

The Ryburn Christian Clarion

Upholding the Accuracy of the God-Breathed Word

Vol. II, No. 3

Spring, 2005

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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

IN THIS ISSUE OF THE CLARION, we have developed much of our content around a single theme, namely the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Many elements of this issue relate to that theme. Enjoy!

“STANDING STRONG ON RESURRECTION GROUND” gets us started with a reminder of *who* and *what* we are in Christ. As sons and daughters of God, we **have** authority from our Father to minister, as well as “power from on high”.

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

“GOD’S MATCHLESS WORD”: The title of our offering this issue is also one of the most electrifying declarations of all time: **“He Is Risen!”** It is a pivotal truth to believers and the doom of the Adversary.

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“FROM THE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT”: Our favorite researcher explores some popular traditions of Easter. **“From Ashtoreth To The Cadbury™ Bunny®”** shows how we’ve strayed from the teaching of the Lord Jesus’s resurrection.

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“ANTIQUITY SPEAKS”, in the article **“Proof Of Pilate”**, deals with the historical evidence of Pontius Pilate’s rule over Judea during the earthly ministry and life of Jesus Christ.

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“FOR YOUR SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT”: We bring you the conclusion of an insightful analysis of the dilemma faced by major Christian denominations. **“The Collapse Of The Church Culture”**, Part Two, isolates the problem and offers *revolutionary*, but Biblical, solutions.

by Rev. Maurice Goulet, D. D.5

“INVESTIGATING CREATION SCIENCE”: In the first installment of this new column, we present the Biblical evidence of creation. **“The Beginning”** launches us into a study of scriptural assertions before we look at scientific analysis.

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STANDING STRONG ON RESURRECTION GROUND

RECENTLY, I’VE BEEN THINKING about one of the first Biblical studies I read as a babe in Christ many years ago. At least, it was one of the first teachings that made a decided impression on me to the end that it illuminated my thinking with Biblical truths I’d never been shown before. The major thrust of the piece was that as children of God, we are assured of more than just a home in Heaven someday, but that we have a unique, spiritual position in Christ which gives us “power from on high” to stand for God *in this life!* In essence, the truth that flooded my thinking so many years ago is this: when God raised His Son, Jesus Christ, from the dead, all who would someday believe on Him were raised, as well. When Christ came out of the tomb in glory and power, we came out *with Him*. This reality is spiritually born within us at the time of our salvation. In truth, like the Lord Jesus Christ, we now stand on *resurrection ground*.

Unlike many believers who think their only option is to endure this life and muddle through until the Lord comes, some are awake, and awakening, to the resources and abilities God has placed within them for fellowship with Him, as well as the wherewithal to minister God’s Word to those seeking answers. As “able ministers” of God (II Cor. 3:6a), we’ve been equipped with everything required for successful Christian service (Rom. 13:12; Eph. 6:11-18; and II Tim. 3:17). It is our responsibility to study the instruction manual (i. e., The Word) to see how God has equipped us, and to learn how to walk with and for Him.

continued on next page...

As well as fellowshiping with like-minded believers in our own area, we, at the *Clarion*, have been inspired by the Heavenly Father to reach others throughout the Midwest and across America. Our heartfelt aim is to share the “resurrection ground” truths of The Word with faithful believers around the country. As we trust Him, God continues to open doors for us in our outreach through the *Clarion*.

The newsletter is presently available at libraries, hospitals, doctors’ offices, grocery stores, coffee shops, organic food markets, and an eclectic array of locations around the Dayton and Cincinnati areas. We have a growing mailing list, also, which includes saints from Ohio, Virginia, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Indiana, Kentucky, Georgia, Florida, California, Idaho, Nevada, and other locales.

We are continually blessed as the Lord inspires others to work with us to move His Word. All of them labor without pay, and we desire to recognize their work for God, for, indeed, it *is* for Him. Our thanks go to those wonderful brothers and sisters in Christ who believe in what we’re doing enough to submit articles, essays, poetry, and so forth (much of which you’ll see in future issues).**

There are also our financial supporters, to whom we are, indeed, grateful. Their offerings allow us to purchase the consumables (paper, envelopes, inkjet cartridges, postage and shipping materials, etc.) that keep the *Clarion* in operation. If it is on your heart to lend your support to theirs, you may make your offerings payable to “The Ryburn Christian *Clarion*”, sending them to the address in our masthead at the top of page one.

