

# The Ryburn Christian Clarion

BIBLICAL STUDIES RESOURCE

*Upholding the Accuracy of the God-Breathed Word*

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The Ryburn Christian Clarion, 420 Ryburn Avenue, Suite C-2, Dayton, Ohio 45405-2552;  
[ryburnclarion2@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ryburnclarion2@sbcglobal.net)

Unless otherwise noted, all passages are quoted from the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible. All explanatory remarks by a writer within a scripture verse are enclosed in brackets [ ].

## INSIDE AT A GLANCE

*AS WE MOVE INTO OUR THIRD YEAR of publication, we are reminded, by The Word, that it is through God's grace and mercy that we have been allowed to share the Gospel in this format. Indeed, His love is marvelous.*

“ **‘HIS GREAT LOVE’** ”, declared in Ephesians 2:4, inspired the plan of redemption and salvation, bringing about all we have in Christ now, and the manifold blessings of eternity. Our best response to such love is to share it with others.

*by Rick Heeter, Editor-in-Chief.....1*

“**GOD'S MATCHLESS WORD**”: Some people come to God because of a thirst for answers. Some are looking for power. Most, as in the article, “**The Quest**”, are looking for a loving relationship with our Heavenly Father. What about you? What are you looking for?

*by Rev. Howard P. Yeremian, Jr. ....3*

“**ANTIQUITY SPEAKS**”, after a brief absence, returns with more archaeological verification of the Scriptures. In “**The Stones Of The Past**”, we see proof of the deviant behaviors of ancient, pagan cultures. We find also a warning for our times. Do we have the wisdom to learn from their errors?

*by Theodore C. Mahr.....4*

“**FROM THE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT**”: Our head researcher decided to continue the theme from last issue's *Clarion* by submitting another article on forbidden spiritual practices. We invite you to think of “**Which Witch Is Which?**” as our Halloween offering.

*by Keith Jamison.....5*

“**INVESTIGATING CREATION SCIENCE**” picks up where it left off in the *Clarion's* spring issue. Our exacting look at the Bible's record of creation continues in the article “**‘Without Form And Void’** ”. The precision of The Word is more in harmony with genuine science than many think.

*by Rick Heeter, Editor-in-Chief.....7*

The Clarion has a new e-mail address.  
[ryburnclarion2@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ryburnclarion2@sbcglobal.net)

## “HIS GREAT LOVE”

*With Which He Loved Us*

**T**HROUGHOUT THE PAST TWO YEARS, the *Clarion* has boldly and unapologetically featured dynamic articles and columns that illustrate the depth and detail of God's Word. During this time, the Father has not only sustained our work, but has graciously opened doors for us. We have been privileged to network and collaborate with an ever-expanding circle of preachers, teachers, Biblical students and scholars, and Christian ministries from around the country. All this, in one way or another, has facilitated and enhanced what we do through the *Clarion*, enabling us to touch more lives with the Word of Truth.

Now, as we push into our third year of service, we pause to reflect upon all God has done, and to express our thankfulness to Him and to those saints who have helped to further this labor of love. Without the prayers, monetary support, intriguing articles, and the time and energy expended by so many friends, our work in the Lord would be far less effectual. The love of our God, too, has never failed us, and continues to enrich our outreach efforts.

In preparing our hearts for the coming year, it seems appropriate, at this point, to gather up some loose ends so we can move ahead, having left no detail untended. In that regard, we should address the matter of the long-awaited *Truth vs. Tradition* episode on baptism. Those of you who have read the *Clarion* from its beginning know that *TVT* was a spin-off from the original *Ryburn Chapel Television Program*. *TVT* dealt with controversial Biblical issues in great detail, showing what the Scriptures actually teach, and often opposing popular, traditional dogmas. One such

*continued on next page...*

episode was to cover baptism, but the preparation was so vast that its development had to be delayed. In the Spring, 2004 installment of *The Ryburn Christian Clarion* (Vol. I, No. 3), we asked our readers to pray for the situation. Suffice it to say, since the closing of the Ryburn Chapel, our energies have been directed to other ends. In short, there will be no future *TVT* programs. We believe God's answer is to lead us into more beneficial areas of outreach, and we want to remain flexible so we can alter our path when inspired to do so.

Since we're dealing with matters relating to the old Ryburn Chapel (which, for you newer readers, was a major reason for this newsletter), we should mention that the *Ryburn Chapel Television Program* is no longer on the air. For two years, this thirty-minute series, largely based upon services held in the Chapel, edified viewers, being carried twice a week on DATV, cable channel 12, here in Dayton, Ohio. A lot of God's Word was made available to the local area through that ministry, and with its passing, we enter a new era in moving The Word.

