

# The Young People's Magazine

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## How Can We Come to God?

**P**ossibly everyone will pray if the situation they are in is serious enough. When they are staring death in the face – when attacked by a wild animal, or desperate to be released from a crashed car, or in danger of drowning at any moment – they will cry out to God to help them. They may never pray at any other time; they may deliberately reject God; yet if they are in some terrible danger, they are very likely to call on Him to get them out of it.

Now prayer is a duty. We should all pray, whatever our circumstances. Indeed we should always pray, even if every imaginable danger seems very far away. And nothing in this article should discourage anyone from praying at any time. But we should remember that God is a holy God and that we are unholy sinners whose sins are offensive to Him. We should remember that He must punish sinners, for it is said in the Bible: “Our God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:29). How dare we then rush into His presence by way of prayer when our sins cry out against us? How can we expect God to answer us if we do not love Him, if we never try to obey Him?

God is far more gracious than we can possibly expect Him to be; indeed we have no right to expect Him to show us any kindness whatever. If we look at ourselves, we should see that, in our natural state, we do not love God at all. We should realise that we do not deserve anything good from Him. What we really deserve is to be sent away to hell for ever because of our sins. But “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). God gave His Son to die for sinners – to take their place so that they would not have to suffer for their sins. So, when sinners believe in Jesus, their sins are forgiven because of what He did as a Mediator.

But what is a mediator? Think of two countries at war with each other. They have become exhausted after years of fighting and neither side is ever likely to win. They realise that it is best to make peace. But neither side can approach the other; the hatred between the two countries is too strong. What hope is there that there will ever be peace? Only if someone from outside will come between the warring countries and negotiate with them both;

that is the work of a mediator. And if he is successful, there will be peace.

When God sent His Son into the world, He came as Mediator. Christ Jesus came to bring about peace between sinners and the holy God whom they had offended by their sins. Christ as Mediator took the punishment Himself, so that they would not be punished; He suffered even unto death. That is, of course, going far beyond what any merely-human mediator would do. But it is part of the wonder of salvation that Jesus – who as the Son of God is infinitely glorious – came so low as to endure the terrible shame of the cross in dying for sinners.

Because He died for sinners, Jesus has opened up a way by which we can approach God. But we must approach God by *that* way, trusting in Jesus Christ. We are to draw near to God with our eye on Christ as the One who died for sinners and rose again. And, having once looked to Him, we may expect to be heard whenever we pray, and whatever we may pray for. The Bible encourages us: “Let us . . . come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16). No matter how desperate our situation, no matter how serious our sins, we may pray to God – because there is a Mediator. But there is no other, only the “one Mediator between God and men”, appointed by God Himself.

Because a way to God has been opened up, it is our duty to make use of it. We need to pray, and we ought to pray. And we should do so in the name of Christ. Otherwise we are really asking God to supply our needs because of how good or how important we are ourselves – and we are not good; we are guilty sinners. But if we come to God through the Mediator He has provided, we can expect that God will hear our prayers and give us what we need. But let us always remember that God knows far better than we do what is best for us.

In Covenanting times, Alexander Peden, one of the persecuted ministers, was among a group of people fleeing from a body of soldiers – some of them on horseback. At last, Peden and his friends got a little away from the soldiers; the horses were no help in pursuing the fugitives as it was difficult for them to move through boggy ground. But Peden and the others were now becoming tired; they had walked, as fast as they could, for a long distance; so Peden stopped and told his companions: “Let us pray here, for if the Lord hear not our prayer, we are all dead men”. Then, with a God-given confidence, he pled: “O Lord, this is the hour and the power of Thine enemies; they may not be idle. But hast Thou no other work for them than to send them after us? Send them after them to whom Thou wilt give strength to flee, for our strength is gone.” He asked God to throw His cloak around him and the others. Then he went on: “Save us this one time, and we will keep it in remembrance, and

tell to the commendation of Thy goodness, Thy pity and compassion what Thou didst for us at such a time.”

No doubt Peden asked for this deliverance in Christ’s name. He certainly knew that none of them deserved God’s help. They were all sinners, even although they might all have been believers in Christ. But Peden was asking God to rescue him because he knew that God pities the helpless and is good to all who are in trouble and who pray to Him in Christ’s name.

Did God hear him? Did God throw a cloak over them to protect them from their persecutors? Yes, He did. He sent a cloak of mist over them; so the soldiers gave up all hope of finding them that day and left them in peace.