Additionally, a small band of intrepid believers sees to it that the *Clarion* is distributed to the “eclectic array” of places mentioned earlier. They take time out of their busy schedules, using their own gasoline, without reimbursement, for the sake of the Gospel. For their unselfish efforts, we are thankful.

Lastly, we recognize those who have donated new and used hardware and software that make our work possible. In the past 13 months, we’ve received a new Dell® computer to supplement our existing model; a new printer/copier/scanner so we don’t have to send our work out to be reproduced by unbelievers; a used printer/copier/scanner so we can increase our production capacity; software tailored to our specific needs; and other accoutrements.

In all of this, God has opened doors so His Word can move. Our goal, therefore, is to provide a format offering the Good News which has something for everyone: for those who have not come to salvation, yet; for the babes in Christ; and for those mature, long-standing saints scattered across this broad land. We want to be part of the glue that holds the Family of God together. Our joy is to fellowship with those who love God *and His Word*.

As we, at the *Clarion*, near the end of two years of reaching people with The Word of God, we remain dedicated, believing God that the *Clarion* will become a *Biblical studies resource for the Household of Faith*. Thank you, as always, for your prayerful support, and for standing with us on “resurrection ground”. God bless you all, abundantly.

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

GOD'S MATCHLESS WORD:

A Forum For Presenting The Light Of Life

(“God's Matchless Word: A Forum For Presenting The Light Of Life” 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.)

“ ‘He Is Risen!’ ”

by Henry S. Altheide

HISTORY IS FULL OF EXAMPLES of great men and women. So many individuals throughout the centuries have done remarkable things and have touched the lives of others. Some are famous for their discoveries, others for their inventions, some for their acts of service to humanity, and others for their courage. Their biographies and autobiographies fill libraries, and their stories are often inspiring.**

There is one biography, however, which causes all others to pale by comparison. Over 2,000 years ago, a certain man was born into this world, an individual so remarkable that the Scriptures refer to Him as “the second (or last) Adam” (I Cor. 15:45 and 47). He was, in truth, the only perfect human being to walk upon the Earth since the *first* Adam. He was supernaturally conceived by God in the womb of his

mother and was born with sinless blood, unlike the rest of the human race. Furthermore, He was born for a far greater purpose and mission than any other person who lived before Him or after Him. Of all the human beings who have ever lived or died, no one has affected humanity and life on this planet more than this one, single man: the Lord Jesus Christ. He is THE SUBJECT of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

Romans 1:3 and 4

*Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And **declared** [author's emphasis added] to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:*

The word “declared” in verse 4 means “marked out”. God *marked out* His only begotten Son by raising Him from the dead. Buddha and Confucius may have been really nice guys, but God did not raise either of them from the dead; they are long gone. Jesus Christ, however, is alive and seated at the right hand of God at this very moment, and is the Head of the Body of Christ, The Church. He entrusted His total being to His Father. He knew God would raise

Him up and give Him new life after lying in the earth as a corpse for three days.

Romans 6:4

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

We, the ones who have believed on Him, can walk in newness of life because “he is risen” (Matt. 28:6). The Easter Season, which we commemorate each year, is *so much greater* than Peter Cottontail and chocolate eggs! It’s about God raising our Lord and Savior from the dead, and being thankful for the new life we have today through Him. As we celebrate the season, let’s remember what it’s really about, and as we read God’s Word, let’s remember to *look for Christ*. All we have and ever hope to be is because of His life, death, resurrection, and (maybe today...) His return. Pass it on,...**He is risen!***

(Mr. Henry S. “Hank” Altheide has been a student of the Bible for many years. He and his wife, Vickie, reside in La Quinta, California, where they are active in Christian work. Hank can be reached at altheide@aol.com.)

FROM THE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

(“From The Research Department”, featuring our columnist, Keith Jamison, examines God’s Word and how its application in our Twenty-First Century lives has been influenced by mythology, philosophy, and tradition.)

