

THE

Evangel

NEWSPAPER

SERVING YOUR COMMUNITY WITH THE GOOD NEWS OF THE BIBLE

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Jesus described his words as seeds, which fall into people's hearts and bring forth fruit.

A time to sow

Welcome to your first copy of *The Evangel*

Jesus Christ once told a story about a man who sowed seed in his field (Matthew 13: 1-23). As he scattered seed upon the ground, some of it fell on good ground—in time, it grew and produced fruit. Other seed fell on stony ground where there was no soil to root down into. Some fell among thorns where it grew, but it was later choked by the thorns. Yet other seed fell by the way-side and was eaten by birds. All of this, Jesus said, is a picture of what happens when God's words, like seeds, are spoken among people. Some have hearts that hear the Word of God and believe it. Their hearts are like the good ground. Other people hear the Word of God and dismiss it because they don't understand it: their hearts are like the way-side ground. Others hear the Word of God and believe it for a while until the cares and love of this world crowd out God's words and they stop listening

and obeying—their hearts are like the thorny ground. Yet others believe and obey God's Word for a while until they become offended by the persecution and trouble that arises because of it. It is a succinct little parable that tells us why people respond in so many different ways to the hearing of God's Word.

The words of God are the most important words you will ever hear. How you respond to them will determine your eternal destiny.

This small newspaper, *The Evangel*, is one way that the Gospel seed will be sown in our community. We hope that your heart will be like the good ground in the Parable of the Sower. Be blessed by the Word of God that you hear and let it grow in your heart. Pick up your Bible and obey what it says. As Jesus said, if you have faith, you will bring forth much fruit with patience.

ON THE INSIDE



Serpent of brass

A curious story from the past speaks to us today



Abraham's sacrifice

Why God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son



Space What recent research tells us about the origin of the universe



Will the world be destroyed? Yes and it's happened before

If the foundations be destroyed . . .

So asks the psalmist, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"



highly skilled and experienced people rig a building with explosives that are designed to detonate at precisely timed intervals, by which the building is brought down in a controlled manner.

The fall of the World Trade Centre towers must have been a marvel to those involved in the demolition industry, in that the buildings basically fell into their own footprint. What seems incredible is that this happened completely unaided by the use of precisely positioned explosives.

In the demolition industry, explosives are used to control the way a building falls so they can basically bring it down where they want. The twin towers on the other hand, experienced structural failure as a result of fire; the building imploded and gravity did the rest. To reproduce this in a controlled manner would be a mammoth task needing a huge amount of preparation.

How to destroy a building

The sequence of controlled demolition requires the charges at the foundation of the building to explode first: this weakens the structure. This is then followed by secondary explosions at the top of the building and then others at lower levels. With the foundation destroyed and the building basically imploding from the top, the rest is left to gravity.

How to destroy a society

Having considered this, let me draw your attention now to something of a social parallel: the progressive destruction of the foundations of a moral society.

Just as controlled demolition seeks to first weaken the foundation of a structure, in like manner, even our very basic understanding of right and wrong is heavily under attack. Precisely positioned and timed charges have already been

detonated, weakening the structure of society. In the 1980s, we saw the legalising of homosexuality, which has since been followed up with the introduction of civil unions. While I could mention

other things, these are just two examples of changes that constitute a substantial attack on the key supports of a strong society.

In Psalm 11: 3, the question is put to us, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" The foundation that

PASTOR JASON DANIELS

Nearly nine years after the fall of the World Trade Centre towers, the shocking reality of how two of the biggest buildings in the world virtually disintegrated into their own footprint still seems incredible. Though built to withstand the impact of a commercial jet, both towers imploded, leaving in their wake a mass of rubble and dust.

The official report suggests that the steel supporting the upper floors near the point of impact eventually succumbed to the heat of fire, resulting in a catastrophic failure that led to the top floors collapsing down on the rest of the building. While the exact sequence of this failure may never be known, it is probably one of the most graphic examples of building implosion that the world has ever seen. The terrorists of 9/11 achieved in a very short time what in most instances takes many weeks, if not months to carry out.

I am talking about controlled demolition. That is, where

Precisely positioned and timed charges have already been detonated, weakening the structure of society.

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Serpent of brass

A curious story of the Old Testament brings a powerful message to us today

For generations, the Israelites were in Egypt: they were slaves to the house of Pharaoh, building his great treasure cities and labouring to meet their tally of bricks in the crushing heat of the Nile Delta. Generation after generation they laboured. Their position seemed hopeless, but at God's appointed time, he raised up Moses to deliver them. Today, many of us are familiar with at least some aspects of their great deliverance through the Red Sea and the overthrow of Pharaoh's army. This is the great epic of the Old Testament: God delivered a nation with a mighty hand—a people who otherwise faced a future of the greatest deprivation and disappointment, a future without hope.

