

THE SEED

A seed is both simple and profound. It is so simple that it can be planted by primitive men, or little children. Even animals and birds can plant a seed by accident and it will grow. At the same time a seed is so utterly profound that it can never be completely understood by mortal man. The scientist can dissect and examine a seed without discovering the germ of life. Even the most powerful microscope cannot detect within that seed the sweetness of a melon, the beauty of a flower, or the towering strength of a gigantic tree. A simple experiment, however, can enable anyone to unlock the secret of the seed. Simply plant it!

Once planted, the corrosive elements of earth begin to eat away at the seed's exterior. It seems destined to be destroyed. Instead of turning to dust, however, something new and marvellous takes place. Out of corruption and decay is born the miracle of life. Incredibly, the seed actually thrives on corruption. A dead fish, for example, planted with a seed will provide it with energy and vitality. This new manifestation of life will force its way through the crust of the earth and stretch toward the sun. Again, a strange paradox is encountered. That which destroys the non living is essential to life. The sun and water, for example, will cause a living plant to grow, will decompose and destroy a dead plant.

It is both interesting and significant to note that the first reference to created life in the Bible is associated with seeds.

“And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the third day.” (Gen 1:11-13)

God created herbs and fruit with the capability of reproducing. The first living plants were created by God, and the rest came as a result of these living plants producing seeds. Today the earth is filled with vegetation.

BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY

Not only were herbs and plants to reproduce, God also ordered that the animals, fish, and birds multiply and fill the earth and sea. **“And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth” (Gen 1:22)**. God spoke those words on the fifth day of creation. Today the earth and sea are filled with living creatures.

On the sixth day God created Adam and Eve. His first command to them also involved reproduction. **“Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Gen 1:28)**. Today the earth is filled with human beings.

Please remember that every living thing reproduces by means of seeds!

THE ENVIRONMENT

Living things need an environment to survive and nourishment to function and grow. Therefore God created an eco system that is capable of sustaining life. The complexity of this system is beyond the finite mind. Multiplied millions of life forms interact as one. We live in a

universe and not a multi verse. Man not only needed oxygen to breathe, he also needed food. God therefore instructed Adam and Eve to eat plants and fruit for food (Gen. 1:29). The beasts and birds were also to eat herbs (vs. 30). The earth would not run out of food, however, because these plants and herbs were constantly reproducing. Thus living seeds were used by God to provide a perennial source of nourishment. While the miracle of life was God's to give, man was also to do his part in taking care of creation. God placed Adam in the garden to "dress and keep it" (Gen. 2:15).

AFTER HIS KIND

It was easy for Adam to observe the relationship between the seed he planted and the plant that grew. Apple seeds produced apple trees. Pear seeds produced pear trees. Etc. Every seed reproduced after its own kind. Jesus reminded Nicodemus of this truth when teaching about the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit (John 3:6). You cannot get spiritual life from a fleshly seed. Every seed reproduces after its own kind. This is why it is necessary to be "born again" with spiritual seed in order to have spiritual life. The Kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom and only those with spiritual life can be a part of it. Christians are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of the incorruptible, even the Word of God that abides forever (1 Peter 1:23).

More will be said about being born again as our study continues.

THE SEED OF WOMAN

The sin of Adam and Eve ushered in a curse. This curse involved all of creation. Every living thing is affected by it. Before sin entered into the world there was no bloodshed. Even the animals all ate herbs. Sin turned God's paradise into a snarling jungle where no creature could be completely safe or secure. There was, however, a promise that someday the evil affects of sin would be removed. This promise was given in words that Adam and Eve had come to understand quite clearly. The "promise" was to be a seed. **"And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen 3:14-15).**

This remarkable prophecy was different from anything with which Adam and Eve were familiar. Her seed was to bruise, or crush the serpent's head. The "sperm" or "seed" that produced human life came from the man. How then would the serpent be vanquished by "her seed"? We now know that this unusual terminology referred to the virgin birth of Jesus. Jesus had an earthly mother, but not an earthly father. Consequently, He did not come from earthly seed like the rest of us.

CAIN AND ABEL

Adam and Eve must have been haunted by their memories of paradise and the consequences of their sin. Each thorn and each pain were like unwritten reminders of what might have been.

Then the Scriptures record that Adam had sexual relations with Eve and she became pregnant (Gen. 4:1). Cain was her firstborn son, and Abel was his brother. The pain of her childbirth must have been mixed with the happy thought that the seed of woman would triumph

over the serpent. Perhaps victory would come soon. Perhaps Cain or Abel would bring that victory.

These boys must have been wide eyed with amazement as they heard the stories of Eden. Their hearts must have raced with excitement as they contemplated crushing the head of the wicked one.

Abel kept flocks, but Cain worked the soil. Both brought an offering to the Lord, but God looked with favour unto Abel and his offering, but not with favour upon Cain and his offering. We now know that the difference was "faith". By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain (Heb. 11:4). The battle with sin is spiritual, not physical. Consequently, the weapons that bring victory are not carnal.

Cain did not understand spiritual warfare, and killed his righteous brother. Scripture reminds us that we should love one another and not be like Cain (1 John 3:11,12).

TWO GENEALOGIES

After the death of Abel God gave Adam and Eve another "seed" to take his place. This son was named Seth (Gen. 4:25). In Genesis chapters 4 and 5 we have two genealogies presented. First, the genealogy of Cain, and secondly the genealogy of Seth.

