides would be as close to a yard as I could manage. It looks like it was only about 100 yards, or thereabouts. As I returned home I pondered what had happened and told Barbara, and, as I said, I was very emotional about it.

**Possible solutions**

I had had help to get up that hill! I was definitely not consciously aware as I did so. I could have passed out and sort of sleep-walked up, but why had I not simply fallen flat on the ground in a faint? I could have been guided up supported by an angel - there were no humans around to help me - but again why was I not incredibly exhausted at the top? Or I could have been lifted up and carried. There is biblical precedence for this sort of happening. The best one I can think of was Phillip being transported up the coast to Azotus from Gaza after he had baptized the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:39-40), about 25 miles. I didn't need to travel quite that far - just about 100 yards - but it really was

way beyond me that day and stupidly I'd refused to give in and turn back. I was upset when I got home because somehow God had helped me, and renewed me, and revitalized me. It's a back road so traffic is rare. Nobody was walking on it before it happened and I saw nobody afterwards either. Why God should have helped me, and how exactly He did, I don't know. I was in a coma of some sort and recall nothing. I can positively declare what happened, but cannot positively tell what is the explanation. I know in my heart that an angel, or maybe even angels, because I weigh too much(!), helped me up that hill. And my feeling is that they lifted me up it because of the way I felt at the top - I don't believe I'd climbed it at all, consciously, sub-consciously or in a coma. I felt far too fit at the top.

You take what you will out of this. I'll never forget it and will praise God for His loving care in a simple thing like this. He's not told me to go out and lead my people out of slavery, or do amazing things for Him like preaching to eunuchs, which I've never done before, but when Jesus said that God cares for us even to knowing the number of hairs on our heads, He's totally prepared to help us more than we can ask or think. While standing on the hill before starting upwards, I didn't say any prayer for help but He helped me nevertheless. I was undecided at first whether to share this story with you through these pages but I felt it might encourage some in their spiritual walk too,

**Looking ahead**

As we face the future we don't know what it will bring but we can rest assured that the Lord will be there for us, with His army of angels, to love, guide and bless us. We don't usually get experiences like I've described because we don't usually need that level of help, but whatever level of help we do need, He is willing to supply it and be there for us, and if I ever need reminding about this truth, I will remember School Hill, North Marston and how I was taken to the top one afternoon in November 2013 with help from the Lord.



# Creation, Spirit and Hell

Samuel Langhorne Clemens (1835-1910) was one of America's most famous and iconic writers and humourists. He is much better known by his pseudonym of Mark Twain. He was born

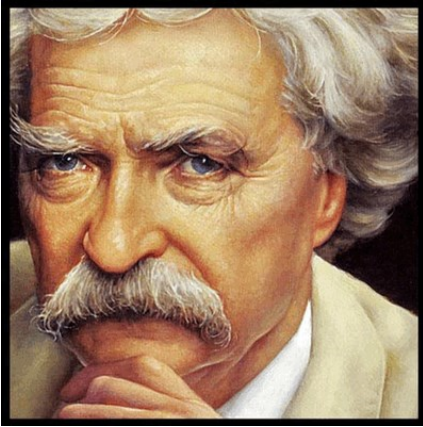


Photo at: [greenpeace.org.au](http://greenpeace.org.au)

in a year when Halley's Comet appeared and died in the year it next appeared, and actually said that he would! Sadly his latter years were marked by personal tragedy and, as a result, he became very cynical and somewhat twisted inside. He wrote a short novel, novelette or long short story, whatever you want to call it, which was discovered on his desk after he died, and was published posthumously. It is called *The Mysterious Stranger* and is a most interesting story which I found both fascinating and helpful, especially in the area of the study of predestination and foreordination. When I mentioned this to a good brother he told me quite firmly that Mark Twain could not teach me anything at all about religion or a religious subject, but I begged to differ then, and now, nearly 50 years later, I still beg to differ. Good ideas in the religious field are not necessarily confined only to the minds of religious people. I most certainly did not agree with all that Twain said, especially at the conclusion of his story, but he stimulated my thinking and I owe him that if nothing else.