You would think then, that they would have been thankful for God's helping hand. Indeed, many were. But perhaps it was after they had considered God's holy law that they had pause for thought. Certainly, though they were out of Egypt now, *Egypt was still in them*: they had grown to like the customs of that heathen nation—its sensualities, its philosophies and its worldliness. But these rescued Israelites were not, as we might suppose, a people of special character. Neither were they more deserving than most. Instead, they were *just like all of us* and what was common to them is common to us today. So what could have been a story with a delightfully happy ending did not end without many ups and downs. It's at this point that we find a most curious story in the narrative of this historic people, which to a discerning observer, brings a powerful message to us today.

As Moses led them to Israel, the promised land, the way was long and hard and the people quickly became discouraged. The land in these parts was largely barren, the sun was hot and there was little water for the thousands of men, women and children with their caravans, flocks and herds. It's understandable that they grew weary. But it's one thing to grow weary and it's another thing to murmur. These people

"[E]very one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live."

had experienced the intervention of God on a scale that no other people have experienced, either before or since. *Yet still* they wished to return to Egypt, where they had food aplenty and could be far removed from the course that God had set for them. They distrusted God's intentions, murmuring that he had evil designs and believing that he wished to leave them there in the thirsty wilderness to die.

As they walked from Mount Sinai (in Arabia), their complaining reached a threshold. Suddenly, they found themselves among snakes—hundreds of them. The Bible calls these *fiery serpents*, because their bite was poisonous, inflicting a burning sensation in the wound. Many people who were bitten died of their wounds.

God raised up these serpents and sent them to punish the



people for their faithlessness. Understanding this, they cried out to Moses: "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us" (Numbers 21: 7). So Moses sought God on their behalf.

"Make thee a fiery serpent," God told Moses, "and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live."

The short account of this story in the Bible ends with this one verse:

And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived. (Numbers 21: 9)

Now this story leaves us with an all-important question: why did God do this? Why did God punish the people, only to bring a remedy that seems both senseless and absurd? A brass snake upon a pole? For the answer, we must look to some fifteen hundred years after the event.

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole

When Jesus walked on this earth two thousand years ago, he answered an enquiring Jewish leader with these words:

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3: 14-15)

Jesus said that he himself must be “lifted up” as Moses lifted up the brass serpent on the pole. Consider: Moses made the serpent out of brass. In the Bible, brass is often symbolic of *harsh judgement* and *affliction* (with the provision of grace).

The serpent plague among the people was God's harsh judgement on them for their sin. They cried out to Moses and as they did, they were instructed to turn and look at the image of the very thing that was causing their suffering: the serpent.

Consider this scripture in John Chapter 12 and verse 32. Jesus spoke:

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw



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unto me.” (John 12: 32)

all men unto me.” This he said, signifying what death he should die.

Jesus Christ was lifted up high on a pole, above the heads of the people for all to see. He was nailed to a cross outside of Jerusalem.

On that dark day, when the people looked up, they saw in his disfigured and tortured body, *the very judgement that was due to themselves.*

Every soul that sins will one day receive the punishment for his or her sin. Every soul that sins will one day stand to receive the eternal judgement of God. The affliction that Jesus Christ received on the cross was the *image of judgement* that awaits every unrepentant sinner. But *what if*, as the people in Moses' day looked up

at that serpent and saw there the image of their judgement and so were saved, we today look up and see, by the hearing of God's Word, the very image of the judgement that awaits us personally, poured out on Christ, and having faith in what he did, we too are saved? You see, what was poured out on Jesus Christ, the Son of God will be poured out on us if we do not look to him—if we do not believe on him. But here we can see the beaten, crucified Christ and see that *he took our judgement.* This is how we are saved and this is the very message that Jesus was sending when he spoke as he did in John 3: 14-15.

The brass serpent on the pole points us to Christ.

The Bible promises that if you will look up and see Jesus Christ on the cross, crucified for you, then you too will be saved. If you see him with faith in your heart and depend on what he did on the cross, then you too will be saved from the sting of the serpent. You will not suffer in Hell for the rest of eternity. Jesus received in his own body the terrible affliction that awaits you as punishment for your sins. This is the great message of the Gospel. You will be forgiven and saved and enjoy everlasting life with Jesus Christ for ever.