The genealogy of Cain was tied to things of earth. Cain built the first city, and from his descendants came the first musicians, and the first metal workers. The seventh generation in his family tree produced Lamech. He was the first man to have more than one wife. He also composed a song bragging about killing a man who wounded him. He was perhaps the most wicked man on earth at that time.

The genealogy of Seth was distinguished by calling on the name of the Lord (Gen. 4:26). No great inventions or earthly achievements are mentioned in association with this family. The seventh generation in the family of Seth produced Enoch. He was the most righteous person on the earth at that time. He was taken directly to heaven. Heb. 11:5 reminds us that it was by faith that Enoch was translated so that he should not see death.

THE FLOOD ELIMINATED THE SEED OF CAIN

The Scriptures teach that the sons of God married the daughters of men (Gen. 6:2). Since angels do not marry (Matt. 22:30) this probably means that men from the godly family of Seth married women from the ungodly family of Cain. At any rate the thought of man became continually evil, the earth was filled with violence, and God determined to destroy all living creatures.

Noah, however, found grace in the eyes of the Lord and God used him to preserve seed upon the earth. Noah was from the family of Seth. The long awaited "Seed," or "Messiah" would come through this family for all of the descendants of Cain were destroyed. Rather than re-create living things, God commanded Noah to build an ark to keep seed alive. The depth of the water covered all the mountains of earth to at least 15 cubits (Gen. 7:19, 20). This meant that the ark could safely float over any obstacle on earth without impacting it. The waters prevailed upon the earth for many months, making it impossible for the men and beasts outside of the ark to survive.

The source of the water was two fold. First, it rained for forty days and forty nights (Gen. 7:12). The atmosphere of earth was originally so saturated with water that there was no need for rain to sustain life (See Gen. 1:6-8; 2:5,6). The second source of water came from beneath the earth (Gen. 7:11). This world wide flood has forever affected the topography and climate of the earth. The flood came on the 600th year of Noah's life, the 2nd month, and the 17th day of the month (Gen. 7:11). A careful reading of Scripture indicates that they were one year and seventeen

days in the ark.

Genesis 10 is called the Table of Nations. This chapter in the Bible tells how the earth was populated by the family of Noah.

THE SEED OF SETH ALSO BECAME CORRUPT

Jesus reminded Nicodemus: **“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again”** (John 3:6-7). It is impossible to get spiritual life from a physical seed. It is impossible to enter into the Kingdom of God, or even see it, without divine help. Some versions translate “born again” as being born from above. The seed which comes from heaven is spiritual and consequently produces spiritual life.

Only eight people survived the flood (1 Pet. 3:20). They came from a good family, and the earth was purged of all evil. This was man’s best chance since Eden to save himself. Almost immediately, however, sin reared its ugly head. Noah got drunk and the conduct of his family resulted in a curse upon Canaan (see Gen. 9:20-27).

The history of man in the flesh is briefly chronicled for us by Paul in Rom 1:21-25: **“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen”**

It was at this point that God called Abram to provide a family for the spiritual seed that had been promised to Adam and Eve.

THE CALL OF ABRAM

Abram lived in Ur of Chaldea. This was a renown centre of education and learning. Abram believed in the One True God, but his family served other gods (see Josh. 24:2). God called Abram to leave his country and his kindred and gave him this promise:

Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” (Gen 12:1-3).

This promise to Abram was repeated many times in association with the word “seed”.

- God promised his seed the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:7).
- God promised to make his seed as numerous as the dust of the earth (Gen. 13:16).
- God promised to make his seed as numerous as the stars of the heavens (Gen. 15:5).
- Before receiving the Promised Land his seed would be in bondage 400 years (Gen. 15:13).
- Etc.

ABRAM AND HAGAR (Another attempt in the flesh)

Since Abram's wife, Sarai, was both barren and past the age of bearing, they assumed she would never have children. Consequently Abram took, Hagar, Sarai's handmaid as his wife and she bore him a son named Ishmael (Gen. 16:15). Abram was 86 years old at the time.

This was a carnal relationship. This fleshly relationship is used in Scripture as an allegory of carnal religion (Gal. 4:22-31).

The promise of God regarding the seed of Abram was not going to come through Ishmael.

CIRCUMCISION

When Abram was 90 years old God appeared to him and renewed His promise and gave to Abram the covenant of circumcision. Every male in his household was to have the foreskin of his penis cut off (Gen. 17:10, 11). At this time he also gave Abram and Sara new names. Abram (exalted father) was to be called Abraham (father of multitudes). Sarai (steward) was to be known as Sarah (princess).

Since the promise of God to Abraham involved his seed, it is fitting that the covenant of circumcision involved the male organ of procreation. Abraham's sexual relationship with his barren wife would come to symbolize a spiritual covenant. It is also significant to remember that when Abraham's servant took an oath involving his seed, he placed his hand under his master's thigh (Gen. 24:2).

ABRAHAM AND SARAH

Just as Hagar and Ishmael are an allegory of a carnal covenant and bondage, Sarah and Isaac are an allegory of a spiritual covenant and freedom (Gal. 4:22-31).

Let us take a closer look at the birth of Isaac. Abraham had children both before and after the birth of Isaac. He was 86 years old when Ishmael was born (Gen. 16:16). He was 100 years old when Isaac was born (Gen. 21:5). After the death of Sarah, Abraham married Keturah and had six sons by her (Gen. 25:1,2).

Sarah wanted to have a child, but could not. The Scriptures put it bluntly: "**But Sarai was barren; she had no child**" (Gen 11:30). As she grew older the Scriptures teach that:

- It ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women (Gen. 18:11).
- She had a dead womb (Rom. 4:19).
- She was past age (Heb. 11:11).