Additionally, when we were in partnership with Chaplain J. R. Collins, we established a Biblical Resource Center in the north-Dayton area, near the Chapel, to assist in neighborhood Bible studies. When Chaplain Collins accepted an assistant pastorship in New Lebanon, Ohio, the materials that comprised the resource center went with him. Also, plans that were under consideration concerning a lending library of Bible study aids were abandoned.

As for Chaplain Collins, he is involved in several aspects of ministry. He is serving at the Eternal Crown Church in New Lebanon, Ohio, where he teaches a Bible study course on Wednesday evenings. Currently, he and his students are looking at the believer's complete security in Jesus Christ, as it especially relates to salvation. On top of that, the chaplain has recently embarked on an outreach effort called *Grace Research And Fellowship*. Seeking to share detailed studies with those outside the walls of Eternal Crown Church, he is producing monthly audio teachings on CD, covering an array of topics. For additional information, feel free to e-mail: [grace\\_research\\_fellowship@yahoo.com](mailto:grace_research_fellowship@yahoo.com).

Of interest to many *Clarion* readers is Chaplain Collins's research work, "The Word" (*ho logos*), which is the outgrowth of a multi-episode study handled on the defunct *Ryburn Chapel* program. First mentioned in the Fall, 2004 edition of the *Clarion* (Vol. II, No. 1), the in-depth work primarily

covers a painstaking look at John 1:1-3. The research explores the use of Koine Greek words like *archee*, *pros*, *ho*, *tou*, *theou*, *theos*, *hutos*, and others which appear in John 1, and elsewhere in God's Word.

A year ago, the initial concept was to publish the work in a single volume. The research is so hefty, however, that Chaplain Collins is thinking about releasing the study in increments, that is, a series of booklets. In this way, the information can be made available to the public in easy-to-handle portions, rather than in a large, daunting tome. This will also permit the chaplain to work on later volumes in the series while the earliest booklets are on the market.

Turning to other matters, we wish to remind our readers that copies of the "Basics Of The Bible" Open-book Quiz still remain. Some are being sent out randomly to friends on our mailing list who receive the *Clarion*. If you would like a copy for yourself or your Bible study group, or if you'd like to be added to the *Clarion's* mailing list, please contact us by e-mail at: [ryburnclarion2@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ryburnclarion2@sbcglobal.net). (Please note that this is a new e-mail address.) If you wish, you may call us at (937) 275-3316, or write us at **The Ryburn Christian Clarion, 420 Ryburn Avenue, Suite C-2, Dayton, Ohio 45405-2552**.

As we close the **news** section of this issue, may we offer you the opportunity to be involved in this endeavor to reach people with the accuracy of The Word? There is an abundance of traditional teaching out there, but a Biblical research approach, which is the logical choice, is hard to find. Your financial partnership, with others who believe in this work, would allow us to produce the *Clarion* in other formats. Eventually, with God's gracious help, we will develop a larger, full-color periodical with wonderful illustrations.

Ephesians 2:4 describes the "great love" of our God, which resulted in the mercy He showered upon us in Jesus Christ. Because He first loved us, I John 4:19 states that we can now love. We invite you to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with us, adding your resources to ours. If you are inspired to join us, please make your offerings payable to "The Ryburn Christian Clarion". Mail them to the address indicated in the masthead of the *Clarion* at the top of page one. Working together, we will witness our God bringing to pass great things. Until next time, let's pray for one another. God bless!

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-----by Rick Heeter, Editor-in-Chief

***"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)"*** Ephesians 2:4 and 5

## *Awaiting His Return...*

*On Thursday, September 1, 2005, Dorothea Kipp Wierwille, who served God by doing His will "from the heart" for many years, fell asleep in Christ. She was reared in the church and learned to faithfully believe God's Word. She and her husband, Dr. Victor Paul Wierwille, went on to found in 1942 what would become The Way International, a non-sectarian ministry which pioneered the Biblical research approach to the Scriptures. Serving as hostess for renowned Bible scholars; surrogate mother to multitudes of young believers from around the world; and loving companion and support to her husband, she was known for many years as the First Lady of The Way Ministry. In all, Mrs. Wierwille exemplified the "virtuous woman" of Proverbs 31. Her quiet, patient example will influence the lives of countless saints for years to come.*