Listen to how the Bible describes the stricken Christ upon the pole:

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes [marks on his body from being whipped] we are healed. (Isaiah 53: 4-5)

This prophecy by Isaiah was spoken some seven hundred years before Jesus was born and is one of many prophecies which tell of the birth and ministry of Christ. The Old Testament foretold of Christ and then Christ came and fulfilled it. By this we can have confidence that the Bible is true. The account of the brass serpent on the pole was a real event showing Jesus Christ to be the judgement-bearer for all of mankind. This provision is accessible to all who believe in God, confess their sinfulness and follow the Lord Jesus Christ with true faith and obedience.

Will you look to Jesus Christ today and be saved? ■

world, and lose his own soul?” (Mark 8: 36) “And as it

More than just a story

Why God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son and why Abraham was ready to do it

About four thousand years ago, there lived in what is now Israel, a man called Abraham. Abraham was called the Friend of God. His wife Sarah was unable to have children and to further complicate things, she was now too old. So God promised them the impossible: he gave them his word that they would have a son.

But many years passed by and still no son. Abraham and Sarah knew better than to distrust their faithful Friend. They believed God. They would get their son. He would not lie.

Eventually, the promised child was born. They called him “Isaac”, which in the Hebrew tongue means *laughter*. “God has made me to laugh,” Sarah said.

Isaac grew to be a strapping young man. He had faith in God too and he knew what it was to have God as *his* Friend. His mum and dad were proud of him. Was not this their promised son? Was not the boy God’s gift to them?

But one day, their faith was sorely challenged. God called out to Abraham.

“Behold, here I am,” Abraham replied.

“Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom

“My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering.”

thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”

Never before had God asked anybody to sacrifice a *person*. Animal sacrifices were well established: animals to die in the place of men for the sins of men; but never a human. What’s more, his own son, Isaac?

The next morning, Abraham rose early and saddled his ass. He and Isaac travelled far to the place that God had told him of. When the place was in sight, they dismounted and Abraham laid the wood for the sacrifice upon the shoulders of his son while he himself carried the fire in his hand. As they made the slow journey up the mountain, observant Isaac asked his dad: “Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” Abraham replied with these memorable words: “My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering.”

When they arrived at the appointed place, Abraham built an altar and laid the wood neatly upon it. At this point in time, he must have explained to Isaac what he intended to do, because Abraham was old and Isaac was a youth. Isaac could have overpowered his father if he had chosen to. He could have opted out of this sacrifice, but he did not. Indeed, God’s purpose would only have been accomplished if Isaac was a



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willing victim.

Isaac must have ascended the altar himself and allowed his father to bind him. Then Abraham stretched out his arm with a knife and at an intense moment, purposed to slay his son. But before he could do so, a voice called from above: “Abraham, Abraham!”

Abraham answered, “Here am I.”

The voice continued: “Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.”

When Abraham turned, he saw a ram caught in the thicket. This ram he offered as a burnt offering on the altar instead of his son.

God will provide a lamb

This is a true story (you can find it in Chapter 22 of Genesis in your Bible). It shows how the man who was described as *the*

is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the



See us by the museum

Often on Saturday mornings, you'll see the Motueka Christian Fellowship outreach team by the museum, playing Christian songs and sharing the gospel with you.

father of the faithful was challenged in his faith and obedience to God and how he passed this test. But were it not for certain striking features, this story could pass as simply a quaint account of a faithful patriarch and the somewhat eccentric means that God used to test his obedience. But this story is more than that.

In the New Testament book of Hebrews, the apostle Paul shows us that in offering up Isaac on the altar, Abraham concluded that God would raise Isaac from the dead and he (Abraham) would receive him again (Hebrews 11: 19).

This all sounds remarkably like another story that we know.

Isaac was Abraham's long-promised son. Yet the Bible tells of another very special long-promised son: from the beginning of the scriptures to the end of the Old Testament, there was prophesied the birth of the Son of God—promised first to Adam and Eve and then to their succeeding generations. Generation after generation, the faithful anticipated the coming of this special man. "The heir of the whole world" he was called; the Prince of Peace; the mighty God. This was God's only begotten son, Jesus.

See how by what they did, Abraham and Isaac came to foretell the death and resurrection of Jesus:

- (1) As Isaac was Abraham's long-promised son, so Jesus was the long-promised Son of God the Father.
- (2) As Abraham offered up Isaac as a sacrifice, so God the Father offered up his only begotten Son, Jesus, on the cross as a sacrifice.
- (3) As Isaac was a willing sacrificial lamb, so Jesus was a willing sacrificial lamb. (Jesus is called "the Lamb of God" in the Bible.)
- (4) As Isaac had total trust in his father, so Jesus had absolute trust in his Father.
- (5) As Abraham anticipated God would bring Isaac back to life after he died, so God the Father resurrected Jesus after he died.
- (6) As Isaac was the heir of all that belonged to his father, so Jesus became the heir of all things.