The birth of Isaac therefore involved a miracle. It cannot be explained from a human point of view. This is indeed a beautiful allegory of conversion and the New Covenant. Conversion also involves a miracle and cannot be explained from a human point of view.

TWO COVENANTS FROM TWO DIFFERENT SEEDS (One brings arguments, and the other laughter)

The Old Covenant was like Hagar and Ishmael. It was characterized by controversy. The name "Ishmael" means "God hears". He was given that name by an angel because God heard the affliction of his mother (Gen. 16:11). But there is also another reason why that name is appropriate. The angel also predicted: "**And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren**" (Gen 16:12). Everywhere Ishmael went he would bring up an argument. One reason he was so unhappy involved the loss of his father's estate. For the first fourteen years of his life he seemed to be the sole heir of Abraham's fortune. When Isaac was born, however, Abraham

gave everything unto him (Gen. 25:5). This must have seemed grossly unfair to Ishmael. Ishmael, as the firstborn son of Abraham, was his legal heir. The miraculous birth of Isaac, however, transcended legalism. No matter how many times Ishmael called out for God to change His mind, our Sovereign God still placed his blessing upon Isaac. The promised “seed” would not come through Ishmael, the natural son, but through Isaac the supernatural one.

The name Isaac means “laughter”. While Ishmael was arguing law, Isaac was laughing. While Ishmael was bitter and angry, Isaac was happy and blessed. Remember, these two children and their mothers are allegories of two covenants. One brings bondage, and the other freedom.

Believers in Corinth met in a house that was right next door to the synagogue (Acts 18:7). Both groups read the same Bible, prayed to the same God, and sang many of the same psalms. Both groups had elders and deacons. One group, however, was characterized by arguments and law, and the other by laughter and grace.

SALVATION IS BY FAITH

The Scriptures teach that faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1). Physical things can be seen with physical eyes. God, however, is a Spirit. No man can see God with human eyes (John 1:18). Faith is the antenna provided for us by God that we might gain a perception of the spirit world. Therefore, from the very beginning God has been teaching us about faith. **“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh** (Heb 11:3-4). Etc. It was by faith that sinful Abram was declared righteous (Gen. 15:6). It was also by faith that Abraham and Sarah brought Isaac into the world.

The Scriptures say this about Abraham: **“And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness”** (Rom 4:19-22).

The Scriptures say this about Sarah: **“Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable”** (Heb 11:11-12).

The Scriptures say this about you and me: **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”** (Eph 2:8-10).

THE TRANSCENDENT PLAN OF GOD

- Cain was the firstborn son of Adam and Eve, but Abel was accepted because of his faith (Heb. 11:4). Abel was the ancestor of Christ and not Cain.
- Ishmael was the firstborn son of Abraham, but Isaac was privileged by faith to become the ancestor of Christ.
- Esau was the firstborn son of Isaac, but God chose Jacob to be the ancestor of Christ.
- Reuben was the firstborn son of Jacob, but God chose Judah to be the ancestor of Christ.

- Zerah was the firstborn twin born to Judah and Tamar. His legal claim was established when the midwife tied a scarlet thread upon his hand and announced “This came out first” (Gen. 38:28). God, however, chose his younger brother Pharez to be the ancestor of Christ.
- It is important to remember the Sovereignty of God at all times, but especially so when studying the genealogy of Jesus. Jesus is the fulfilment of the promise made to Adam and Eve and repeated many times in Scripture. He is the “seed” that will crush the serpent’s head.
- This plan was in the mind of God before the world began (Rom. 16:25, 1 Cor. 2:7; 1 Pet. 1:20, etc).
- God gave us seeds to make His eternal plan more understandable.

THE GENEALOGY OF MATTHEW

The promise God made to Adam and Eve in the garden was repeated many times in Scripture. The promise of the “Seed” was also given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, David, etc. In order for these promises to come true, Jesus had to be the legal descendant of these ancestors to whom the promise was made. Though He was born of a virgin, Jesus was still the legal son and heir of his earthly father whose name was Joseph. The Gospel of Matthew begins by tracing the legal descent of Jesus through the family of Joseph back to Abraham. Forty-two names are listed. They are grouped in three groups of fourteen, probably so they could be more easily memorized:

“So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations” (Matt 1:17)

Legally speaking, Jesus was the Seed that God had promised.

THE GENEALOGY OF LUKE

Jesus was not only connected with God’s promise legally, but also biologically. He was the seed of David according to the flesh (Rom. 1:3). Mary, the mother of Jesus, was also from the family of David.

The Gospel of Luke presents the genealogy of Jesus through Mary. He was the son of man as well as the Son of God. The genealogy of Matthew starts with Abraham and takes us to Jesus. The genealogy of Luke starts with Jesus and takes us all the way back to God. Note the last verse in this genealogical record:

“Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God” (Luke 3:38)

The physical life of Adam came from God and was passed on to Seth, Enos, etc. all the way to Jesus.

YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN

“There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be

born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again” (John 3:1-7).

Nicodemus was part of a religious system that had become increasingly corrupt. Jesus said they compassed sea and land to make a proselyte. Instead of improving their religion, however, the new convert was two fold more the son of hell than those who converted him.

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves” (Matt 23:15).