## **GOD'S MATCHLESS WORD:** ***A Forum For Presenting The Light Of Life***

*(This column features a wide range of subjects from God's Word as they are set forth by a host of preachers and teachers from differing avenues of Christian thought, and various areas of Biblical study and concern.)*

### **"The Quest"**

*by Rev. Howard P. Yeremian, Jr.*

**"I KNOW WHY YOU GOT** into The Word!" What a weird way for this wide-eyed, shaggy, coifed hippy chick to greet me. It was a believers' picnic in California in the summer of '69. The weather was typically beautiful for Marin, and a light breeze was blowing off the Pacific. It was 80 degrees with no humidity to speak of. "You wanted the power of God," she continued, "didn't you?" I was tongue-tied. The concept was foreign to me. The truth is, after a fervent search in the church, visiting about a dozen sects of various flavors; two years in Bible college; and a stint working in Christian radio in San Francisco, the one thing that *did* win me to God's Word was a caring believer. I finally got a glimpse of God's love *for me*.

God created man because He desired a loving family, not because He needed a hobby. We are the dwelling place of God, in Christ, His habitation (Eph. 2:22). Moreover, because we have Christ living in us, we are now able to communicate God's love to others, by loving them with *His* love. We know how to do this. Many of us have had much teaching on the love of God. Remember, love is a verb; love activates; love is giving; and, indeed, love never fails (I Cor. 13:8a).

One thing I do know is that we humans seem to be more aware of when *our* need isn't

being met. Being sensitive to other people's needs, and expressing God's love to them, is where we must grow. Isn't that just like human nature, though? Life is so full of distractions, responsibilities, and demands on our time, and yet, when we allow these things to cause us to live by our "old man" nature (Eph. 4:22), it becomes impossible to manifest the pure love of God. Praise God that the old nature was put to death with Christ!

We are now a new creation in Christ (II Cor. 5:17). We have His nature in us, the "new man" (Eph. 4:24). With Christ in us, we can love with the love of God; we can see ourselves, and others, through God's eyes. We only need to be our true selves (in Him), not our old, dead selves. Let's be who God, through Christ, has made us to be. As God's dear children, we need to accept and live the calling of II Corinthians 5.

#### **II Corinthians 5:17-21**

*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature ["creation"]: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

*And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;*

*To wit ["know"], that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing*

*their trespasses unto them* [“not counting their sins against them”]; *and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.*

*Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech* [“implore”] *you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

*For he* [God] *hath made him* [Jesus Christ] *to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him* [Jesus Christ].

Now, let’s be the new creation God has already made us to be, and let’s walk in love.\*

*(Rev. Howard P. Yeremian, Jr., after two years of Bible college, was introduced to his first Biblical research class, Power For Abundant Living, in 1968. Since then, he has been involved in taking and running many such classes and seminars, and in August of 1974, he was ordained to the Christian Ministry. “Howie” and his wife, Lynn, currently live in Williamsburg, Virginia, where they fellowship and serve as God leads.)*

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## **ANTIQUITY SPEAKS**

*(This column, featuring the work of Theodore C. Mahr, will acquaint us with archaeological discoveries and secular, historical documentation which verify the ancient Biblical accounts.)*

### **“The Stones Of The Past”**

**AS WE HAVE SEEN**, modern archaeology has proven to be a vital asset in verifying the authenticity and accuracy of the Word of God. So far, in several examples of recent archaeological discovery, we have confirmed the historical existence of a number of Biblical personalities. People and places, however, are not the only things archaeological research has brought to light. Ideas and practices described in the Bible have also been validated to have existed in ancient Israel, even as The Word states.

In the Old Testament, or *Tanakh* (as it is known in Hebrew), there is much discussion of the gods and practices of the non-believing cultures of that day. In particular, we find many references to the Canaanites and Philistines. These were two of the more prominent peoples that inhabited Israel from the time of the Hebrews’ deliverance out of Egypt until the days of King David. In the Old Testament writings that deal with the various kings, judges, and prophets of Israel, from Joshua to David, we see continual conflict between these nations and God’s people. Although the Bible speaks of military, economic, and societal tensions in these conflicts, it is the spiritual distinctions between the two groups that is the profound message in this part of God’s Word.

Israel’s worship was monotheistic, directed toward the Almighty God, Who revealed Himself to Moses on Mount Sinai. He is the Creator of all things, and is all-powerful, all-knowing, and everywhere-present. He is a loving Father Who shepherds and cares for His people. The Word, the revelation of God and His plan and purpose for mankind, was first presented to ancient Israel in the *Torah* (in Hebrew), the first five books of the Bible. In it, we find an initial roadmap guiding man in the ways he is to worship and live.