The story of Abraham's test of faith became a prophetic demonstration of what the Son of God came to do: die as a sacrifice in the place of men for the sins of men.

Remember what Abraham said: "My son, God will provide himself a lamb." God would provide his own sacrificial lamb for the sins of mankind: he would provide Jesus, the only one who was without sin and could be a perfect sacrifice.

Remember this story of Abraham and Isaac. Remember that it's a prophetic picture that God showed us hundreds of years before Jesus died. He did this so that you could know that the Bible is true. He did it to show you that he loves you. ■

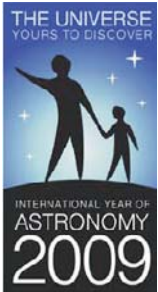
"... and [he] brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." (Acts 16: 30-31)



judgement: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins

Space

The International Year of Astronomy brought our attention to the last frontier



In April 2009, more than a million people around the world marked the International Year of Astronomy 2009 (IYA2009) by visiting their local observatories to gaze at the heavens through a telescope as Galileo did four hundred years ago. IYA2009 was established to help people around the world “rediscover their place in the universe and to experience a personal sense of wonder and discovery.”

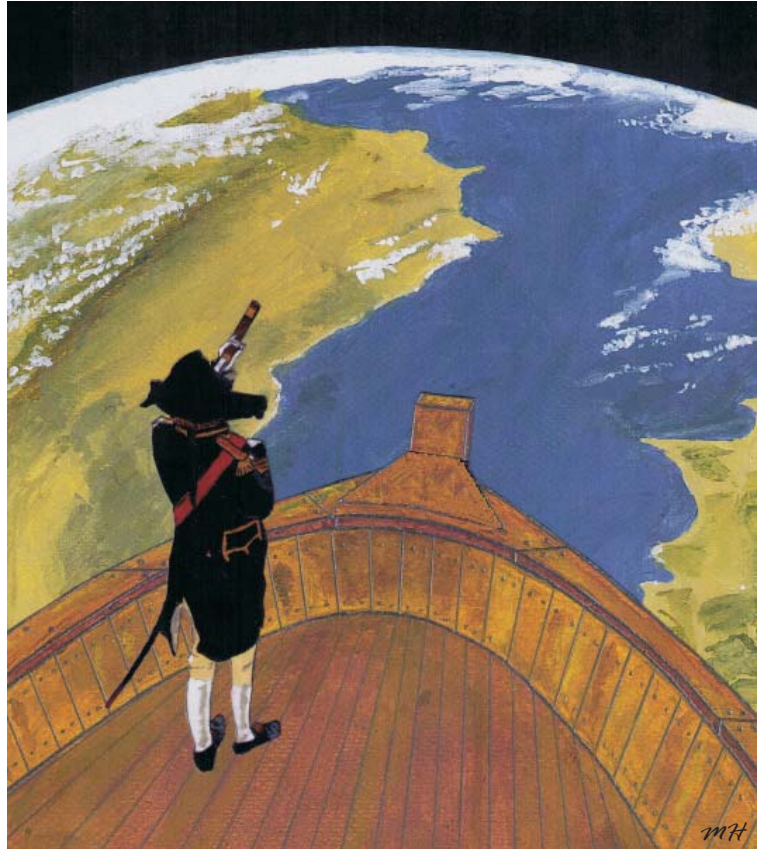
In Nelson, the Cawthron Atkinson Observatory opened for four nights and there local astronomers set up their telescopes. Children and adults gasped at clearly seeing Saturn with its ring system for the first time “in real life”. Other gems were “the Jewel Box”, a star cluster as pretty and perfect as its name suggests; and Alpha Centauri: two stars that politely orbit each other like some courting couple, but are seen with the naked eye as only a pinprick of light.

Since the days of Galileo, men have looked up at the universe with mixed emotions: some see only the beauty of the colourful spheres, some wonder if other forms of life lie out there, and others shrink from realising how vulnerable our familiar home is. Planet Earth is floating in a cosmic stew, defenceless in an astoundingly hostile environment.

While much of modern astronomy takes the view that there is no intelligent order to the universe—that it’s merely an accident of physics and chemistry and not the creative work of God—is there anything in what we know of space that suggests that it’s the handiwork of a designer? Astrobiologist Dr Guillermo Gonzalez of Iowa State University and philosopher Dr Jay W. Richards of the Discovery Institute of Seattle believe that there is.