Nicodemus was also under the jurisdiction of Rome. This too was a corrupt government. Julius Caesar was assassinated by members of his own government in 44 B.C. His son Octavian came to power and the Roman world became embroiled in a civil war. Octavian was also known as Caesar Augustus. He is mentioned in Luke 2:1 and is the ruler who ordered all the world to be taxed. Caesar Augustus died in A.D. 14 and was succeeded by his adopted son, Tiberius. Tiberius was noted for cruelty and injustice and killed close friends like Germanicus and Sejanus in order to stay in power. In A.D. 37 he became sick and lapsed into a coma. He was suffocated on his bed by Caligula who succeeded him in power. Caligula was mentally deranged and was killed by a band of assassins in A.D. 41. His uncle Claudius came to the throne but was poisoned by his wife in A.D. 54. This emperor is mentioned in Acts 18:2 because he commanded all the Jews to be expelled from Rome. The next emperor was Nero who ordered the murder of his brother, his mother, his first wife, and also thousands of Christians. He also had the dubious distinction of ordering that Peter and Paul be put to death. Nero died by suicide on June 9, A.D. 68.

THE POINT IS THAT ALL HUMAN SYSTEMS ARE CORRUPT! IT DOESN'T MATTER WHETHER THEY ARE RELIGIOUS OR POLITICAL, ALL SYSTEMS THAT COME FROM A FLESHLY SEED ARE FLESHLY SYSTEMS!

There is a kingdom, however, that comes from a spiritual seed. NICODEMUS HAD TO RECEIVE THAT SPIRITUAL SEED IN ORDER TO ENTER THAT SPIRITUAL KINGDOM!

THE INCORRUPTIBLE SEED

When Jesus explained the parable of the sower he said that the seed was the Word of God (Lk. 8:11). Peter was inspired to say the same thing: **“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you (1 Pet 1:23-25).**

THE NEW CREATION

The fleshly Adam created by God in the Garden of Eden is our physical father. His seed was passed down to us through many generations. Since it was a physical seed it only produced physical life. The life we received from the fleshly Adam is destined for the grave.

Jesus enables us to be “born again” with a spiritual seed. For this reason the Scriptures call Jesus the last Adam. This spiritual seed produces spiritual life and it lasts forever. Paul was inspired to put it like this:

“And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (1 Cor 15:45-49).

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor 5:17).

John was inspired to write:

“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother” (1 Jn 3:9-10).

NOT ALL SEED WILL GROW AND PRODUCE FRUIT

Jesus put it like this: **“A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience (Luke 8:5-15).**

MAY YOUR HEART BE GOOD SOIL TO RECEIVE THE SEED OF GOD!

IN GOD'S IMAGE

Paul Ackerman is a Christian psychologist who offers great insight into creation. He began his professional career, however, as a philosophical determinist. This means that he did not believe in creation or free will. B. F. Skinner represents the radical edge of this view by comparing a poet and a mother to machines. He believed that neither a baby nor a poem come from creative thought. Both are merely the result of natural processes, and neither involves free will.

Ackerman's conversion to Christ came in the wake of a personal tragedy. In August 1972 his five year old son, Bryan, was run over by a car and instantly killed. None of his psychological training offered him any comfort or hope. It was hard for him to understand how a machine could be so miserable. His inconsolable grief awakened in him the realization that man is much more than a machine. After great soul searching and study he turned to Christ. His new faith not only brought him great consolation, it enabled him to see the facts of science in a more rational context. In 1986 he published a book on creation titled *It's A Young World After All*. In this book he concluded that God is alive, the Bible is his word, and abundant scientific evidence is falling into line around both of these two great truths.

His book *In God's Image After All* is a sequel and demonstrates how the facts of psychology support Biblical Creationism. This remarkable book was published by Baker Book House in 1990. It is interesting reading and hard to put down. One typical illustration is regarding the psychological research done by T. G. R. Bower on newborn infants. Bower devised an ingenious way "talking" with infants. He set up a system that enabled the infant to play a peek-a-boo game by turning its head. Some infants as young as two weeks could learn to play this game. Once the communication link was established Bower discovered many fascinating things about infants. For example, they have depth perception. They can recognize the same block at different distances. Up close the block seems big, at a distance it seems small, but the baby still knows the difference. Additional experiments involved solving puzzles. The researcher could program a light to come on when the baby turned its head to the right. As the baby solved that puzzle, the solution was made more complex. For example, the baby might have to turn its head two times to the right, and then two times to the left in order to turn on the light. Once the puzzle was solved, the baby smiled and seemed to lose interest in turning on the light.

Bower wrote: *"In the process of detecting a contingency the baby smiles vigorously. These smiles seem to be caused by discovery of the contingency and to manifest the pleasure that the baby feels at having successfully detected what to do to make a particular event happen. The smiling, in other words, indicates an intellectual pleasure, a pleasure at having discovered something about the casual structure of the world, and pleasure at being in control of some part of the world . . ." (p. 53).*

Those who believe the Bible are not surprised by these discoveries, for the Scriptures teach that man was created in the image of God. Further, God intended us to have dominion over the earth. Though the facts of science do not change, Ackerman discovered that they become more lucid and understandable by the recognition that man is created in the image of God.

There is almost no limit to what man created in the image of God can accomplish. A famous case in point is the story of Nigel Hunt who was born mentally retarded. At two weeks the family was warned that their son would never be able to learn or function normally. Nigel's mother refused to accept this diagnosis. She made a game out of learning for her infant son and by the time he started school he could read better than most of the children in his class. At age seventeen he became the first person with Down's syndrome to write a book. The book, his autobiography, is called *The World of Nigel Hunt*. New information leads the scientific mind to challenge the outdated precepts of the past, and helps us to believe that all men are created in the image of God.