His conclusion about life, born out of sorrow and despair, reads like this:

*"Life itself is only a vision, a dream"...*

"Strange! that you should not have suspected years ago - centuries ago, eons ago! - for you have existed companionless, through all the eternities. Strange indeed, that you should not have suspected that your universe and its contents were only dreams, visions, fiction! Strange, because they are so frankly and hysterically insane - like all dreams: a God who could make good children as

easily as bad, yet preferred to make bad ones; who could have made every one of them happy, yet never made a single happy one; who made them prize their bitter life, yet stingily cut it short; who gave his angels eternal happiness unearned, yet required his other children to earn it; who gave his angels painless lives, yet cursed his other children with biting miseries and maladies of mind and body; who mouths justice and invented hell - mouths mercy and invented hell - mouths Golden Rules and forgiveness multiplied by seventy times seven and invented hell, who mouths morals to other people and has none himself; who frowns upon crimes, yet commits them all; who created man without invitation, then tries to shuffle the responsibility for man's acts upon man, instead of honourably placing it where it belongs, upon himself; and finally, with altogether divine obtuseness, invites this poor, abused slave to worship him!

"You perceive, now, that these things are all impossible except in a dream. You perceive that they are pure and puerile insanities, the silly creation of an imagination that is not conscious of its freaks - in a word, that they are a dream, and you the maker of it. The dream-marks are all present; you should have recognized them earlier.

"It is true, that which I have revealed to you; there is no God, no universe, no human race, no earthly life, no heaven, no hell. It is all a dream - a grotesque and foolish dream. Nothing exists but you. And you are but a *thought* - a vagrant thought, a useless thought, a homeless thought, wandering forlorn among the empty eternities!"

This theory of existence espoused here by Twain is called 'Solipsism'. It has a fierce logic to it if you reject the reality of the early chapters of Genesis and the existence of Adam and Eve, and the Fall. With them firmly in place there are no charges to answer to Twain's ranting. Life and the universe in which we live make perfect sense. I have attempted to answer these charges in my little book *Why believe in Adam?* (1990), and will happily send you a copy free if you have not read it and would like to do so.

## The Awesomeness of Creation

Just imagine, if you can, the 'situation' where God had not created anything at all. We can't call it the 'time' because time had not yet been created. 'Time' implies a 'before', a 'now' and an 'after' (past, present and future) and something to measure it by. There was nothing, apart from God. I know that we humans cannot begin to grasp such a concept because we are locat-

ed in both time and space which gives us a context - however, let us try!

God thought He would like to create and He could create exactly what He decided He would like to create. There were no rules to follow. He had no canvas on which to draw nor a template to work from. He could do anything. But what did He mean by 'create'? He had to decide exactly what it was He wanted from His Creation for He is a God of purpose not of chaos. There were decisions He had to make but once made they provided a framework which would have consequences yet could not be altered in principle. There were absolutely no limiting factors until He began; once He uttered His first creative word then there were.

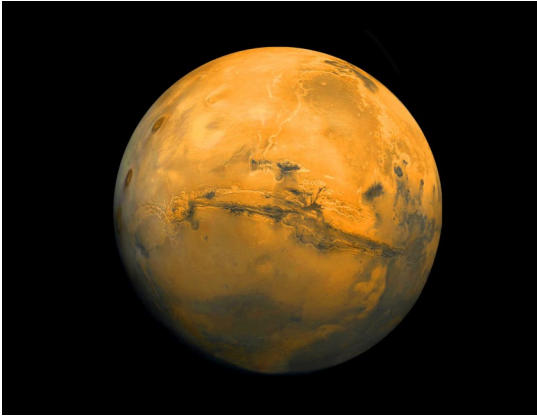
His first thought was to create angels. There were to be almost countless millions of them, and they would be of a very high order of Creation yet they were not to be the pinnacle, the supreme end-product and purpose of it all. They would be servants and witnesses of His greatness, limited in number, despite the vastness of their number, and not able to reproduce themselves nor independently create. They would do His bidding, praise His Name and worship Him.

Then God turned to thinking about the Universe in which His creation was to



Galaxies and stars

operate. He wanted it to be composed of galaxies and stars, held together by a mys-



**Mars: showing its 'Grand Canyon'**

terious force called gravity. There would be planets and light and dark parts, all operating mechanically and predictably to laws which He would put in place and design. Indeed 'design' was to be the undergirding principle of this mechanistic universe. It was all to be meticulously designed for the benefit of the greatest, and most awesome being of His Creation - Man! It was to be with Man that God was, in fact, actually truly to create.