“From Ashtoreth To The Cadbury™ Bunny®”

THE SPRING OF THE YEAR finds many Christians celebrating Easter. In light of that, have you ever wondered what eggs and rabbits have to do with the resurrection of Christ? The answer is nothing. Most Easter traditions are from pagan holiday festivals. These were often “Christianized” to help convert people to Christianity. St. Patrick, for example, did this in Ireland, but the practice has led to much confusion and erroneous teaching. Let’s look at some traditions of this holiday in order to dispel a bit of the confusion.

The first thing to note is that the word “Easter” is not actually in the Bible. The King James Version (KJV) uses it in only one verse, Acts 12:4b, where it states, “...intending after Easter to bring him [Peter] forth to the people.” The Greek word *pascha*, rendered “Easter,” was mistranslated. This Greek word is the counterpart of the Hebrew word *pecach*, the root of which means, “to skip.” This word is ordinarily used for the festival of the Passover. Passover is observed in remembrance of the deliverance of the Hebrews out of Egypt. It acknowledges

the angel of death’s “passing over,” or *skipping*, the households of the faithful of ancient Israel. Other English versions use this correct term. Even in the KJV, when Acts 12:3b declares, “...Then were the days of unleavened bread...,” one can readily see that the word in verse 4 should have been translated “Passover” since unleavened bread was eaten just prior to that event.

The origin of the word “Easter” is not precisely known. The term is an Anglicized form of the name of a spring fertility goddess. *Eastre*, *Ishtar* (of ancient Assyria), and *Astarte* (of Babylon) are three other forms. Their proper pronunciation is nearly identical to that of “Easter.” *Ostera*, *Eostre*, and *Ashtoreth* (worshipped by ancient Canaanites and Phoenicians) are other names of this goddess. Even *Aphrodite* from the Greek civilization was partially derived from these earlier female deities. In Babylon, this goddess represented fertility, and was the “Queen of Heaven,” worshipped during the early spring with a festival. The “east” in many of her names implied an association with the dawn. The spring equinox was the

dawn of a new growing season after the dark night of winter, thus Easter sunrise services are a modern remnant of the worship of these false gods.

The Easter Season begins with Mardi Gras, literally "Fat Tuesday." This is a celebration held just before Lent. Lent comprises the forty days leading up to Palm Sunday, and Easter. It begins on Ash Wednesday, the day after Fat Tuesday, and ends on Holy Saturday. It is a time of fasting and prayer. Its name comes from a Latin word meaning, "spring," however, a forty-day observance was also part of the worship of Ashtoreth. It was a period of weeping and grieving practiced annually for her son, Tammuz, a false Christ, who was slain and subsequently worshipped by certain disobedient Israelites, as the Old Testament records. Through the weeping of his mother, he was "mystically revived" in spring. Tammuz was also known as Baal or Bel (Again, refer to the Old Testament for accounts of the worship of this false god.). He was ultimately worshipped as the sun god with a sunrise bonfire service the first morning after the forty days concluded.

As for eggs, they have been symbols of fertility and renewal as far back as the Persians and ancient Egyptians. The Babylonians believed Astarte came from an egg of wondrous size that fell into the Euphrates River from Heaven. This served as an ark which she used to survive a great flood and ensure the continuation of the human race. The coloring of eggs made them symbols of her supposed blessings. The hunting and eating of them occurred in order to receive her favor.

The rabbit is another ancient symbol of fertility. The reason should be clear to everyone and, thus, they

represent the renewal of life. Bringing them together with eggs on this holiday has led to the notion of the Easter Bunny, which brings colored eggs and treats to children. Peter Cottontail is a famous one of song and story.

In more modern times, confections have been added to enhance Easter. Many of these are specialty items like chocolate bunnies. Candy manufacturers use the traditional Easter symbols in the making and marketing of these goodies, establishing modern classics such as Peeps™ Marshmallow Chicks® and Reese's™ Peanut Butter Eggs®. Cadbury™ markets its Cream Eggs® by using a clucking bunny which supposedly lays these eggs. The Cadbury™ Bunny® is, perhaps, the latest in a string of Easter icons.