Paul Ackerman is not unique. Every Christian ultimately has to make that same pilgrimage

from unbelief to faith and commitment A logical first step is to conclude with Dr. Ackerman, that man is truly created in the image of God.

HEART AND MIND

I am indebted to Bro. Given Blakely for observing that each time heart and mind are mentioned together in Scripture, heart is mentioned first. There are at least eight such references: Deut. 28:65; 1 Sam. 2:35; 9:19,20; 1 Chron. 28:9; Dan. 5:20; Matt. 22:37; Mk. 12:30; Lk. 10:27.

There does seem to be biblical precedent for arranging people and things in the order of their importance. David's mighty men in 2 Sam. 23 is a classic example. The list begins with the mightiest and then proceeds to those of lesser importance. Even the list of the twelve apostles always begins with Peter, the great preacher, and ends with Judas the traitor. (See Matt. 10:2-4; Lk. 6:13-16; etc.) The relationship of Barnabas and Saul provides another example. Initially, Barnabas is mentioned first as he was apparently in a position of leadership. (Acts 11:30; 12:25; 13:1, 2, 7) After Saul's name was changed to Paul, it seems their roles were reversed. Therefore later references in Scripture no longer refer to "Barnabas and Saul", but rather to "Paul and Barnabas". (See Acts 13:43, 46, 50; 14:12, 14; 15:2; etc.) Church workers are also listed in the order of their importance. Since apostles were of primary importance we are told in 1 Cor. 12:28 that in the church God has appointed first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, etc. In 1 Cor. 13:13 faith, hope, and love are not listed in the order of their importance so the Scriptures clarify by stating explicitly that "the greatest of these is love".

God does have priorities. Some things are more important to Him than others. Jesus explained, for example, that the first and most important command in all the Bible was to: "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt 22:37). Notice that heart is mentioned before mind. It is important to love God with the mind, but it seems more important to love Him with the heart. The heart is apparently more dominant than the mind.

The Bible word for heart involves man in his entirety. It involves intellect - "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov 23:7). It involves emotion: "Let not your heart be troubled" (John 14:1). And it also involves our will. Man is to give as he purposes in his heart (2 Cor. 9:7).

The mind, by contrast, is not so inclusive. The Athenians, for example, could spend their time talking about and listening to the latest ideas without becoming emotionally involved in any of them (Acts 17:21). Just as a man can be attracted to a woman that he does not want to marry, philosophers can toy with ideas they will never give their heart to. Perhaps this is why God did not choose the intellectually elite to represent Him upon the earth. He deliberately chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak to confound the mighty (1 Cor. 1:27).

Love often compels us to do the irrational. When we love God with all of our heart we may also do things we cannot understand. Human wisdom, for example, calls for a maximum of planning and a minimum of risk. God, however, called Abraham, Moses, Joshua, and many others to do just the opposite. God sometimes expects us to take a maximum risk with no planning at all.

The difference between "heart" and "mind" may seem academic and irrelevant. It is, however, of critical importance. Ponder carefully this remarkable statement by Jesus: "**If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own**" (John 7:17 NIV). Note that the "choosing" comes before complete knowledge. The decision is obviously made without having all the facts. Such risk is unacceptable to the mind, but not to the heart. What we love with our heart takes precedence over what we love with our mind.

Mary of Bethany provides a beautiful example. When it dawned on her that Jesus was going to die, she broke a jar of very expensive perfume and poured it upon Him. The fragrance of her gift not only filled the house but would cling to Jesus until the time of His death. She anointed Him for His burial. Judas criticized her, and argued that the perfume could have been sold for 300 days wages and given to the poor. Judas may have loved Jesus with all of his mind, but Mary loved Him with all of her heart. Wherever the Gospel is preached, Jesus wanted her story

to be told. It is important to love God with all your mind, but more important to love Him with all your heart. **“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life”** (Prov. 4:23)

THE MIRACLE OF LIFE

“God’s ways are as mysterious as the pathway of the wind and as the manner in which a human spirit is infused into the little body of a baby while it is yet in its mother’s womb. Keep on sowing your seed, for you never know which will grow-- perhaps it all will. It is a wonderful thing to be alive! (Eccl 11:5-7 TLB)

King Solomon, who wrote these words, must have been in awe and deeply humbled by the miracle of life. He had a thousand wives, but only one son. His son, Rehoboam, came from Naamah, an Ammonitess. The name Rehoboam, means “The people (or family) is extended (enlarged)”. Perhaps Solomon dreamed of a large family and felt that Rehoboam would be the first of many sons. Hebrew leaders were proud of their sons. Gideon had 70 sons (Judges 9:2). Ahab also had 70 sons (2 Kings 10:1). No matter how hard Solomon’s tried, however, his family was apparently not enlarged. Solomon discovered that the miracle of life is in the hands of God.

Perhaps I should not be dogmatic about Solomon’s family for my thinking is based upon an argument from silence. I can simply find no other son of Solomon mentioned in Scripture. In 1 Chron. 3:1-9, for example, the sons of David are listed. The next verse states: **“Solomon’s son was Rehoboam”** (1 Chron. 3:10). If Solomon had other sons, why not mention them? Taphath (1 Kings 4:11), Basmath (1 Kings 4:15), are listed as the daughters of Solomon. But only Rehoboam is mentioned as his son.