The Cawthron Atkinson Observatory at Atawhai, Nelson



Space is the last frontier for exploration

The Principle of Mediocrity

Ancient astronomical doctrine maintained that the Earth sat motionless in space while the Sun, Moon and stars orbited around it. In 1543 however, Nicolaus Copernicus, a Polish astronomer, shattered this idea by boldly declaring that not only did the Earth move, but it orbited around the Sun with the other planets. Copernicus was right, of course, but his belief fractured the prevalent idea of the times that the Earth was the centre of the universe. By the twentieth century, as men had developed a greater appreciation of the enormity and complexity of the universe, Copernicus' theory had grown into what is now known as the Principle of Mediocrity, that is:

The Earth occupies no preferred place in the universe. Our location and status are mediocre and unexceptional. By extension, we should not assume that we are in any way privileged or that the universe was designed with us or beings like us in mind.

The astronomer Carl Sagan popularised this notion in his

of many ...” (Hebrews 9: 27-28)



BRENT NICHOLLS, NELSON

Images from Nelson: (1) above left, Jupiter, the largest planet in our solar system; (2) above right, Sombrero Galaxy (M104), a spiral galaxy surrounded by a disc of dust and gas; (3) below left, star cluster Omega Centauri (NGC 5139)

best-selling book, *Pale Blue Dot* (1994). This was named after a photograph that was taken by the Voyager 1 explorer in 1990, when it turned around for a backward glance as it approached the edge of our solar system—from four billion miles away. The image that it sent home was startling—not because of its beauty, because space is, well, mostly space—but because in this lonely and dark universe, there suspended in the centre of a ray of sunlight was a tiny, faint and pale blue dot. Remarking on this extraordinary occurrence, Sagan wrote:

Because of the reflection of sunlight . . . Earth seems to be sitting in a beam of light, as if there were some special significance to this small world. But it's just an accident of geometry and optics. . . . Our posturings, our imagined self-importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the Universe, are challenged by this point of pale light. Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark.

Sagan's view doesn't offer us much hope! But he was right in one thing: humanity does seem to see itself as fairly important—we're rather special.

Sagan's philosophy is that though we are specially intelligent and unique, we just happen to be so. There's no designer, no maker.

But the Principle of Mediocrity does a strange thing. It correctly recognises that *physically*, Earth—and by extension, *man*—is *not* at the centre of the universe. But by going a giant leap further and assuming that there is therefore no creator, it *spiritually* puts man right at the centre. We are all that there is.



BRENT NICHOLLS, NELSON

There is no more. Nobody can help us. If we want answers to our problems, we must find them ourselves.

Fortunately though, there is an answer about the origin of life and it's one that scientists are increasingly refusing to dismiss as new technology and new understanding help us to unravel the physical mysteries of the universe.

Our privileged planet

In 1995, Guillermo was in Rajasthan, India during a total solar eclipse. A total solar eclipse, when the Moon fully covers the bright disk of the Sun, is a rare event that lets scientists observe the Sun's atmosphere by blocking out the Sun's brightness and allowing its chromosphere and corona (the outermost part of the Sun's atmosphere) to be seen around the edge of the Moon. Studies of the Sun's corona during eclipses have taught us much about physical laws.

Though he was there only to carry out a simple experiment, it was not lost on Guillermo that a striking array of circumstances needed to fit together to produce such an eclipse. If the Moon was a little bigger or the Sun a little smaller, then light from the Sun's atmosphere would have been fully blocked. Or, if the Moon was a little smaller or the Sun a little bigger, the Sun would not have been blocked enough and too much light would have made the corona invisible. But it just so happens that while the Sun is four hundred times larger than the Moon, it is also four hundred times further away from the Earth than the Moon is. This means that for us observers on Earth, the Moon fits just nicely over the Sun without being too big or too small. Given the special value that these eclipses have for scientists, this may sound like a lucky throw of the dice. However, in their book, *The Privileged Planet*, Guillermo and Richards show that there's an awful lot that's gone right in the galaxy for the Earth to not only be a great place for us to live on, but also to be a prime spot for us to observe and explore our galactic neighbourhood. The solar eclipse is one example of the opportunities that our galaxy provides us for its discovery.