What should Peden then have done? What should we always do when God answers our prayers? We are told to add thanksgiving to our prayers (see Philippians 4:6). And did Peden do so? Yes; he told his companions: “Let us not forget to return thanks to the Lord for hearing and answering us in the day of our distress”.

They had very little food with them, but they sat down to eat it beside a well. As Peden said grace, he asked: “Lord, Thou who didst bless the few loaves and fishes and madest them sufficient for so many, bless this water and these crumbs to us, for we thought we should never have needed any more of these creature comforts”. He had expected that they would have been killed by the soldiers, but God heard his prayer and – godly man that he was – he now thanked God for sparing their lives.

Peden obviously prayed for something important. But is it right for us to pray for what is trivial? Is it right to go to God to ask for something which does not seem to be at all important? Well, God does not forget even one little sparrow. He keeps control over everything, even the tiniest details of our lives. So we should bring everything before Him, whether it seems important or otherwise; we should trust Him to do everything well.

But would it not be very strange if we were to pray about all sorts of things and ignore what is most important? What is that? It is our soul – that it would be saved, that we would be delivered from the wrath to come. This is how Jesus put it: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33). We are to seek, more than anything else, a place in God’s kingdom, for Christ’s sake, and to be clothed with the righteousness which He has provided for sinners like us. Then we will want to pray for the many other things we need – for things like what we will eat and drink and the clothes we will wear. And we can expect to be heard. These are the sorts of things, Christ said, which will also be given to us. Yes, we may come to God for everything. Because Christ has become the Mediator between God and sinners, their prayers can be heard.

# Marriage: What the Bible Teaches

## 1. A Blessing from God

*Rev G G Hutton*

This is the first part of a paper given at the 2005 Youth Conference.

**M**arriage is the oldest institution in human society. It is the foundation for all other lawful social institutions. The family itself arises from the marriage union. The visible Church began when the family became organised. Public worship is an extension of family worship. Civil government is, in practical terms, an extension of family government. These are examples of how the family, through marriage, provides a foundation for other institutions in our society with which we are familiar. It is to be understood from the start that this is a paper about the biblical teaching on this subject.

We all realise that, if the foundation of a structure is removed, the whole building is in danger of collapsing. Marriage is fundamental to the stability of all human society; so, if it is undermined, the whole fabric of society will very quickly begin to fall apart. And the fact that God our Creator instituted marriage at the beginning ought to impress upon us just how important it is. God meant it to be useful to every part of human society; He bestows great blessings on those who appreciate its worth and keep consistently to the principles He established. If we are to value marriage as we should, we must largely ignore what modern society thinks and apply ourselves to discovering – or perhaps rediscovering – what God in His kindness has given as the greatest blessing in this world, apart from personal salvation.

People may give the impression that a *church* wedding is superior to a *civil* wedding because one has a more religious aspect to it and takes place in a building set apart for divine worship. We must remember that the marriage ceremony has two aspects, which should be viewed separately. Firstly, there is the requirement of the state that marriages be registered, recording details of those who are marrying as well as the identity of their parents, with evidence that the marriage is according to the law of the country. This registration contributes to maintaining an orderly society. Secondly, there is the personal commitment of the man and woman to each other, with binding vows, in the presence of witnesses. If there is no union of heart and spirit when the ceremony is taking place – whether in a religious establishment or a registrar's office or elsewhere – then all the ritual will only at best formalise a deception, legally uniting two people in a cold, loveless relationship. No ceremony, however solemn, even in a church, can guarantee the success of any marriage.

Sadly we have to acknowledge that governments are introducing laws which ignore the fact that marriage is between one male and one female. But although men may attempt to legalise what is contrary to the law of God and nature, it remains true that the only biblically-lawful marriage is between one man and one woman. Everything else is a God-forbidden perversion. While Christians recognise the legal requirements for marriage and keep to them, as we believe they should, they seek the blessing of God on their union. They wish to call God as a witness to their vows; they bind themselves in a covenant, not only before men, but before the Judge of all the earth, to whom they feel accountable for how they will keep their marriage vows.

I personally find it very sad when some young people getting married allow themselves to be carried away with all the outward show of the occasion, and use the place of worship as a mere platform for display. It is even worse when this is encouraged by their parents, whom we would expect to know better. God and religion are simply tagged on to what is sometimes little less than a competitive display of immodesty.