It is interesting to note that Rehoboam was conceived before Solomon became king. We know this by comparing 1 Kings 11:42 and 1 Kings 14:21. The first Scripture states that Solomon reigned 40 years, and the second tells us that Rehoboam was 41 when he became king. Simple math proves that Rehoboam was one year old when Solomon became king.

We know that Solomon had a harem with 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3). Perhaps one reason for his many wives was frustration. More wives, however, did not solve his problem. He learned with Abraham, Abimelech, Zacharias and others that the miracle of life is in the hands of God. God promised David that one of his descendants would always be upon the throne of Israel (2 Chron. 6:16). Solomon therefore had to have at least one son for this promise to be true. Rehoboam fulfilled that promise and was an ancestor of Jesus (Matt. 1:7).

Solomon is credited with writing Ps. 127. This psalm begins: **“Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it”**. It reminds us that **“Children are an heritage of the Lord and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them . . .”** Solomon apparently learned this lesson the hard way.

But now let us make a spiritual application of this principle. If only God can create the miracle of physical life, certainly He alone can create the miracle of spiritual life. If Solomon was humbled by his inability to father physical children, we should also be humbled by the reality that only the Lord can enable us to be “born again”.

Solomon wrote: “God’s ways are as mysterious as the pathway of the wind”. Every parent and every preacher ought to listen reverently to such words of wisdom. We need to stand in awe at the miracle of life. Every lesson on human reproduction ought to emphasize the omnipotence of God and the limitations of man. Every lesson in evangelism ought to also acknowledge that only God can write someone’s name in the Lamb’s book of life.

On the one hand we are told that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (Rom. 10:13), but on the other hand we are reminded that not everyone who says “Lord, Lord” will enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 7:21). It is God who determines who is added to His

church, and who is not!

The fact that you are reading this article is proof that you were born the first time. God placed that spark in your mother's womb and gave you life. Our loving Heavenly Father also wants you to be born again. Please humbly pray that God will grant you this miracle of life also!

HYPOCRITES

“. . . They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers” (Matt. 24:4)

Hypocrisy is nothing new. The world has always had those who *talk* one way and walk another. Consider, for example the hypocrisy among the leaders of Islam. I am indebted to Egyptian Pastor Dr. Saleem Almahdy for this information which was printed in the April 2002 newsletter of the Voice of the Martyrs.

Let's start with Mohammed himself. He legalized polygamy and wrote in the Koran that a man could have four wives. He had fourteen! His words were: *“Marry other women who seem good to you: two, three or four of them. But if you fear that you cannot maintain equality among them, marry only one or any slave girl that you own. This will make it easier for you to avoid injustice” (Sura 4:3).*

Since Mohammed was leading his warriors to distant lands he initiated what is known as the marriage of enjoyment, the marriage of pleasure, or the temporary contractual marriage. In the marriage of pleasure a man can “marry” a woman for one-quarter of an hour for the sole purpose of having sex with her. Al Baydawi, one of the most famous commentators in Islam, endorses this. He wrote in his book, *The Interpretation of the Baydawi*, *“The purpose of the contractual marriage is the mere pleasure of intercourse with a woman, and her own enjoyment is what she has given” (page 108).* Iban Mas'ud, one of the followers of Mohammed said: *“We used to participate in holy battles led by Allah's Apostle, and we had no wives with us. At that time he allowed us to marry women with a temporary contract and recited to us this verse (from the Koran). “Oh you who believe, make not unlawful the good things which Allah has made lawful for you” (Surah 5:87).*

In *Sabib Muslim*, one of the authentic commentaries for Muslims, we find a detailed description of some moral scandals that Mohammed approved. It recounts that Mohammed used to bring women to his followers or send a herald to proclaim that it is permissible to sign contractual marriages (Vol. 3: page 555). On page 556 of the same book it is written: *“They used to meet a woman who belonged to one of the tribes and attempted to seduce her by offering her either a dress or some dates or flour. They spend three days with the harlot.”* This marriage is not bound to any of the rules set in Islam for a normal marriage. In this 15 minute marriage, the man does not write a contract of marriage nor divorce after he enjoys her. The only thing the man has to do is give the woman something like money or food. Dr. Musa al Musawi, a Muslim Scholar with a Ph.D. in Islamic law from the University of Tehran, mentions in his book, *The Shi'ites and The Reformation*: *“This marriage is carried out without a witness. The period of this marriage could be a quarter of an hour, or a day, or any period of time. In it, it is permissible for a man to have collectively an unaccountable number of women at the same time” (Page 109).*

In April 2001, Egyptian authorities arrested one of the leaders of an Islamic group in Cairo. Over several years he had married 95 women. They arrested him, because they found that he was illegally married to five of these women at the same time, instead of the legal four. He had not broken Islamic law by rotating through 95 women but had made the mistake of having five at one time. Like a zealous fisherman, he was one over the limit and didn't throw her back in time.

When Jesus was upon the earth the religious leaders would bind on others burdens they wouldn't touch. The same is true today. Men like Osama Bin Ladin and Yasser Arafat do not die in suicide bombings, they delegate that “honor” to others. While they talk about their willingness

to die, they go to great lengths to stay alive. Osama Bin Laden, for example, hires deluded “look alikes” to stand in harm’s way while he runs like a rabbit for safety. Those in positions of power often emulate his cowardice. They encourage their idealistic pawns to die while they slip into the bedroom for a marriage of convenience.

Lest you be tempted by such a double standard, remember that God has created the flames of hell for the devil and his angels. Those who are hypocrites will join them there for all eternity (Matt. 23:14, 33).