Without God, there would not necessarily be any rule that says that the planet that is most hospitable for intelligent life is also a planet that has the structure, geology, atmosphere and position in the universe that provides for exploration. Complex life can't exist just anywhere in the universe: there are things that Earth does so well, which are so conducive to life—especially in the combination that it does them—and which are very rare in the universe. We need the Earth to be the size that it is or thereabouts; we need a moon to stabilise

The Privileged Planet (the DVD)
is available from:

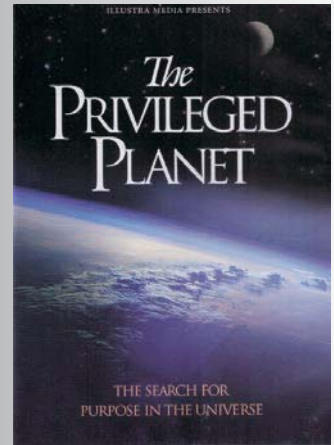
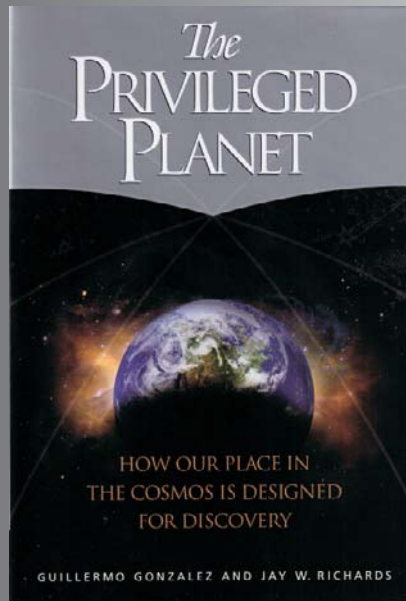
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Earth's orbit; we need the Earth to be about the distance that it is from the Sun so it doesn't cook or freeze; we need Earth's plate tectonics to recycle its crust; we need the Earth to have abundant water to regulate its temperature; we need the atmosphere that the Earth has; we need the Earth's rotation and we need its magnetic field and so on . . . if we, complex life, are to exist. But if that is not astounding enough, then consider that all of these things also create optimal conditions for discovery. Guillermo explains:

To put it both more technically and more generally, "measurability" seems to correlate with "habitability." Is this correlation simply a strange coincidence? And even if it has some explanation, is it significant? We think it is, not least because this evidence contradicts a popular idea called the Copernican Principle, or the Principle of Mediocrity.

Without God, it does not need to be so. Without God, there is no rule that says that intelligent, exploring life should have the optimum conditions for viewing and analysing their universe. But with an incredibly small probability of these things ever happening, they have happened for Earth. This is why Guillermo and Richards say that the Earth is privileged—and has been designed.

Yet astronomy offers only one perspective. Perhaps far more convincing is biology. It should be clear to all that the marvellous assemblage and functioning of the human body as well as even the simplest of organisms *could not be* except someone had designed and built them so.

In our next issue, we'll review the work of scientists from a range of disciplines (some are former leading evolutionary biologists) who confess to finding the theory of evolution scientifically unsatisfying for explaining the origin of life. They are convinced that the smallest of bugs, like miniature machines, must have been designed, programmed and built—by a designer.

But you don't have to be a scientist to realise these things. God has made creation so clear in nature that a simple child can recognise it. There is every reason to be certain about this. There is no need to doubt.

Searching for God

Seeing the universe and hearing of the distances between stars and galaxies (thousands of light years) gives us a picture of eternity: space without end; time without end. Yet, if Earth was in a less fortunate place in the galaxy, our skies might be permanently clouded and we'd be unable to see far at all. Maybe we wouldn't even know that there are other stars out there beside our own. *We would then be less able to comprehend the eternal God who made them.* Therefore, while the plant and animal kingdoms show us God's cleverness and attention to detail, the universe shows us the measure of his mighty power, i.e. *there is no measure.*

If there is a correlation between habitability and discovery, what is its purpose? It is that mankind might see that there is a maker and that we become as familiar with searching *him* out as we are searching the physical realm.

The Bible shows that our sinful ways have moved God to hide himself from us, but this same God also said:

. . . ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the LORD . . . (Jeremiah 29: 13-14)

Jesus also said:

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. (Matthew 7: 7-8)

We will not find God with scientific instruments. Finding God is dependant only on a willing heart. God wants those who *want* to find him, to find him.

Would God, who created such order in the universe, be satisfied with letting disorder reign in our own hearts? Would he be happy with every man doing what is right in his own eyes and with people who choose to live independently of him?

The Bible shows us that the same God who created all things has put his hand inside human history so that we can see

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who he is and what he thinks about us. Just as the universe shows God's handiwork; just as the smallest bug and the most majestic tree shows his skill; so, the Bible, a book written over many ages, also shows the same unity of origin and God's imprint. If you get to know God's Word, then you will get to know God. He has not left us without his voice.