We should remind ourselves that “man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever”, and this includes marriage. If this principle is to be respected within marriage, it should also be applied before then. If young men or women think properly, they will seek to honour God as they consider marriage. They will seek a partner prayerfully and carefully. They will consult their parents for advice. They will keep to biblical standards of behaviour. No young woman who values her virtue, fears God and seeks to please Him, will throw herself without thinking into the arms of the first young man who claims to be her admirer. And no young man with moral principles will think of treating a young woman merely as a object of carnal desire who may be abandoned when someone more attractive appears on the scene.

In beginning a courtship, young men particularly should act honourably. Any man who can lead a trusting young woman along, telling her he loves her, and then for no good reason break her heart by deserting her, just because he has discovered someone else more attractive or more likely to satisfy his carnal desires, does not merit trust from any female. If he can treat matters of such grave importance so lightly, how can he expect to command genuine respect from anyone? Some young people today seem to think that while they are not actually married, they have liberty to flirt around. This is sinful and ought never to be found among young people who know the Bible. Even young people belonging to the church, with all the good influence of a Christian upbringing, need to realise that they must be pure in their thoughts, principled in their conduct and conscientious in their choices. Paul told Timothy to flee youthful lusts, and I am certain that such a warning applies

to young men and women even in church circles. Youth, as we know, has its own special temptations, and grace is required to overcome them.

The Bible tells us that “marriage is honourable in all” (Hebrews 13:4). While we acknowledge that God does not require everyone to marry, it is desirable for most people. It is honourable because it was established by God our Creator. He knew the relationship which would most likely lead to harmony and well-being in human society. We should remember that the relationship between the first husband and wife was formed when there was no sin to disturb it. When Adam became a husband and Eve became a wife, they were both in a relationship of friendship with God; so there was no friction between Adam and his God-given wife. When sin entered into the world, everything changed. Sin infected every part of man's being. His understanding became darkened; his will became the servant of his corrupt nature; and his affections became misplaced. Like every other human relationship, marriage suffered. So when two persons are joined together in marriage, they are united as poor sinners in need of mercy.

Our first father Adam was “the figure of Him that was to come” (Romans 5:14) – who of course was Christ. Adam's marriage was a God-ordained relationship for the mutual benefit of both partners, but it also was a figure of a more glorious marriage – between the Son of God and His bride the Church. He came into the world to procure a bride for Himself; so Paul uses earthly marriage as an apt illustration of the spiritual union between Christ and the Church. No human relationship can better depict that union. The end of time will bring us to the glorious event of which John wrote: “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready” (Revelation 19:7).

Since Adam was a figure of Christ, his marriage must be considered not only as a truly useful relationship – God provided “an help meet for him”. The covenant between a husband and a wife is a symbol of the unbreakable covenant between Christ and His redeemed people. This is reason enough, even if there were no other, for God to declare: “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder”. Divorce is totally unnatural. When it must happen, it is one of the awful consequences of sin. But there will never be – there cannot ever be – a breakdown in the Redeemer's covenanted marriage to His church. The heavenly marriage is the ideal marriage; it is the perfect marriage. By grace, it should be the pattern of earthly marriages, between fallen creatures; they are not to be conformed to the trends of a rebellious, Bible-rejecting, God-defying society. Husbands are told to love their wives even as Christ loved the Church. And wives are to be subject to their husbands, as the Church submits to Christ, her spiritual Head.

## The Sad Story of Scotch Jamie

It is indeed a sad story – the story of Scotch Jamie, which I read in an obituary in a newspaper cutting from 1922 that I found in an old book. His real name was James Muirhead. He was born in Edinburgh in 1848, and served his apprenticeship as a joiner.

We are told that “he was a man of more than ordinary intelligence and ability”. But at the age of 30 he turned to crime. He was sentenced to 10 years’ imprisonment in Belfast for fraud. Not long after his release he was in London, where he was sentenced to another five years, for theft. However, in 1906, after some more spells in prison, he turned over a new leaf and lived honestly. But three years later, “temptation proved too strong for him”, and he was jailed in Glasgow to seven years for burglary.

When he was released, he tried hard to forsake his old ways and even gave lectures in various towns about prison life, warning against a life of crime and giving good advice but, as his obituary says, “he was unable to follow it himself”. “The old ways proved too much for him”, we are told, and at the age of 69 he received another sentence for burglary – a sentence he was still serving at the time of his death five years later.

Yes, it is a sad story, but also an instructive one. Not only does it teach us that a life of crime usually results in disgrace and punishment (and also punishment in eternity if it is not repented of), but also that a sinner has no real ability of his own to reform himself.