Easter traditions clearly predate Christianity. Many reference books note this, including *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. **Its origin is pagan!** The holiday started as a pagan festival and was later Christianized and, finally, commercialized into the form we know today. While we have not covered everything, we have lifted the veil of confusion regarding this subject. *Our true spring celebration* is the rejoicing we express as we remember the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Thank you for joining us as we study and enjoy the depth of God's wonderful Word.*

(Mr. Keith Jamison has been a student of The Word of God for over thirteen years. He presently prepares research for The Ryburn Christian Clarion's "From The Research Department" and "Investigating Creation Science" columns. He is also the director of the Clarion's Research Department.)

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ANTIQUITY SPEAKS

("Antiquity Speaks", featuring our columnist, Theodore C. Mahr, acquaints us with archaeological discoveries and secular, historical documentation which verify the ancient Biblical accounts.)

"Proof Of Pilate"

ANOTHER ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIND that proves the veracity and accuracy of the Bible is the discovery of an inscription in the ancient city of Caesarea Maritima. This find designates the Roman official, Pontius Pilate, as the military governor of Judea during the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, just as the New Testament states. The inscription was found on a stone at an Italian archaeological "dig" in 1961 in the city which Herod the Great named to honor Caesar. Caesarea Maritima is located along Israel's Mediterranean coast, midway between Joppa (or modern-day Jaffa), which lies to the south, and Haifa, located to its north.

The city was built by Herod, ostensibly to provide a viable harbor for the use of Roman occupational forces which controlled Israel at that time. As befits Herod's ambitious construction schemes, Caesarea Maritima was an engineering marvel for its time. In effect, it was an artificial harbor built along the coast where no such port should logically exist. In deference to the Roman occupation and his collaboration with

it, Herod named the city for the Roman emperor. The additional title, "Maritima," distinguished it from numerous other towns in Israel and other Near-Eastern Roman provinces which also bore the name "Caesarea" (i. e., Caesarea Phillipi, situated in the northern Galilee region).

The city and port became a thriving metropolis, ultimately serving as the base for the Roman military and civil government in Israel during the time of Christ. In fact, the Roman governor and military forces generally remained in Caesarea itself, keeping a smaller contingent of troops and officials at the Fortress of Antonia in Jerusalem. Only during civil unrest and Jewish festivals, such as Passover, did the Roman governor, and a larger body of troops, occupy Jerusalem. This harmonizes completely with the accounts of Christ in the Bible, and the records made by later Roman governors in the times of the Apostles.

As a Roman city, Caesarea Maritima sported the amenities and structures requisite in any fine Italian

metropolis. Herod constructed a magnificent aqueduct, running from Mount Carmel in the north, in order to furnish the port with a continual supply of fresh, clean water. In addition, various Roman temples, government buildings, military facilities, and athletic and civic venues adorned the city. One of these structures was a large, crescent-shaped amphitheatre excavated by the Italian archaeologists in 1961.

While cleaning and documenting the rough, archaeological finds, the Italian scientists uncovered a stone in one of the stairways within the theatre which revealed an inscription of monumental, historical importance. On it were the words "...Tiberium [temple dedicated to the worship of Emperor Tiberius]...Pontius Pilate, Prefect of...Judea...has dedicated...." Other non-Biblical sources, both historical and archaeological, have shown that there was a temple, or an addition to an existing temple, dedicated to the emperor, Tiberius, in Caesarea, as the inscription indicates, and, indeed, dating to the time of Christ. Archaeologists have determined that the Pontius Pilate artifact had originally been used as a dedication stone in *that very temple*. It had, however, been re-used as building material for the stairway when the Tiberian temple fell into disrepair years later. The amphitheatre continued in use for some time, and, thus, all available, nearby materials were utilized in its upkeep.

The significance of the inscription on the stone is obvious to Biblical scholars and archaeologists alike. It not only gives Pontius Pilate's name *exactly as recorded* in the New Testament, but it also verifies his role as the chief Roman official in Judea during the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. The word "prefect" was originally used by the Romans for their provincial governors, but was changed to the word "procurator". Both, used interchangeably for a time, meant the chief Roman official or "governor" of a province or territory. The Biblical use of "governor" agrees completely with either Latin word. In Pilate's case, he was not just the governor of *any* province, but of Judea itself, where Jerusalem is located. This, again, upholds the New Testament accounts.