In opposition to this, the Canaanites and Philistines, who battled Israel for possession of the Promised Land, worshipped many deities and practiced many rituals which

had been handed down from the Babylonian Empire. These customs and deities had been adopted by peoples farther west, namely the Hittites (the predecessors of modern-day Turks), Amorites, and the Mycaenian-Greek-Phoenician cultures of the eastern Mediterranean. The Canaanites and Philistines came out of these cultures.

The most prominent god of the Canaanites was the male deity, Ba’al. The word “Ba’al” means “master” or “husband”. It is also related to other names such as Molech or Dagon (the name of the chief deity of the Philistines). Ba’al was, supposedly, the male god of fertility and, in particular, the storm god of thunder and rain. He also had a female counterpart known as Asherah.

As Canaanite culture was chiefly one of farming, Ba’al worship was of the utmost importance. Ba’al was often depicted in association with storms, rain, and lightning, because the precipitation was needed for crop production. It was believed that Ba’al came forth from the underworld during the growing season, and returned thereafter. Sexual intercourse between him and his consort, Asherah, was thought to be the impetus for the onset of the growing season, and an abundant harvest. The Canaanites imitated the union of their fertility gods by incorporating sexual intercourse between priests and priestesses of these deities into their rituals. Often, this extended to the common people by the practice of intercourse with temple prostitutes, who served as “priestesses” to the average man. This was supposed to prompt these gods to initiate their own divine union, thus bringing the rains, and the resultant crop yields.

The Philistine culture and the Carthaginian peoples, both thought to have descended from ancient Phoenicia, took this form of worship to extreme levels, pursuing land fertility and prosperity. It was believed that promiscuous, sexual rituals were no longer enough; more was needed to stimulate the gods in order to induce greater agricultural

benefits. The practice of infant sacrifice to their Ba'al equivalents, Dagon or Molech, was added. The deity was usually represented by a large, stone figure with outstretched arms. The idol's mid-section was often hollow and contained a raging fire. The infants would be placed on the stone arms and would roll into the flames.

King Ahab's pagan queen, Jezebel, was of Phoenician descent. When she and her husband ruled Israel, she introduced this grotesque form of Ba'al-Asherah worship. This was anathema to the True God, Who stands for monogamy, sexual relations only within marriage, and the value and protection of children and the family. This immoral behavior, the murder of thousands of infants, brought the Lord's judgments upon these pagan peoples, as well as many who had gone astray in Israel.

Biblical archaeology has shown that these practices did exist in Israel, just as described in God's Word. Also, the evidence indicates that they were more pronounced where the greater gains in prosperity were to be made. In the ancient Middle East, the main trade routes between Egypt, Babylon-Assyria-Persia, and Greece led through the land of Israel. Coming down from the north of Galilee, the chief route, the Via Maris ("Way Of The Sea"), turned west and passed near Mount Carmel before meandering south along the Mediterranean Coast toward Egypt. One of the great cities along this route was Megiddo.

Situated in the plains east of Mount Carmel, Megiddo had been a major city long before Israel conquered the area. Indeed, King Solomon had made it a fortress for guarding this vital avenue of trade. Excavations at Megiddo, and elsewhere, have uncovered evidence of Ba'al worship in all its horror. Huge, circular, stone sacrificial altars, as well as many idols relating to Ba'al worship, have been discovered in the Megiddo tel, dating from the Canaanite period, and, again, substantiating the Scriptures. Also, alternating with periods of artifacts and structures confirming Israel's worship of the One True God, are indications of Ba'al-like practices, upholding the

Old Testament's portrayal of Israel's on-again, off-again relationship with God. Lending support to these findings are huge burial plots holding the remains of thousands of infants sacrificed within the Ba'al cults, discovered along the Mediterranean Coast of ancient Philistia, and at the ruins of the great city, Carthage, in northern Africa.