Gonzalez is assistant research professor of astronomy and physics at Iowa State University and the author of over sixty peer-reviewed scientific articles. Richards is vice-president and senior fellow of the Discovery Institute in Seattle, the author of many academic and popular essays and the editor of several books. ■

Want to know more?



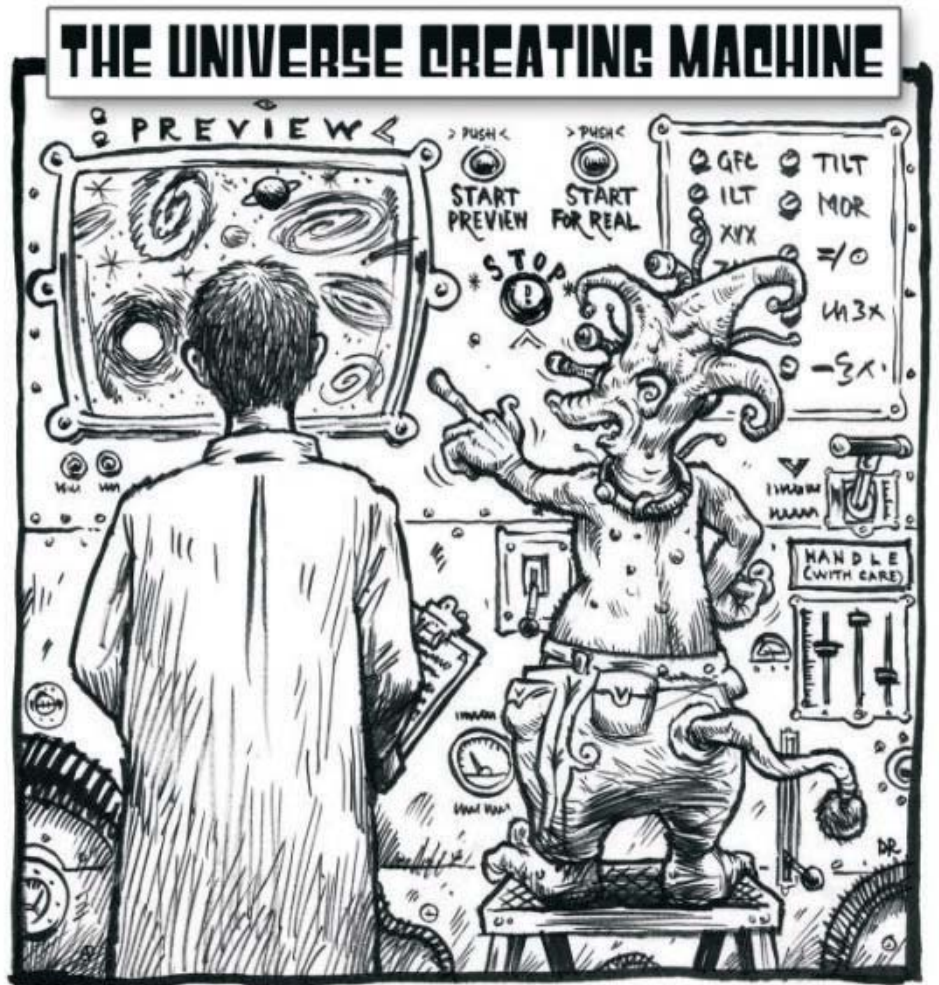
Motueka Christian Fellowship

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Pastors Jason & Heather Daniels and the fellowship warmly welcome you to their services:

Sun. 9:30 a.m. & 7:00 p.m.
Wed. 7:00 p.m.

*Where everybody is
somebody and
Jesus is Lord*



'See, we think there's other combinations that'll make a Universe that will sustain life. But so far, we haven't found any.'

The Universe-Creating Machine

In *The Privileged Planet*, Gonzalez and Richards tell a comical story about some powerful aliens who have discovered a Universe-Creating Machine—the very machine that created our own universe, in fact. The machine has knobs and dials on it with names like “Gravitational Force Constant”, “Electromagnetic Force Constant”, “Strong Nuclear Force Constant” and “Weak Nuclear Force Constant”. Since it was used to create our own universe, all of its knobs and dials have remained precisely set in place and since it was found (the aliens don’t know who put it there or who set the dials), the aliens have been trying to find another combination of settings that will produce another universe like ours (one that doesn’t, for example, simply collapse in on itself within a few seconds after they press Start). They believe that there must be other dial combinations that can also make a universe that can sustain life—but so far they’ve been unsuccessful.

The authors conclude by saying: “This fanciful story illustrates one of the most startling discoveries of the last century: the universe, as described by its physical laws and constants, seems to be fine-tuned for the existence of life.”