There is more to be found regarding Pilate's life, his rule, and even his personal temperament. In a number of extra-Biblical sources, more detail is available which bears directly on Pilate's role in governing Judea. Even his personality is described, corroborating information given in the Scriptures. The writings of the Roman historian, Tacitus, and the Jewish historian, Josephus ben Matthias (better known as "Josephus Flavius"), are two such sources.

Josephus, a Jewish scholar of possible priestly descent, began as a Judean patriot but later, after Israel's complete subjugation, settled into the role of a chronicler, detailing both Roman and Jewish history and life in Israel during the First Century, A. D. He, himself, was not known to be a believer in Jesus as the Messiah, but his writings document, as historical fact, many of the people, places, and events described in the New Testament, including Jesus (*Yeshua*, in Hebrew) of Nazareth and Pontius Pilate. His *Wars Of The Jews* and *Antiquities Of The Jews* are historically prominent works, serving as two of the best sources for the Greco-Roman conquest and occupation of Israel. Needless to say, he, among others, has thoroughly documented the existence of Pontius Pilate and Jesus of Nazareth, further substantiating God's Word.*

(For further study, see: Pfeiffer, Charles F., ed., The Biblical World: A Dictionary Of Biblical Archaeology, First Revised Edition, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1979, pp. 455-58; Bull, Robert J., "Caesarea Maritima—The Search For Herod's City", and Hohfelder, Robert L., "Caesarea Beneath The Sea", Biblical Archaeology Review, May-June, 1982, both reprinted in Archaeology And The Bible: The Best Of B. A. R., Washington, D. C., 1992, pp. 106-23 and 125-35, respectively; The Research Editorial Staff, The Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Revised Edition, The Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, United Kingdom, 1994, Vol. 3, pp. 1229-31; and Whiston, William, translator, The Complete Works Of Josephus, originally penned by Josephus Flavius, pp. 379-83, 478-79, and 554-60.)

(Mr. Theodore C. Mahr has spent over sixteen years studying God's Word, focusing primarily on Judeo-Christian Studies and Creation Science. When not involved in U. S. Military History book projects, he develops research for The Ryburn Christian Clarion's "Antiquity Speaks" and "Investigating Creation Science" columns.)

FOR YOUR SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT

Essay

("For Your Spiritual Enrichment" offers our readers a variety of inspirational and edifying submissions. In this "grab-bag", appearing from time to time, you will find essays, book reviews, testimonies, poetry, letters, and other things designed to exhort and comfort God's people.)

"The Collapse Of The Church Culture"

Part Two

by Rev. Maurice Goulet, D. D.

PEOPLE WHO CLAIM TO BE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST, claim to have a relationship with Him. This means they *know* Him, not just *about* Him (This was Paul's claim in Philippians 3:10). Yet, we have turned our churches into groups of people who are studying God as though they are taking a course at school, or attending a business seminar. We aim at the head; we do not deal in relationships. We then wonder why there is no passion for the Lord and His mission. It's because, in our efforts to disciple people, we've been barking up the wrong tree.

We have made following Jesus all about being a good church member. We are training people to be *club* members, all the

while wondering why our influence in the world is waning. The truth is, the North American church culture extracts *salt* from the world and diminishes the amount of *light* available to those in darkness who need to find their way.

In the modern world, how would we typically approach the spiritual learning dilemma we've identified? We would write a curriculum, produce a conference, convene a class, develop a study course, recruit a teacher or other expert, sign people up, teach the material to the students, and pass out completion certificates. We would then wonder what would happen or change as a result of the experience. The truth is, we have very

little evidence that academic or conferential learning changes behavior. I submit that there has never been more teaching or Christian education in the history of the world than there is in the U. S. today. Nevertheless, one survey indicates that only 9% of people who say they are “born again” has a Biblical worldview. The question we should be asking today is, “How do we develop followers of Jesus Christ?”

The academic model used for the last several hundred years involves an expert (teacher) who has information and disseminates it to less-informed people (students). This is the basic scenario that has developed into millions of cases of death-by-lecture.