These practices did, indeed, exist, and their obvious relationship to desired trade and prosperity in the centers of greatest inter-empire commerce cannot be denied. Additionally, the spiritual correlation to our times must not be understated. God's standards, His love for humanity; the sanctity of marriage; and proper sexual conduct, have been sacrificed, in our times, for the pursuit of prosperity. Perversion, as outlined in God's Word, is eating away at our culture. The disposal of the unborn, for convenience and financial benefit, is running rampant. For many, life is no longer sacred, and the bizarre and unholy seem to be everywhere, even in the churches. God's Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, referred to the worship of Ba'al Z'vuel as being, in essence, the worship of Satan. Can we not see that this same trend is growing in our society? By not living the way God teaches, we are, in effect, practicing a type of Ba'al worship. This behavior is tearing our nation apart, bringing about spiritual and natural consequences. Can we awaken to righteousness as a nation? Indeed, can we not hear the stones of the past crying out?\*

*(For further study, please consult: Vander Laan, Ray, That The World May Know, Vol. 2, Faith Lesson 6: "Megiddo", Focus On The Family, Colorado Springs, Colo. (1996); The Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Intervarsity Press, 1994 Edition, Tyndale House Publishers, pp. 153-54, and 230-35; Pfeiffer, Charles F., The Biblical World, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich. (1966), pp.159-62, and various indexed references to "Ba'al".)*

*(Mr. Theodore C. Mahr has pursued an interest in Judeo-Christian Studies and Creation Science for many years. Although he is formally trained in United States Military History, when his schedule permits, he contributes articles to The Ryburn Christian Clarion's "Antiquity Speaks" and "Investigating Creation Science" columns. "Ted" also directs the Clarion's Biblical Archaeology Studies Department.)*

## **FROM THE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT**

*(This column, featuring the work of Keith Jamison, examines God's Word and how its application in our Twenty-First Century lives has been influenced by mythology, philosophy, and tradition.)*

### **"Which Witch Is Which?"**

**SINCE FALL IS UPON US**, we have decided to look at a common Halloween character, the witch. We first note that, in the King James Version (KJV), only one Hebrew word is translated "witch". It is also translated "witchcraft" and "sorcerers". In addition, another form of this word is rendered "witchcraft", while a third is translated "sorceries". Finally, two other words, one Hebrew and one Greek, are also translated "witchcraft", and both are rendered as other words, as well. With all this detail, we need to look at all of them in order to see which "witch" is which.

The first one is *kashaph*, a Hebrew word which means one who whispers a spell or enchants. Its first use is in Exodus 7:11, where it is translated "sorcerers". These sorcerers worked for the pharaoh. Its next use is in Exodus 22:18, where The Word declares, "Thou shall not suffer ["permit" or "allow"] a witch to live." Here, the KJV translates *kashaph* as "witch", however, other English versions use the feminine noun, "sorceress". Either is acceptable, because both are spell-casters. They are not individuals with which we should associate. Deuteronomy 18:12 declares them to be

“...an abomination unto the LORD:....” Malachi 3:5, also, speaks strongly against them.

As I mentioned in the opening paragraph, *kashaph* is also translated “witchcraft”. In II Chronicles 33:6, it is used for the last time, where it reads, “...also he [Manasseh] observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft [*kashaph*]....” Here, Manasseh, king of Judah, and son of Hezekiah (one of Judah’s greatest rulers), is described as doing much “...evil in the sight of the LORD (verses 2 and 6)....” This is the only place this word is used referring to the practice of witchcraft, rather than to the individual. Usually, a related word, *kesheph*, is applied to the practice or craft. It is used in II Kings 9:22, Micah 5:12, Nahum 3:4 (twice), and Isaiah 47:9 and 12. Each verse deals with that which is practiced, the witchcraft itself.

The third form of our Hebrew word is *kashshaph*. It occurs only once, in Jeremiah 27:9, and is translated “sorcerers”. All three forms together reveal the first of our witches. This witch (or sorcerer) is a spell-caster. We can observe this in the word “bewitched”. In Acts 8:9 and 11, we are told twice (for emphasis) that Simon “bewitched” the people using “sorceries”. The Greek word translated here as “bewitched” is *existemi*. It is rendered elsewhere as “amazed”, “astounded”, and “beside himself” (crazy). It means to put one out of his wits, and is the origin of the English words “ecstasy” and “existentialism”. “Bewitched” also appears in Galatians 3:1a, where the Scriptures ask, “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth,....” Here, the word translated “bewitched” is entirely different. It is the Greek word *baskaino*, which means to malign. The Apostle Paul is rebuking the believers of Galatia for allowing others to malign God’s Word, replacing it with false doctrines that addled their thinking.

Another Hebrew word to consider is *qecem*, meaning “a lot” (as in casting lots) or “divination”. The only place it is translated “witchcraft” is in I Samuel 15:23, where we note that “...rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft [*qecem*],....” Two forms of this word are used in the Bible. In almost all cases, they are translated “divination” or “diviner”. Also, a specific form of divination seems to be indicated. Divination by the rolling of “oracle bones”, dice, was a common way to guess about the future. The Norse used rune stones; the Chinese used sticks. Tarot cards became popular because of their convenience. These have been

associated with witches (and psychics) throughout the years. This shows that our second witch is a fortune-teller. These are also listed, in Deuteronomy 18:10-12, as “abominations” to God.