BY THEIR FRUITS

“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits . . . ” (Matt. 7:15, 16)

(A Fourth of July Meditation)

This principle is both simple and profound. Not everyone can identify a tree by examining a seed, a leaf, or a piece of bark. It is simple, however, to identify a tree by its fruit. Jesus applied this principle to religious teachers. You do not judge them by what they say or write, but by what they produce. Fruit, as you know, is something produced consistently over the long term.

In this regard the Bible, as a seed, produces fruit without equal in the modern world. Our pilgrim forefathers did not come to the new world with the teachings of Karl Marx, Mao Tse-tung, Mohammed, or Buddha. They came with the Holy Bible, and there is an undeniable association between what the Pilgrims believed and taught and the country they produced. Thousands are dying to get into this country, and thousands are dying to get out of other countries. By their fruits you shall know them!

But someone may suggest that Europe was “Christian” when the Pilgrims sailed across the sea to begin their bold experiment of a new nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. In this regard it is important to remember that seeds cannot produce fruit until they are planted. The “Old World” kept the Bible under lock and key. They forbade the common people to read the Bible on pain of death. William Tyndale, for example, was strangled and burned at the stake Oct. 6, 1536 for the “crime” of translating the Bible into the English language. His dying words were: “Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.”

The Pilgrims, by contrast, wanted everyone to read the Bible. In 1642, for example, they passed the “Old Deluder Satan Law”. This law required a community with 50 homes to have a school. Their stated goal was that everyone should be literate so they could read the Bible and thus not be deluded by Satan. America’s first college was Harvard College in Massachusetts, and its official motto was “For Christ and the Church”. One hundred and six of the first one hundred and eight colleges in America were founded on the Christian faith. Such roots produce fruit!

Many, however, are mad at America and speak disparagingly of the Christian faith. At the risk of being unchristian, perhaps we should:

- Let the atheists move to North Korea and enjoy the fruit of atheism
- Let the Oriental Mystics move to India where the “beauty” of such mysticism is not corrupted by Christianity.
- Let the flag burning communists emigrate to China or Cuba where the purity of Marxist doctrine is unpolluted by Christian ethics.
- Let the Muslims move to Mecca where Islamic fruit is untarnished by the taste of Christian love and compassion.

It is irrational for unchristian people to flee to America for refuge and then try and make this country like the ones they are escaping from. Jesus obviously knew what he was talking about. You know teachers by their fruit! You might be fooled by Chairman Mao’s Little Red Book, but you should not be fooled by China. You might be fooled by the writings of Buddha and Confucius,

but you should not be fooled by India. You might be fooled by the brilliant rhetoric of atheistic scholars, but you should not be fooled by the U.S.S.R. Seventy three years of atheism produced such bitter fruit that it is totally irrational to repeat that barbaric experiment.

By their fruits you will know them! You can make fun of the pilgrims, and belittle their archaic ways and puritanical ethics. They would be the first to acknowledge that they were all sinners in desperate need of salvation. They erred in witch-hunts and stumbled in other ways too numerous to mention. But it is undeniable that they came on the Mayflower with the Holy Bible. They planted that incorruptible seed in society and it is still producing fruit! Let us join with them in that simple prayer that has become a part of our national anthem.

GOD BLESS AMERICA!

THE SIN OF DOING NOTHING

“Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins” (Ja. 4:17)

This amazing verse helps to open our minds to a life that is offensive to God. Conventional wisdom seeks refuge in not doing anything wrong, but such shallow thinking will not stand the scrutiny of divine judgment.

- The man who received one talent was condemned. He was not condemned because he gambled away his money or spent it in riotous living. He was condemned because he did nothing (Matt. 25:24 - 30).
- The man who received the mina was also condemned for the same reason. He received money from his master and did nothing with it (Lk. 19:11 - 27).
- More than once Jesus condemned fig trees. Once in a parable (Lk. 13:6 - 8), and another time when he sought something to eat (Mk. 11:12 - 21). These fig trees were not condemned because they produced thorns or poison ivy. They were condemned because they produced nothing.
- On the night before Calvary Jesus told His disciples that He was the True Vine and His Father was the Gardener. The Gardener cuts off every branch that does not bear fruit (John 15:1, 2). This is so obvious that it hardly deserves comment. Dead branches that produced no fruit are destined to be burned.
- James reminds us that the demons believe and tremble (Ja. 2:19). They know more about Christ than we do and they believe that He means what He says, and says what He means. Since they do nothing about it, however, they are destined for the lake of fire and brimstone.
- James continues that faith without works is like a body without a spirit (Ja. 2:26). What value would it be to marry a corpse, or hire a cadaver to work in your garden? Cemeteries are filled with people who haven’t done anything wrong lately. They haven’t done anything right either. In fact, they haven’t done anything.

The poet said it like this:

He lost no hard fights in defence of the right
He never did bleed with his back to the wall
He never fell faint in his climb to the light
He simply did nothing at all

So God will pardon your blunders, my friend

And regret with pity your fall,
But the one big sin that surely means hell
Is to simply do nothing at all.

The cure for this common malady is Christ in you the hope of glory (Col. 1:27). Jesus did not come into the world to do nothing. He was on a divine mission for God. When you invite Jesus into your heart He will continue His divine mission through you. Philippians 2:13 specifies two ways God works in the believer. First, He produces the “will”, and secondly He empowers us to “act”. Both the desire and the ability are of divine origin. Since God is Omniscient, His will in our lives is always on track and relevant. Since He is all powerful, His energy in us is as tireless and perennial as a river.