Students, though, can now obtain more information from the Internet overnight than a teacher can deliver in lecture form in a month's time. The issue now is learning and how to make sense of the information that is available. The agenda is being set more and more by the learner. Another way of saying this is that we have grown up in the modern world with a Greek approach to education. We must now return to a Hebraic approach that is much closer to what Jesus used. One aspect of this is that the learner/disciple determines the curriculum.

In the modern world, it is believed that spiritual formation is accomplished by taking a student through a prescribed group of texts that address topics in a curricular approach. This is so deeply ingrained in us that we approach almost every learning experience (even in the church) in this way. In the world that is dawning, the curricular approach to educating people is increasingly viewed as a supplemental strategy to the primary approach: learning agendas driven by life issues and informed by life experiences. Jesus facilitated spiritual formation in his disciples by *introducing them to life situations* and, then, helping them to debrief their experiences. He *taught them* to pray; He did not lead them in a study course on prayer. He *took them* on mission trips; He did not read books to them on missions.

The consistent challenge I run into when discussing growth in smaller groups is the prevalent notion that they should function primarily in a curricular mode (i. e., a Bible study, a text-driven experience). Small groups, however, can move from one curriculum piece to another and never experience any *real* growth. In pre-modern and postmodern cultures, the home *was* and *is* the center for spiritual formation. Consider this quote by Marvin Wilson: "Foundational to all theory on the Biblical concept of family is the Jewish teaching that the home is more important than the synagogue. In Jewish tradition, the center of religious life has always been the home (*Wilson, Marvin R., Our Father Abraham, W. P. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1989, pp. 214 and 216*)".

I am amazed at how our best church families have no clue as to how to have conversations at home about spiritual subjects. Churches are so busy getting people involved *at the church* that they've neglected this fundamental agenda of spiritual formation. The typical church family relegates spiritual stuff to what happens at church. They leave spiritual formation to the institution, and the institution encourages it!

What if youth ministers spent as much time with parents as they do with their children? This would be a shift for most church

staff members. We usually hire children's and youth ministers to run programs for kids and young people. In fact, this approach by the church may do more to *decimate the home* as a spiritual center than anything on television or the Internet.

As a youth, I grew up in the surfing culture. As a surfer, I never planned a single wave, but I did prepare to ride the waves when they came. God is making waves all around the North American church. Some churches are going to get to ride them. These are the churches that are prepared to get in on what *God is doing*.

Current approaches to the future involve prediction and planning. The better and *Biblical* approach to the future involves prayer and preparation. The Apostles sitting in the Temple on the Day of Pentecost were not engaged in a strategic planning retreat in order to facilitate the birth of The Church and the early stages of the Christian movement. Not even in their wildest dreams would they have scripted almost three thousand converts on that first day, nor would they have predicted the leap of the Spirit to the Samaritans, or to the Gentiles. Indeed not, based upon their responses to both developments. Would they have recruited the rising star of Judaism to become the ultimate leader of the movement? Hardly! God does the planning; we do the preparing. He does not say, “I am waiting for you to develop plans I can bless.”

Spiritual preparation has the goal of getting God's people in partnership with Him in His redemptive mission in the world. Five elements of a spiritually prepared architecture include vision, values, results, strengths, and learning. The question we need to begin asking is, “How do we cultivate vision?” Vision is discovered, not invented. Jesus Christ said, “I will build my Church...” (Matt. 16:18). He is the One with the vision for our lives and for The Church. It is our job to discover what He has in mind, and not to invent something He can get excited about.

I learned the following lesson early in life, and it has eased my heart tremendously. God is *always* at work in *every* situation before I show up. As the reality of this sank in, I realized my job is not to analyze the situation in order to figure out a way to make something happen. It is, rather, to see what God is *already doing* and ask if I have a part to play.