Scotch Jamie went straight for some time, but it was only a superficial change – he was quite unable to give himself a changed heart and a new nature. None of us can! And we certainly do need a new heart – if we do not already have one. All the sins we commit begin in our hearts. The Bible tells us that our hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jer 17:9), and, as Jesus said, “from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts” and all other sins (Mark 7:21-23).

Scotch Jamie broke the law of the land seriously many times. We may not have broken the law of the land even once, but we have broken God’s law times without number, and that is much more serious. We may try to live a sinless life to avoid being punished for ever by God, but it is impossible for us to do so. As “the old ways proved too much” for Scotch Jamie, so our sinful nature is too strong for us – we cannot conquer it. The Bible asks this question (in Jeremiah 13:23): “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” Obviously the answer is, No. So the verse goes on to say that it is just as impossible for the sinner to do good by his own powers.

Like Scotch Jamie, you may even give good advice to others although

you are unconverted. You may say to a friend, "O don't do that; it's wrong", or, "This is the best thing for you to do", and go on to give him sound advice. But then you find yourself doing the opposite. The person who tries to live a good life by his own ability will also find that Satan's opposition is too strong for him. After all, Satan is "the strong man armed"; therefore the sinner trying to reform himself by his own powers will be like Scotch Jamie when he was tempted – "temptation proved too strong for him".

There is no doubt about it: the unconverted person needs a completely new nature – the same new nature possessed by every born-again person, the new nature by which the sinner believes in Christ and follows Him, the new nature that opposes sin and loves holiness. Have you this new nature? If not, you must earnestly and urgently ask God: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." NMR

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*For Junior Readers*

## Out of the Right Way

**H**ave you ever been on a walk when the path became stony and rough? Perhaps it was in the countryside, perhaps along the coast, but the path was not pleasant to walk on; in fact it became quite sore on your feet. You didn't really want to turn back because you still hoped to reach the place you wanted to go to, but you began to look around for an easier way. Does that remind you of anyone?

Have you recently read *The Pilgrim's Progress*, by John Bunyan? Perhaps you will remember when the pilgrims, Christian and Hopeful, became footsore and weary on their journey. They began to wish for an easier path.

Then what did they see? To their left, there was a stile leading into a meadow. When they looked over the fence or hedge, they saw a path on the other side. It looked smoother to walk on. What could be the harm, they thought, of taking the easier way? It followed quite close to the main path, and Christian was sure that it would not lead them out of the right way.

Have you ever found yourself in a situation like that in your life? Your parents are trying to bring you up in the right way. They want you to live your life according to the Word of God. They hedge up your way with rules from the Bible, hoping to keep you from the dangers of the world around you.

But, instead of being glad of that, perhaps you feel restrained. You think it is too hard to walk in the "narrow way". You want to break through the boundaries and to go the way of the world – to dress as they dress, speak as they speak, and go to the same entertainments.



Do you not see the danger? Bunyan calls the smoother way, “By-path Meadow”. It led the pilgrims into many troubles and difficulties. Bunyan describes them in a very interesting way. The man in front of them fell into a deep pit and was killed. Then there was such a wild storm – with lightning, thunder and floods – that they did not know whether to go forward or back.

Do you know what happened next? Giant Despair found them and locked them up in the dungeon of Doubting Castle. There they were starved and beaten by the cruel giant. If they did not have the Key of Promise they would have perished for ever. They learned the hard way that (as Bunyan puts it) it is a lot easier to go out of the right way when we are in it, than to get back into it after we go out of it.

When they escaped, the pilgrims erected a pillar at the stile to warn other travellers of the dangers of entering By-path Meadow. Will you not take heed also? Do not be tempted to stray from “the old paths”. Beware of all by-paths. You can be sure that any path that goes away from the Word of God is dangerous.

Are you finding it difficult to stick to the narrow path? And do you feel tempted to take what appears to be the easier path, the way of the world? Then remember the advice of Solomon: “Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil” (Proverbs 4:25-27). You should pray every day:

“Hold up my goings, Lord, me guide in those Thy paths divine,  
So that my footsteps may not slide out of those ways of Thine”.

*J van Kralingen*

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## The Book of Ruth

### 86. The House of Pharez

*Rev K M Watkins*

Ruth 4:12. “And let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the Lord shall give thee of this young woman.”

When Boaz and Ruth married, it was a great blessing to be surrounded by the praying people of Bethlehem. They prayed not only for the new couple but also for their future children: “the seed which the Lord shall give thee”. The people wanted this family to be like the family of Pharez: “Let thy house be like the house of Pharez”. Pharez was one of the twin sons born to Judah and Tamar. Sometimes in the Bible he is called Perez.