Finally, “witchcraft” is also rendered from the Greek word *pharmakeia*. The root of this word is *pharmakon*, which means “medicine” or “drug”. If you look closely, you will realize that our modern words, “pharmacy”, “pharmacology”, and “pharmaceuticals”, are derived from these Greek terms. How, then, are drugs “witchcraft”? It is because witches are known to brew potions. In Galatians 5:19-21a, we read, “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like:....” Here, the word “witchcraft” is from *pharmakeia*. This is the only place in the Bible where “witchcraft” is rendered from this Greek word. Other forms of *pharmakon* occur in Revelation, but they are translated “sorcerers” and “sorceries”.

It’s plain that this form of witchcraft is drug use. The other behaviors listed with it in Galatians 5 show this. This third witch is a maker and seller of potions. Illegal drugs obviously fit this definition, as well as all so-called “recreational” drugs. Snake oil salesmen, for generations, sold cure-alls, and people bought them because they believed them to be magical. There are many over-the-counter “wonder drugs” sold in this country that would fit this description. In fact, this form of witchcraft could be summed up in the expression, “better living through chemistry”.

*Kashaph*, *qecem*, and *pharmakeia*, then, are our three words. Spell-casters, fortune-tellers, and drug peddlers are our three witches. Hexes, tarot card readings, and magic potions embody their crafts. These practitioners and practices are all around us. It doesn’t matter whether they are called witches, sorcerers, diviners, or any thing else; all are an “abomination” to our Heavenly Father. We, as God’s children, can learn to recognize and avoid their influences by studying and living The Word. We pray that this article helps to open your eyes. May God bless you.\*

*(Mr. Keith Jamison has been a student of the Bible for many years. He is presently the director of The Ryburn Christian Clarion’s Research Department and develops material for the “From The Research Department” and “Investigating Creation Science” columns.)*

### HELP US MOVE GOD’S WORD OVER AMERICA!

*If you are interested in submitting an article for our “God’s Matchless Word” column or, perhaps, an essay, some original Christian poetry, or a testimony for our “For Your Spiritual Enrichment” column, please note that it is best to send them on a 3½” floppy disk, using a standard Microsoft™ Word® format. For additional information, feel free to call us at (937) 275-3316, or send an e-mail to [ryburnclarion2@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ryburnclarion2@sbcglobal.net). If you would like to send a letter to the editor, you may use our e-mail address, or simply write: **The Ryburn Christian Clarion**, 420 Ryburn Avenue, Suite C-2, Dayton, Ohio 45405-2552. If you desire to support our outreach work financially, please make your offerings payable to “The Ryburn Christian Clarion”, and mail them to the same address.*

# INVESTIGATING CREATION SCIENCE

*(Continuing in this installment of The Ryburn Christian Clarion, and appearing in every spring and fall issue, Keith Jamison and Theodore C. Mahr explore the timely and unfolding evidence that supports the Biblical assertion concerning the Divine creation of all things, visible and invisible. Join us as we take a journey into scriptures and science alike to investigate the latest, compelling proofs.)*

## “ ‘Without Form And Void’ ”

*by Rick Heeter*

**[Editor’s Note:** *This column is meant to be authored alternately by Keith Jamison, director of the Clarion’s Research Department, and Theodore C. Mahr, who oversees our Biblical Archaeology Studies Department. Due to scheduling conflicts, however, neither Keith nor “Ted” was able to finish an article for this column, this issue. As a result, this issue’s “Investigating Creation Science” column is written by Rick Heeter, the Clarion’s editor-in-chief.]*

**WHEN I SAT DOWN TO WRITE THIS,** I reviewed the first article that appeared in this column (Spring, 2005; Vol. II, No. 3). The article, entitled **“The Beginning”**, by Keith Jamison, made some sterling observations. The first point acknowledged the Biblical accounts of creation as having authority and being detailed in their precision. Another point was that by using God’s Word, our God-given ability to reason, and scientific study, we can enhance our understanding of the creation and the Creator. We will build upon this groundwork by first looking at some verses that must define our approach to The Word.