We need to listen to people in our churches. We need to look at our towns and neighborhoods. We need to talk with our leaders. As we do this, however, we must focus on the question, “What is God *already doing* here?” Jesus modeled this kind of approach when He said, “I do nothing on my own initiative...I only do what I see the Father doing” (excerpted from John 5:30 and, then, 5:19; American Standard Version). Furthermore, the role of a leader is to help his people ask the question, “What do we see God doing here?” This is the starting point for the “visioning” process.*

(*Rev. Maurice Goulet, D. D. is a long-time student of The Word of God who has recently authored a research study entitled Lord Of Darkness; Lord Of Light: Unfolding The Signs Of The Times And The Hope Of A New World. For further information, visit www.HopeWatch.com .*)

(Do you have a submission: a research article, an essay, some Christian poetry, or a testimony? Call (937) 275-3316, or e-mail us at rcc@proapc.com.)

The Ryburn Christian Clarion: *Biblical Studies Resource*

INVESTIGATING CREATION SCIENCE

(Beginning with 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.)

“The Beginning”

by Keith Jamison

MEN THROUGHOUT HISTORY HAVE SEARCHED for the meaning of life: not just why we humans are here, but why there is a universe at all. Men have looked to religion, philosophy, and science for those answers. Most never receive those answers; others do not listen. Although most people do not realize it, this questioning is our hunger to know God, for He alone is the answer. God **is** the Beginning; He is our Creator, our Reason to exist.

The scientific study of the origin of the universe is called cosmology. Physicists study high-energy particles in cyclotrons; others study stellar astronomy through huge radio and optical telescopes, all in an attempt to produce a “Grand Unified Theory of Everything”. These activities increase our knowledge of how the universe works, but they do not explain why it’s here. Science is limited in what it can show us. By its very nature of insisting upon verifiable evidence, science is incapable of offering 100% positive proof of anything. It demands empirical evidence that can be registered and analyzed by the five senses. If the true essence of existence, however, is *spirit* and is, therefore, beyond the realm of the senses, science alone will never provide fully satisfying answers. For now, science must content itself by acknowledging that if the universe did not exist, we would not be here to ask these questions.

Philosophies are limited, for they can only put forth suppositions as to why the universe exists. Religion’s answer, also, is many times confusing or mysterious. Additionally, the fact that there is a plethora of beliefs often turns the search for answers into a frustrating foray into seemingly endless blind alleys. We, however, have no ambiguity. The Bible states clearly many times that God created all things in the totality of the universe (Gen. 1:1; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16; and Heb. 1:1 and 2). It also tells us not to be ignorant and to study God’s Word (II Tim. 2:15). God gave us a mind with which to reason. We can, therefore, use reason, God’s Word, and scientific study to further our understanding of the creation and the Creator.

In examining the field of Creation Science, it is only fitting that we begin with the Biblical accounts. Genesis 1:1 declares that God created the heavens and the Earth. According to The Word, the *very first act* which occurred was God creating the universe. Modern usage of the word “created” assumes that it is synonymous with words like “formed” and “made”, or even words such as “designed” or “developed”. Words in the Scriptures, though, are used with Divine design, never haphazardly (Ps. 12:6; and II Peter 1:21). In our culture today, movie actors talk of *creating* a character based upon the script they’ve read. Fashion designers say they have *created* a new fall wardrobe for women. Do they mean “create” in the same way God’s Word uses it? Biblically, and accurately, words like “created”, “formed”, and “made” have their own precise and distinct meanings, and in The Word, we see God doing all three. The Hebrew word *bara*, “create”, means “to bring into existence (out of nothing) that which has never been before”. This ability is held by God **alone**. *Yatsar*, the Hebrew word translated “formed”, means “to fashion out of something that is already in existence”. *Asah*, rendered “made”, indicates “substance is required of which the thing (made) consists”. From these exact definitions, it is plain that man can *form* and *make* things, using materials which already exist, but he *cannot* “create”.