Those who prayed for Boaz and Ruth knew that only the Lord can give

children. It was the Lord who gave Boaz “this young woman” – Ruth – to be his wife, and it would have to be the Lord who would give them children. Their seed would have to come from God. “Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is His reward” (Psalm 127:3). So let people pray for the precious gift of children, and let them value their children as a gift from the Lord.

“Let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah”. This was an unusual and surprising prayer, when we think of how Judah and Tamar came to have Pharez for their son. The story is recorded in chapter 38 of Genesis. It is an account of sin and shame. Tamar was married to Judah's first son, but he was wicked and died before they had any children. It became the duty of Judah's next son, Onan, to marry Tamar. But Onan knew that their child would be counted as belonging to his dead brother, so he made sure that there would be no children. This displeased the Lord, so Onan also died. Judah had another son who was too young to marry; so Judah told Tamar to wait until he was grown up.

However, Judah did not keep his promise. When Tamar saw that, she took things into her own hands; she disguised herself. When Judah saw her, he did not recognise her as his daughter-in-law and they came together sinfully. As a result, Tamar conceived and gave birth to twins: Pharez and Zerah. Poor boys! To be born to parents who were not married would bring troubles on them, as it still does today for such children. But for Pharez and his brother it was worse. Their parents were related to each other as father-in-law and daughter-in-law – something that should never happen. With such a bad start to their lives, it did not look as if those boys were going to prosper.

However, God turned things to the good, especially for Pharez. From him came a family that became great in Israel. Four generations later, a boy called Nahshon was born who became “prince of the children of Judah” (1 Chronicles 2:10) and their “captain” (Numbers 2:3). It was Nahshon that represented the tribe of Judah when the altar of the Lord was dedicated in the days of Moses (see Numbers 7:17). One would never have thought that such honour could come to the family of Pharez when it had started so badly. But that shows the wisdom, power and grace of God, who can bring good things out of evil. “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Romans 5:20).

Do you see now why the people prayed that the family of Boaz and Ruth would be like that of Pharez? Ruth was a foreigner from Moab, a land of idolatry. What kind of start was that if she was to become a respected mother in Israel? She had been married to a man who had forsaken Israel and gone to Moab. God seemed to have judged him for that. Her first marriage had

been childless, and she had arrived in Bethlehem in poverty. What blessing could attend someone with all that behind her? How could she be a good wife for Boaz? But the people remembered Pharez and how God had built up for him a mighty and respected family in Judah. They wanted the Lord to do the same for Ruth, now that she was married to Boaz.

From the examples of Ruth and Pharez, let no one think despairingly that their background excludes them from the favour of God. When we look back over our lives, there is much to make us feel ashamed. It can make us feel that the Lord will never bless us. But He blessed Pharez! He blessed Ruth! He can bless us too. In fact, God loves to bless those who seem to have everything against them. He loves to display His grace by bringing good out of evil.

God can even use us to build His kingdom, just as He used Pharez and Ruth to build the tribe of Judah, from whom came the Messiah Himself. The Lord can use us even though we have often sinned against Him. Think of Simon Peter. He had disgracefully denied His Lord and Master. He must have feared that the Saviour would never use him again in the great work of fishing for the souls of men. But, within a few weeks, the Lord used Peter's preaching at Pentecost to bring 3000 to faith and repentance!

Another reason for the people to think of Pharez was the fact that some of his famous family had settled in the town of Bethlehem. The grandson of that great man Nahshon was none other than Boaz himself (see 1 Chronicles 2:11). What the Lord had started to do in Bethlehem, in blessing the family of Pharez there, they wanted Him to continue doing through Boaz and Ruth.

There was another connection. Tamar's first husband had died without children. Afterwards she did everything she could to marry someone from his family and have children. Isn't Ruth's story similar in many ways? Her first husband died before they had children. The nearest relation had refused to marry her, just as Judah and his sons had failed to give Tamar her rights to marriage and children. But God had worked in Tamar's case to produce the vast and blessed family of Pharez. In Ruth's similar circumstances, He could do the same for her too.

But there the similarities end. Like the two daughters of Noah before her, Tamar had become desperate and turned to sin in order to obtain a family. Even Abraham and Sarah had done the same, with Hagar. But Ruth refused to do evil and the Lord provided for her. The story of Ruth shows that we never need to sin in order to obtain a good thing. If we continue in the paths of righteousness, God can provide all that He sees to be good for us. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass. . . . Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. . . . Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil" (Psalm 37:5,7,8).