Our aim here is to show God’s own opinion of the Scriptures. For example, we read in Psalms 12:6, “The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.” Notice that it does not say the “word” of the LORD, but, rather, the “words” of the LORD. Plus, God uses the word “words” twice, for emphasis. This indicates that every jot and tittle is to be considered. Furthermore, the verse states that God’s “words” are “pure”. As a matter of fact, they are so pure that God compares them to silver that has been smelted seven times. Did you know that the number seven in the Bible represents spiritual perfection? God is saying that the very “words” that make up The Word are spiritually perfect. Why? It’s because God, Who revealed this knowledge, IS PERFECT. This is why we must come to appreciate the depth and detail of Holy Writ.

In Psalms 138:2b, the Lord, again, gives us a glimpse of His attitude toward The Word. In the latter part of the verse, it reads, “...for thou [God] hast magnified thy word above all thy name.” Here, we find “word” used in the singular, because God is referring to the entire revelation that He gave to man, namely, the Bible. Of this entire revelation, He declares that He magnified it above ALL HIS NAME. God has a pretty all-encompassing name, and yet, He elevated the Scriptures above it. Tell me, then, how important is The Word? How important are the “words” that make up The Word?

Now that we’ve seen the value of scriptural detail, let’s continue our examination of the Biblical records of creation. You may recall that the last **“Investigating Creation Science”** column showed the distinctions between the words

“created” (*bara*), “made” (*asah*), and “formed” (*yatsar*). From Genesis 1:1 through Genesis 2:3, there are 102 separate acts of God indicated by phrases like “God moved”, “God said”, “God saw”, “God divided”, “God called”, “God made”, and so forth. In all these acts of God, however, there are only three where the word “created” (*bara*) is used. If the “words of the LORD are pure words”, then, much of what we’ve been taught in Sunday School is wrong. Also, if the Bible is accurate, then, the Scriptures agree more with genuine science than with orthodox Christianity. How can this be?

Recently, on two different television programs, I heard evolutionists debunking the notion that God created all things during a six-day period, asserting that this concept does not fit the available scientific evidence. Their information indicates a prolonged geological process. Traditional Christianity, on the other hand, teaches that God created light on the first day, He created the firmament of heaven on the second day, He created the dry land and the seas on the third day, and so on. Both groups have a modicum of truth to back up their respective positions, but neither the scientific community nor the churches have taken a close look at the textual detail of Genesis 1. When you study this chapter in the old Hebrew and Aramaic, you discover that **1)** creation (Gen. 1:1) was instantaneous, **2)** followed, after a vast period of time, by a worldwide cataclysm (Gen. 1:2). Then, in verse 3, God begins to **3)** restore order, a process which took Him six days to complete.

Starting with point 1, let’s look at the first verse in the Bible. A more accurate rendering of Genesis 1:1, from the Hebrew and Aramaic, reads, “God, in the beginning, created [*bara*] the heavens and the earth.” The first word in The Word is actually “God” (*Elohim*, in Hebrew), giving Him the prominence He deserves. Since *Elohim* is first used in connection with “created” (*bara*), its underlying emphasis throughout the Scriptures carries that connotation, namely, God, the Creator. The phrase, “in the beginning”, is translated from one Hebrew word, *breashith*, meaning “origin” or “at the origin”. At the origin of all things, visible and invisible (Col. 1:16), only God was there to get things started. The Hebrew word for heaven, *shamayim*, is in the plural form, which is a figure of speech called *heterosis*. This figure takes something singular, in this case heaven, and expresses it in the plural to emphasize its vastness or enormity. Finally, as we noted already, “created” is the Hebrew word *bara*, which means “to bring into existence (out of nothing) that which has never been before”.

As you can see, scrutinizing the ancient texts brings to light much more detail and accuracy than simply reading it in English. Putting all this information together, an enhanced rendering of Genesis 1:1 reads, “God, at the origin (of all

things), brought into existence (out of nothing) the heavens and the earth.” Can you see how knowing just one word in greater detail augments our understanding? The truth is, we’ve only scratched the surface, because “the words of the LORD are pure words”.

As we begin to consider point number 2, we need to note the use of another figure of speech, for these figures are used with Divine design, and always show what God wants emphasized. Notice that the last three words of Genesis 1:1, “and the earth”, are repeated at the beginning of verse 2. This figure is called *anadiplosis*, and employs the immediate repetition of a word or phrase to focus the reader’s attention on that word or phrase. After declaring that God brought into existence the totality of the visible and invisible universe (in verse 1), He lets us know, by this figure, that we are now going to focus exclusively upon “the earth”. It is with our attention now fastened on “the earth” that God begins to reveal to us things that the scientists have no knowledge of. Indeed, few Christians have seen these things.