Bara, “created”, is used only five times in Genesis, chapter 1. Besides the use in verse 1, it is used once in verse 21, and three times in verse 27. In verse 1, as noted earlier, God created the entire universe, and according to Colossians 1:16, this includes things “visible (material) and invisible (spiritual)”. In verse 21, in the King James Version, we read, “And God created [*bara*] great whales, and every living creature [*nephesh chay*] that moveth,....” The Hebrew words, *nephesh chay*, translated here as “living creature” are generally rendered “soul” or “life”. A more precise translation of verse 27, taken from the Hebrew and Estrangelo Aramaic, reads, “And God created living soul [*nephesh chay*] for

great whales and every living, moving thing,....” Even though the Lord had created the entire visible and invisible universe in Genesis 1:1, according to verse 21, He then created (*bara*, brought into existence (out of nothing)) “life”, or “living soul” (*nephesh chay*) which gave animation and movement to the animals which the waters (verse 21) and the earth (verse 24) “brought forth”. *Nephesh chay* is also used in Genesis 2:7 where “...man became a living soul.” The word “became” in this verse is derived from *asah* and could be rendered “was made”. Although the accuracy of the Scriptures show that “living soul” was created [*bara*] in Genesis 1:21, it had to be taken and “made” (*asah*) into that which distinguishes one creature from another. Man, thus, “was made” a living soul, which occurred after his body was “formed” (*yatsar*) from “the dust of the ground...(Gen. 2:7a)”.

In Genesis 1:27, the word “create” is used three times, but all three uses refer to one event, and, so, the multiple occurrences of *bara* are employed for emphasis.

Genesis 1:27

So God created [bara] man in his own image, in the image of God created [bara] he him; male and female created [bara] he them.

With this, we’ve seen all three Hebrew words, *yatsar*, *asah*, and *bara*, used in connection with man. In Genesis 2:7, the Almighty formed (*yatsar*) man of the dust of the ground. God then breathed into man the breath of life, and man became, or was made (*asah*), a living soul. Now, we see in Genesis 1:27 that God created (*bara*) man in His image, and to underscore the event, God uses the word *bara*, “create”, three times. This incident in verse 27, then, must have been a truly monumental event. Mankind (male and female) was created (or “brought into existence”) in God’s own image AFTER THEY WERE FORMED AND MADE. Since John 4:24 notes that God is *spirit*, it is plain that He brought Adam and Eve into existence (*bara*) *spiritually* after He had formed (*yatsar*) and made (*asah*) them.

In actuality, and contrary to popular religious teaching, there are only three acts of creation in the first chapter of Genesis. If the accuracy of The Word is true, in all other acts, God used matter and energy that He had *already* created. That is why, after the Bible says “God created...” (Gen. 1:1), it goes on to state, “...God moved,...And God said,...And God saw,...and God divided,...And God called,...And God made,...And God set them,...And God blessed,...And...God ended his work,...and

(finally) he rested (or sat)” (excerpted from Gen. 1:2-2:2). All these other verbs, like “said”, “made”, and “divided” show God acting without having to create.

Furthermore, the opening chapters of Genesis portray God as the Prime Motivator of the universe. God, Himself, takes all direct action. The repeated use of the “ands” in chapter 1 is a figure of speech called *polysyndeton*, meaning “many ands”. It is employed to slow the reader so he takes note of each item listed. It emphasizes *each part* of a greater whole. Contained within this figure in the opening pages of the Bible, there are 102 separate acts of God. These are delineated in the 34 verses following Genesis 1:1. The emphasis is obviously God, and that God’s actions are the “first cause” of all.

We have taken the time to share all this scriptural detail, not because our aim is to prove *creation* in our very first “**Investigating Creation Science**” article, but because we want the reader to be aware that the Bible is not a jumble of haphazard, ancient writings, as modern society would have us think. It is, rather, a compendium of divinely revealed knowledge, which is absolutely thorough in its approach to life (II Peter 1:3). As for the various fields of science, there are many things they can teach us about the universe. These things can enhance our appreciation of God and His Word. We must always remember, though, that God is the Creator, the First Cause, and the Prime Motivator for the universe, life, and man.*

(We invite you to join us as columnists Keith Jamison and Theodore C. Mahr present insights from appropriate fields of science, as well as the integrity and accuracy of The Word of God, that will make this field of study come alive for you. Look for “Investigating Creation Science” in every spring and fall issue of 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.*

***If you are interested in submitting an article for our “God’s Matchless Word” column or, perhaps, an essay, some original 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 rcc@proapc.com. 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.)*

Until next issue, pray with us that God’s Word may have free course, and that it moves freely, quickly, and rightly divided across America.