Please invite Jesus Christ into your heart so that you will not be condemned for the sin of doing nothing!

OPEN DOORS AND ADVERSARIES

**“For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries”
(1 Cor. 16:9)**

Paul wrote these inspired words from Ephesus. This was an area where he had great success in preaching Christ. In only two short years everyone in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks (Acts 19:10). During this time God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul so that even handkerchiefs he touched had healing power (Acts 19:11, 12) Many who once used necromancy publicly burned magic books valued at 50,000 pieces of silver (Acts 19:19). So many people were being converted to Christ that those who made idols feared they would go out of business (Acts 19:27). In spite of this, Paul still made friends among the chief officers of Asia (Acts 19:31). It is not surprising, therefore, that the devil would counter attack Paul and those with whom he worked.

We get some hint of this opposition in 1 Cor. 15:32. Here Paul makes reference to fighting with “wild beasts” in Ephesus (1 Cor. 15:32). The problems he faced, however, were about to get worse. The book of Acts informs us that the simmering opposition he faced boiled over in a massive riot that involved the whole city (Acts 19:29). The idol makers won a temporary victory and Paul was forced to flee from town.

Believers should not be surprised when their efforts for Christ bring confrontation. Jesus warned in the clearest terms: **“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.”** (John 15:18-21) He sent out His disciples like sheep in the midst of wolves (Matt. 10:16). He warned them that some would even have conflicts in their only families (Matt. 10:36). He said: **“Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.”** (Luke 6:26). Paul echoed this truth to new converts and warned them that they would enter into the kingdom through much tribulation (Acts 14:22).

Nehemiah was a man used of God to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. When his intentions became known, however, he became the object of laughter and scorn. Please consider: **“But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us . . . ”** (Neh 2:19). When you start building for God, you may also become the object of laughter and scorn.

It is not unusual for people to be persecuted. This has happened to all kinds of people in every generation. It is unusual, however, for people to love those who persecute them. Love is that which distinguishes the followers of Jesus from the rest of the world. Jesus died praying for the men who killed Him (Lk. 23:34), and those who have the Spirit of Jesus do the same (Acts 7:60). We are to love our enemies, bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us, and pray for them which despitefully use us and persecute us (Matt. 5:44).

Mother Teresa put it like this: *“ People are often unreasonable, illogical and self-centered - forgive them anyway. If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives - be kind anyway. If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies - succeed anyway. If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you - be honest and frank anyway. What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight - build anyway. If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous - be happy anyway. The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow - do good anyway. Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough - give the world the best you've got anyway. You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and God - It was never between you and them anyway.”*

HEROES

“They were the heroes of old, men of renown” (Gen. 6:4 N.I.V.)

The Bible teaches that there were “heroes” on the earth in the days of Noah. They were men of renown among their peers. They were obviously the ones who made the money and basked in the spotlight of power and fame. In spite of their popularity with the people, the Lord was grieved with their conduct. They filled the earth with violence and every inclination of the thought of man’s heart was only evil continually (Gen. 6:5). For this reason God decided to send a flood and wipe mankind off the face of the earth. The “heroes” all died and their fame died with them. Nothing survives to relate the magnitude of their accomplishments. Their fame was only temporal.

Noah, however, found favor in the eyes of the Lord. He was a righteous man, and blameless among the people of his time. As you know, God used Noah and his family to build and ark and preserve life upon the earth. His fame is eternal!

But let us return to those “heroes of old”. Is it not stunning that their great earthly achievements meant nothing to God? Human historians would have focussed on them and passed over Noah. God did exactly the reverse. He told us a lot about Noah, and nothing about the others.

Who were these heroes? Did they conquer nations and build great cities? Did they succeed in business and amass great wealth? Did they excel in athletics and dazzle the public with their strength and speed? Were they actors and actresses whose beauty and grace were sought after and admired? We will never know this side of eternity for the God of heaven did not consider what they did worthy of our attention! They, and all of their human achievements were wiped off the face of the earth by the flood.

After the flood God promised that He would never again use water to destroy all life (Gen. 9:15). Next time God is going to use fire to destroy the earth. Please prayerfully consider these inspired words: **“First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.” (2 Pet 3:3-7 NIV)**

We must constantly be on guard that we do not adopt the value system of the world. Jesus once told the story of a rich man who was blessed with a bumper crop. In stead of helping others, he decided to tear down his little barns and build bigger ones. The world would admire him for his ability to make money, but God called him a fool (Lk. 12:20). His entire focus was on things of earth and he had made no preparation for eternity. Remember the time that the disciples of Jesus rejoiced that even the demons were subject to them. As exciting as this was, Jesus called them to a higher purpose and said: **“Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (Lk. 10:20)**. No matter how much power and wealth we accumulate on this earth, it is all for nought if our names are not written in the Lamb’s Book of Life in heaven.

If there were libraries on the earth in the days of Noah I fear that they would be much like our modern libraries. They would focus on the things of earth, and their heroes would do likewise. They would say nothing about God and God would say nothing about them. The world may worship at the feet of such great thinkers as Aristotle and Plato, but God does not. The wisdom of this world is foolishness to God. Some wise person once warned that we should be careful who our heroes are. Do we seek to emulate the lives of “successful” men and women who have achieved earthly wealth and fame, or do we follow in the footsteps of men like Noah. He is no fool who gives up the things that he cannot keep, to gain those things that he cannot lose!