### True Creation

As we look at and admire the wonders of the Creation, we are not really looking at Creation at all! We are looking at 'extension'. From planets to penguins, and galaxies to gnats, these are things



Photo: hortipm.tamu.edu

**Fungal Gnat**

which God made, and in that sense 'created', but they all operate in ways which He built into their engine rooms. They do exactly as they are pre-programmed to do. Some of the living creatures certainly seem to have a freedom of choice at times, especially amongst the so-called 'higher' animals, but in the end they all operate on instinct and therefore lack morality since even predation is natural and part of their make-up. They cannot be held to be responsible for what they, in the final analysis, cannot control.

This principle operates exactly the same with us humans. We can invent and make things, and some of these are absolute marvels of design and ingenuity but in the final analysis they are only as good as they were made. A computer can do

wonderful things but is only as good as its program, and that program was designed by a human mind. Some programmers might like to believe that they can create a computer which can think independently but they can't and never will, though they will no doubt create even more amazing advances in this area than I can now imagine. As the hymn 'There is beyond the azure blue' says:

'Secure is life from mortal mind,  
God holds the germ with in

His hand,  
Though men may search they cannot find,  
For God alone does understand.'

Our creations are limited by our minds and cannot operate truly independently. They can only do what their creators - who are us - put into their programmes. And this is also true of God's amazing world. The physical laws of the material world and the instinctive laws of the animal kingdom are only as good as they were designed to be - and since the Fall many of these are now corrupted and not nearly as good as they were designed to be, but that's another story. Yet God wanted to create.

If we create a car, a computer or a musical instrument, we can admire its performance and marvel at what it does, but if it goes wrong we cannot blame the car, computer or the instrument itself, only the ones who designed or made it. That is where any fault lies. But, as we said above, God wanted to create and not merely show His wonderful expertise and brilliant mind. In the final analysis He did not have to prove that to Himself because He knows how omniscient and omnipotent He is. He can leave the angels gasping for breath at His creation, and did (Job 38:4-7), but He still wanted more than this, for in the end there is no meaningful relationship between the designer and the designed if the designed can do nothing more than reflect the magnificence of the designer. If the doll can do no more than say, "Mummy, I love you," such affirmations can never satisfy. Such 'creations' are indeed truly no more than extensions of their creator.

### In God's own image

So in the 'situation' where God had created nothing at all, God had to decide whether He was going for nothing more than a glorified extension of Himself or truly to create. Yes, Man would have pre-programmed instincts and his body would operate under God's physical laws for he was to be a full part of the physical universe, nevertheless he alone would be made in God's image. So what did this

mean?

### God's two major characteristics

The Bible tells us many things about the nature and character of God but the two we need to focus on here are that 'God is spirit' (John 4:24), and 'God is love' (1 John 4:8, 16). To be made in the image of God probably has a multiplicity of aspects to it but it certainly means that Man must also be spirit, and must have the capacity and ability to love. Though angels too are spirit beings, they do not love so they are not made in God's image. Their relationship to Him is one of praise, worship and service based on sight, not faith. Like Man, they have the freedom of will to choose to fulfil their rôle or not, in defiance of His wishes and commands, and will also be judged for their faithfulness in this, however Man was made for love based on faith not sight. God could not pre-programme Man to love Him, for you can't pre-programme an emotion like love, it either wells up naturally from within or it doesn't happen at all. Pre-programmed, or even forced love, as in arranged marriages in some societies, cannot produce genuine relationships of love - though, admittedly, some do indeed rise above the arrangement and amazingly eventually find love! To create genuinely in His image, God had to give Man a spirit, an absolutely free will and the power or capacity to love.

### Consequences

The gift of spirit was indeed unbelievably awesome. You see, if 'God is spirit', and He is, spirit cannot be destroyed. Once given it cannot be retrieved or retracted. If spirit was destructible, God Himself could be destroyed, or God could destroy Himself, which is logically and metaphysically impossible. But if this Man with an indestructible spirit, and if these angels too with an indestructible spirit, decide to use their genuinely free will to defy God and oppose Him, what would happen to them?