## How Did it all Begin?

### 6. How Old Is the Earth?

Just over three years ago there was great excitement when geologists in Canada discovered volcanic rocks which they considered to be about 4 billion years old. This made them, apparently, the oldest rocks in the earth. In the news a couple of years ago much attention was given to the small human being found in Indonesia and described as a "Hobbit"; it was said to be about 18 000 years old. At the end of last year there was an article on the BBC website about the fossilised trail of a giant scorpion found in Scotland, in rocks supposed to be about 330 million years old. About a month ago the BBC reported on a fossil of a beaver-like creature found in China. It was estimated to be about 164 million years old.

Scientists want to know how old things are because they think they can then get closer to answering the question, How old is the Earth? The answer is relatively straightforward. By considering the history of the world, starting at creation week in Genesis and going right through the Bible to the present, the age of the earth has been calculated to be about 6000 years.

Why then is the age of fossils and rocks, or the age of the Earth, given in tens of thousands, millions or even billions of years, as in the examples at the start of this article? The main reason for this drive to make the age of the Earth so large is that evolutionists need huge periods of time in order to have any hope of their ideas working out. In previous articles we looked at natural selection and mutations. According to evolutionists, billions of years are required to give time for all the supposed mutations in simple organisms to occur and for natural selection to work on them to produce, at last, complex organisms. So evolutionists conclude that the Earth is about 4.5 billion years old.

Evolutionary scientists assume lots of theories to be true when they develop the tests they use to try to work out the age of things; they use these tests to piece together their ideas about when the universe came into existence. Carbon dating is one of these tests. However, it is less than reliable.

Carbon dating works on the basis that a radioactive form of carbon (carbon 14) decays over time. When scientists want to find the age of an object, they test to find out the percentage of radioactive carbon in it and compare it with the percentage of the other form of carbon (carbon 12). They then work out how long it would have taken for the radioactive carbon to fall to that level compared with the current levels of radioactive carbon in the atmosphere. The older the object is, the smaller the percentage of radio-

active carbon, because this means that there has been more time for the radioactive carbon to decay.

The main difficulty with this method of testing is that it assumes that the level of radioactive carbon in the atmosphere has been constant. But it is more than likely that this was not the case. For instance, the burning of fossil fuels since the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century would lower the percentage of radioactive carbon. The testing of atomic bombs in the 1950s would increase the level. There would also have been significant changes in the atmosphere after the Genesis flood.

Indeed many results from carbon dating have turned out to be seriously flawed. For instance, some mortar taken from a section of an Oxford castle built about 800 years ago was dated by this method at 7370 years. Shells from living snails in Nevada were carbon-dated at 2700 years old. And a seal which had recently died appeared to be 1300 years old when it was tested in this way.

Evolutionists resort to the usual excuses, claiming exceptional circumstances; they state that they are aware of the problems and take them into account when they are doing their calculations. One professor who believes in evolution went so far as to say, "If a carbon-14 date supports our theories we put it in the main text. If it does not entirely contradict them, we put it in a footnote. And if it is completely 'out of date', we just drop it."

But there is scientific evidence which fits in with the timeframe of biblical creation. This evidence supports the 6000 years of the Bible rather than the evolutionist's billions of years. A few of these evidences are listed in the rest of this article, but there are many others.

It has been found that processes relating to rocks and fossils do not need thousands or millions of years, in spite of what evolutionists claim. There are many examples of stalactites and stalagmites being formed in short periods of time, in spite of what evolutionists claim. In a cave in New Mexico a dead bat fell on a stalagmite. It was cemented into the stalagmite showing that the stalagmite grew faster than the bat decomposed. Researchers at laboratories in Chicago have produced high-grade black coal by mixing wood, water and clay at 150 degrees Celsius for several weeks – not thousands of years! Some people think it takes millions of years to form opal, but one Australian researcher makes it himself by mixing the right chemicals together.

The continents are eroding quickly. If they truly were billions of years old there would be nothing left of them today – assuming, of course, that the rate of erosion did not change much. From this erosion, which has supposedly been happening for billions of years, you would expect the mud on the sea-floor to be several kilometres thick, choking up the oceans. Instead it is only

400 metres deep. Henry Morris, who wrote the book, *The Genesis Flood*, studied the amount of salt in the oceans. He discovered that there was much less salt and other minerals than would be expected if they had been added to the oceans at the same rate for billions of years.