The first part of Genesis 1:2, in the King James Version, reads, “And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep....” In reading any English version of the Bible, especially the Old Testament, which was first written in Hebrew and Estrangelo Aramaic, a student of God’s Word should be aware that forms of the verb “to be” do not exist in these old languages. In other words, verbs like “is”, “are”, “were”, and “was” are not a part of the Hebrew or Aramaic lexicons: they do not exist in these languages. On the other hand, Hebrew and Aramaic do have the verb “to become”, and thus, the opening phrase of Genesis 1:2 literally reads, “And the earth became without form, and void;....” God did not create it that way; it became that way!

The words “form and void” are the Hebrew words *tohu va bohu*. These Hebrew words are used elsewhere in the Scriptures, and verify that God did not create the earth as a formless mass. One such record is in Isaiah 45.

#### **Isaiah 45:18a**

*For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain [tohu],....*

The words “in vain” come from the Hebrew word *tohu*. *Tohu* is the word translated “without form” in Genesis 1:2. Isaiah declares that “...he [God] created it not in vain [*tohu*, “without form”],....” In other words, God “...created it not [or “did not create it”] in vain [“without form”],....” God did not create the earth formless, nor did He create it “void”, which is the word *bohu*, meaning “empty”. The Lord did not create the earth as an empty, formless mass; it BECAME that way because of some tremendous, cataclysmic event.

The question to ask, then, is what caused God’s perfect creation to become “without form and void”, or formless and empty? The Bible teaches that in the beginning, God created all things, visible and invisible. Part of the invisible creation included the angelic beings who served God under three leaders, Gabriel, Michael, and Lucifer. One of these, Lucifer (which means “light bringer”), tried to usurp the throne of God by leading those angels under him in rebellion against the Almighty. His efforts failed, as recorded in the Book of Revelation.

#### **Revelation 12:7 and 8**

*And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not [“did not prevail”]; neither was their place found any more [“longer”] in heaven.*

Sometime between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2, this celestial conflict between Michael and his angels and Lucifer and those under him took place. The strife was of such a magnitude that there were consequences in the physical realm. The result was that God’s perfect, beautiful earth became “without form and void”. Therefore, Genesis 1:3 shows God beginning the process of restoration, not creation.

That now brings us to point number 3. From Genesis 1:3 to Genesis 2:3, we see God putting the material elements back in harmony so the earth would be an appropriate habitation for man. Note, once again, that the Scriptures use phrases like “God said”, “God moved”, and so on, because the raw materials had already been brought into existence in Genesis 1:1. The only times “created” (*bara*) is used is in Genesis 1:21 and 27. As discussed in the previous article, verse 21 shows God creating living soul (*nephish chay*, in Hebrew) for mankind and the animals. Additionally, verse 27 uses “created” (*bara*) three times to emphasize that the Lord put His spirit within Adam and Eve so they could have perfect communion with Him.

Between verses 1 and 2 of Genesis 1, there are eons of time passing. This will answer the questions of geologists and other scientists who know that the earth is older than six thousand years, as most Christians believe. On the other hand, we *do* have God engaged in activity for a six-day period as most believers acknowledge, however, they are not six days of creation, but, rather, six days of “restoration”. Both sides, thus, have an element of truth, but neither has seen the full impact of God’s revelation in the opening verses of the Book of Genesis. In conclusion, **1)** God created all things instantaneously. **2)** After an expanded period of time, the physical earth fell into disarray, becoming “without form and void”, because of rebellion in Heaven. Lastly, **3)** God spent six days restoring the earth to make it habitable for mankind.

As you can see, there is great depth and accuracy in The Word. There is even more to cover in the first chapters of Genesis, and we will, in future issues of the *Clarion*, delve into some interesting and compelling topics. We invite you to join us for another mind-expanding journey into the depth and greatness of God’s matchless Word.\*

*(Be sure to join us in every spring and fall issue of The Ryburn Christian Clarion as Keith Jamison and Theodore C. Mahr present intriguing and fascinating insights into the nature of our existence in the “Investigating Creation Science” column.)*

*(Mr. Rick Heeter has been a student of the Bible for over thirty-three years. Most recently, he was the teacher at the Ryburn Chapel. For the past two years he has been the editor-in-chief and book reviewer for The Ryburn Christian Clarion.)*

*\*Articles and columns submitted to The Ryburn Christian Clarion are edited to ensure correct spelling and punctuation, proper grammar, and clarity of expression.*

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