Here then, in the situation before He even uttered one word of Creation, God had huge decisions to make. He had to decide if Creation was to be worth it. Was the relationship of love with Man to be so precious that He would allow for such defiance? This tells us that the power of love is so great that God deemed it well worth it for, as a God of love, He could only feel complete in this relationship when genuine love was returned to Him. How was He to deal with opposition if it came?

### The price of true Creation

With the indestructible spirit in place the only possible solution was for God to create a state, a situation, where He was not present. God dwells in a spiritual state we call heaven. Where God does not dwell all His blessings are removed. Galatians

5:22 lists most of them: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Imagine being in a situation where there is no love, no joy, no peace, no patience, no kindness, no goodness, no faithfulness, no gentleness and no self-control. That is hell. It is a spiritual state where God is not, and it's truly frightening.

Since the angels were to be spirit beings, hell was prepared for those who might disobey and oppose God (Mtt, 25:41). They were to have no chance of forgiveness since they would walk by sight not by faith. God knew He could not destroy them once He had given them of His spirit, and some very early in the story of the world He even locked away in *Tartarus* where they could do no further damage (2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6). Annihilation for defiant spirit beings was not an option, and that includes Man as well as angels.

However, before one word of Crea-

tion was uttered, a decision to provide a way of escape for the creation made for God to love was planned. It was not, and still is not, God's wish that any of these loved and lovely creatures should perish (2 Peter 3:9), so He laid out a plan to offer salvation to those who defied Him. This plan revolved around the death of His Son. The plan was worked out and agreed upon by both the Father and the Son, who was to carry it out, 'before the foundation of the world'; the shedding of the blood of the Lamb (Jesus Christ) was known and ordained by the Father before a word of Creation was uttered (1 Peter 1:18-21). This is the measure of His love, '*For God so loved the world*', (John 3:16) and the measure of what Man means to Him, and that's how much He loves you, and me as well!

Annihilation of defiant sinners could never be an option in a genuine creation, but salvation by grace through faith for those who both trust and obey could be

made, yet at a terrifying cost and price for God Himself. Creation really was awesome. Hell, therefore, is the price to be paid for true creation.

#### Back to Twain

Mark Twain had absolutely no grasp of any of this. Hell was not created by a malevolent God who enjoys making things miserable and difficult for His creatures. Hell was a necessary outcome of a loving, genuine creation which refused to play around with Divine extension and decided really to create. But to create there were consequences even for God once He decided exactly the sort of creation He wanted. For some reason He wants your love and mine, freely given because He is a wonderful, loving God. Sadly most do not seem to want His love and reject it. He has done all He can to ensure that nobody ever has to pay the price of creation. Jesus paid it all.

Hallelujah! What a Saviour!.

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## The End of the Road

I always knew that one day it would come to this. I knew that I'd know somehow that this venture into Genesis would have to end. In October 2010, as many of you know, I came very close indeed to death and frankly had the stuffing knocked out of me. I have been blessed to be able to continue producing the *Christian Worker* for the church each month but, though I took a year out when I could not do this magazine, I decided to try to continue it. Unfortunately it has proven to be one step too far. I'm finding it very difficult to think of new articles of the type we have published - I could easily have diverted it into being yet another 'Creation' magazine, but there are plenty of others doing a fine job of that. I'd only be both duplicating and plagiarising their efforts. I wanted to add something to the field and do what nobody else was doing. I can't seem to find it in me now, though I still can for other parts of the Bible and hope to be able to continue writing like this about topics beyond Genesis.

Thank you all for your support and encouragement. If you delve into the first few numbers you will see that it actually was not my intention that this should be a one-man show and I encouraged and invited brethren to join me. Some actually said that they would but none delivered, and I fully understand why! I therefore have had to do it all, and thoroughly enjoyed the privilege of producing it. All numbers are now posted on the Great Barr (Birmingham) church of Christ web site at: [www.greatbarrchurchofchrist.org](http://www.greatbarrchurchofchrist.org) and my thanks to them for the privilege afforded to me in this.

May God bless you all as you continue to study His Word and grow in faith and in truth.

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*Genesis Accepted* has now ceased publication. All correspondence to:

**Graham A. Fisher,**  
**5 Portway, North Marston, Buckingham, MK18 3PL, (UK).**  
**☎ (01296) 670568.**  
**Email: [gafisher888@aol.com](mailto:gafisher888@aol.com)**



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



Cover picture: Black tulips in my front garden