There is also the fact that the population of the world is small enough to fit into the biblical timeframe. The number of people is much smaller than you would expect if you believed evolutionary ideas of when mankind first appeared and if you take into account the way the population is growing.

So evolutionists cannot produce scientific evidence which proves the age which they claim for the Earth. Nor can creationists produce evidence that is so definite that no one can argue against it. But we do have the firm basis of the Word of God, and the evidence that exists fits easily into that framework. God is eternal; He has always existed and always will. And we are to praise Him for this, knowing that "before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting, Thou art God" (Psalm 90:2).

*S M Campbell*

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*For Younger Readers*

## God Is Good

A few days ago, I was sitting at my desk. I looked outside into the darkness, and I could see something beautiful in the sky. It was the moon, shining brightly down on the world.

How lovely it is to see a bright moon shining down at night, when everything else is dark around you! When there are street lights everywhere, perhaps you do not notice the moon so often.

It was God who made the moon, just as He made the sun. We should be thankful to God for all He has given us.

It was perhaps night time when David looked up to the sky. He looked at the moon and the stars and he sang:

When I look up unto the heavens,  
which Thine own fingers framed,  
Unto the moon, and to the stars,  
which were by Thee ordained;  
Then say I, What is man, that he  
remembered is by Thee?  
Or what the son of man, that Thou  
so kind to him shouldest be?

David knew that God put the moon and the stars in the sky because God is kind to us, although we do not deserve it.

God gives us lots of good things. He has given you your parents. He gives you all the nice food you eat. He gives you the bright sunshine in the daytime.

But God has given an even more wonderful gift. He has given Jesus. How wonderful Jesus is! And how wonderful is all that He has done.

We are all sinners, and we deserve to be punished for our sins. But Jesus was punished instead of sinners; He died instead. So everyone who trusts in Jesus will escape being punished. And none of us deserves this wonderful gift.

Ask God to teach you how wonderful Jesus is.

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## “Be My God Also”

**I**t was possibly somewhere in Germany. The godless soldier marched into the village with the other troops in his unit. He was quartered in a farmhouse, with a family who were to show him great kindness. There, it would seem, he was to see what he had never seen before – true godliness.

He arrived about noon, as the family were about to have dinner, but he felt very uncomfortable when, after the food was placed on the table, the father said grace. Everyone stood up reverently and he began: “Lord, the eyes of all wait upon Thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.”

The soldier was impressed with how all the children, even the youngest, a three-year-old boy, were as quiet as if they had been in church. The soldier stood up like everyone else, but just to be polite. In fact, he became rather upset and he found it difficult to eat; he seems to have been conscious of the reality of the family’s religion; he had probably never before been in contact with genuine religion. But the farmer thought his reluctance to eat was because he was shy, and he kindly pressed his visitor to take his food.

When the meal was over, the family stood up again, with folded hands, and the father began: “Give thanks to God, for He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever”. And he went through the whole of the form of thanksgiving drawn up by the German Reformer Martin Luther.

Then the older members of the family went off to their work, while the children went back to school – except the little boy, who climbed up on

the soldier's knee and asked him: "Tell me a little story about the Saviour". Instead the soldier spoke about what he knew; he told the boy about lambs and sheep, cows and horses. He had no stories, little or big, to tell about Jesus. But the boy went on asking the soldier to tell him about the Saviour. At last the soldier had to be honest and confess his ignorance to the little boy, who replied, "And you are so big, and yet you know nothing about the Saviour. Then you will not get to heaven." The soldier admitted later: "Truly I had never thought about heaven. And yet it seemed terrible to hear from the mouth of the child that I should never go there."

When the soldier went into the village to meet his comrades, he still felt uneasy and decided not to go back to the farmhouse until the time for supper had passed. When he did go back, it was about 9 o'clock. Yes, the evening meal was over, but some had been kindly put aside for him. As he began to eat, the little boy was getting ready for bed. Of course he was watching, and he noticed at once that the soldier had not said grace before starting his meal. He came running over and ordered the visitor: "First pray; then eat". The soldier could say nothing.

Then the boy clasped his hands and said, "Come, Lord Jesus; be with us and bless to us what Thou hast given us". "That is how you ought to pray", he told the soldier, and off he went to bed. The soldier went on with his meal, but the food seemed to stick in his throat.

It was almost time for everyone else to go to bed, but first the father held family worship. There was a singing; he read a chapter from the Bible, stopping now and then to give a few words of explanation; then they all knelt down, including the soldier, and the father prayed for the forgiveness of sins, the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and protection from the holy angels against the devil.

The soldier felt quite dizzy; he could not look up; he felt so ashamed. When worship was over, they all wished each other goodnight. The children went away to bed, all taking their Bibles with them. The farmer and his wife stayed on in the kitchen reading their Bibles. He handed one to the soldier, saying, "Perhaps you would like to read a little longer the precious Word of God". The soldier took the Bible and read for a little, but he understood nothing. Soon he too went away to bed. But before he lay down, he prayed: "God, Thou God of this house, be my God also".

Let the soldier finish the story: "The next Sabbath was a special day for me. All went to church, and I with them. And there I joined in a service which I can never forget. From that time all is changed with me. Now I love the Saviour with all my heart; now I know that I am on the way to heaven. And, knowing it, I rejoice."



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## Looking Around Us

### Sin As Entertainment

This is an age of entertainment. Never before have people had so much leisure time as in the last 50 years, or even the last 100. It was to meet the demand for different ways of occupying people's leisure time that cinemas began to open – especially as, in a time of new inventions, it was now possible to produce films, or what in America are called movies.

When television became common, it became possible for people to watch such films in their own homes, without anyone outside the family seeing them going to a cinema. More recently, with films available as videos or DVDs, people can watch them just whenever they want to. While some material on TV, and on videos and DVDs, is educational and instructive, much of it is dangerous. Sin is not a proper subject for entertainment. And most films, it would seem, are glorifying what is sinful.

Indeed there is something false about all acting – when people take on someone else's character and have to pretend to express someone else's emotions. This is quite out of keeping with what God demands in the Ninth Commandment: perfect truthfulness. It is, in effect, bearing "false witness" to others.

If violence and murder are wrong – and of course they are – then it cannot be right to turn them into entertainment. And it cannot be right to seek enjoyment from watching them. Nor can it be right to make sins against the Seventh Commandment into entertainment. Paul said of one such sin that it "is not so much as named among the Gentiles"; he was shocked that there were some in the church in Corinth who were guilty of that sin. How much more shocked he would be to find such sins used as a means of entertaining people. And how appalled he would be if he found some connected with the Church today enjoying such films.

What should be our attitude to sin? Remember Job, and how he is commended at the beginning of the Book which carries his name. It is said that he "eschewed evil"; he turned away from it – you may say that he always tried to get as far away as possible from evil. He would certainly not have found his enjoyment in watching others acting out what is sinful, and neither should we. We are in this world to glorify God, and it should be clear to everyone that watching sin – especially serious sin – is very far away from being glorifying to God. No wonder Paul said: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report;

if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8). This should be our standard – always.

We should always remember that we have corrupt, sinful hearts. It is dangerous for us to watch what is sinful, because it is likely to stimulate evil thoughts in our minds. It makes us even more unlikely to want to draw near to a holy God, who hates sin with a perfectly hatred. The fact is that such entertainments are preparing sinners from an eternity far away from God – they most certainly will not prepare anyone for heaven.

In the light of the Bible, we are to flee from the wrath to come. Obviously then, we must flee from sin, and we must refuse to spend our precious hours watching sinful activities depicted on a screen for our entertainment.

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## The Potter

Only a piece of common clay,  
a shapeless lump of earth,  
But in that clay the potter sees  
a vase of priceless worth.

He takes it, puts it on the wheel,  
then with his skilful hands  
He gently moulds it to his will,  
till there the vessel stands.

A vessel beautiful in form,  
though still of mud-brown hue,  
Far from the perfect, beautiful vase,  
the potter has in view.

The drying process has to come,  
long hours in heated air;  
Then coating, painting, glazing, too,  
each done with utmost care.

But ere the vase is fit for use,  
it has to pass through heat –  
No gentle heat, but furnace fierce,  
to make the work complete.

Until the fire its work has done,  
no colours can be seen;  
All is dull and ugly red;  
the glaze, too, has no sheen.

His handiwork the potter takes,  
according to his plan;  
And shuts it in the furnace hot,  
for days unseen by man.

At length, the fiery ordeal o’er,  
the door is broken down;  
And from the oven he brings out  
a vessel of renown.

No likeness now to common clay,  
but for his use made meet.  
Perfect in colour, glaze and form,  
the vessel stands complete.

O Thou, who art the Potter great,  
and we the lumps of clay,  
May we be pliant in Thy hands,  
that Thou mayest have Thy way.

*MEA*