“The universe, as described by its physical laws and constants, seems to be fine-tuned for the existence of life.”

DR GUILLERMO GONZALEZ AND DR JAY W. RICHARDS



Will the world be destroyed?

Perhaps more than ever before, scientists are alarming us with news of impending global catastrophe

GLOBAL WARMING. RISING OCEANS. Super storms. Famine. We are all familiar with these terms. Today, scientists, environmentalists, political leaders and school teachers shout them out and proclaim that human-caused climate change is today's greatest threat to humanity. This message has been widely accepted, partly because in here somewhere there is potentially an end-of-the-world theme. Their claims are alarming, frightening and stirring.

In the midst of it all, and as Europe, Asia and North America chill in the most severe snow and ice in decades, some high-profile people are throwing water on the fire by saying that we're not making the world heat up and they reference abundant scientific studies to show it. So more and more people are indeed asking, "Is the world *really* heating up? Is this what the science shows?"

As alarm grips first the scientists, then the politicians . . . and then people like you and I, solutions are being proposed which *really do* make it feel like the end of the world: walk, don't drive; eat less cows; pay more taxes. Yet it seems that some of the most important questions aren't being asked by many. These include: "Even if climate change is real, is it *really* the greatest threat facing humanity? Is it the greatest threat facing our children? And if it isn't, what on earth is?"

If we know what the greatest threat to humanity is, then we might put more mental energy into working on *its* solution.

The real end of the world

The Bible clearly teaches that one day this world will come to an end and its nations and civilisations will cease to exist forever. On the face of it, this seems unlikely. But God does not intend to have this present sinful world continue always as it is. This earth is here only for a time and when its purpose is fulfilled, he will roll up this

universe and the earth with it to set out a new heavens and a new earth that is without sin, sickness and death and which will endure forever. Our present world is therefore a part of a much bigger picture than we could ever conceive if the Bible had not told us so. There is therefore something much greater to be alarmed about than melting ice caps and grumpy polar bears.

An ancient catastrophe

Thousands of years ago, there occurred an extremely devastating catastrophe that was like an end-of-the-world event in its day. Though after it, the world continued on and

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life again filled the planet (we're here, after all), what happened then was a striking picture of what will come upon this world in the near future.

The Bible shows us that about seventeen hundred years after the first sin of the first man and woman (Adam and Eve), the world had reached a state of great moral depravity, violence and wickedness. People knew of God, but they chose to disregard him and not fear him. They knew of his laws and his righteousness, but they wished rather to live independently—to live their lives *their way*. The result was that:

The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. (Genesis 6: 6-7)



“And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered.” (Genesis 7: 19)

When men *will* not be subject to the laws of God, when they *will* not be led by God's Spirit, then they will be led by their own beastly nature to do awful acts of violence, rape and pillaging. So God resolved to bring an end to that evil generation by a worldwide catastrophe.

“Make thee an ark”

God selected one man from the whole human race with whom he could work.

But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. (Genesis 6: 8)

Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. (Genesis 6: 9).

He commanded Noah to build an ark (a ship), into which Noah and his family (eight people in total, including his wife, his three sons and their three wives) could enter and thereby be protected from the coming judgement.

This judgement would be by water: an overwhelming flood that would destroy all creatures on the earth. Of all animals and people, only those in the ark would be saved.

Noah needed plenty of time to build the ark—it was enormous in size. He needed time to cut down timber, prepare the wood, draw up plans and build and furnish the ark with all things necessary to ride out a ferocious storm.

During this time, Noah was not only building. He was also preaching:

[God] spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; (2 Peter 2: 5)

During the years of preparation, Noah warned the people that to be saved, they must have faith in God and turn from their wickedness. Those who believed Noah's message would find shelter in the ark.

There was a specific method of salvation. If some had decided that they would not like to join with Noah in the ark—that they might rather build their own ark—they would have perished with the rest of the world. God's plan of salvation was *with Noah*.

This was the time of God's patience and grace: the time during which catastrophe was held back to give people the opportunity to hear the message of salvation and believe. Noah's message was an end-of-the-world message to his generation. The world as they knew it would be no more.

For many years, there was no sign of a rain storm. But at the appointed time, the flood came and destroyed everything that breathed except for those who were protected in the ark. Apart

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from Noah's family, nobody else came. Nobody else followed. The people of the world proudly continued with their lives—marrying, eating and drinking—until the flood came and took them all away (Matthew 24: 38-39). They heard the message of salvation and bypassed it.

A prophetic picture

You can read this story in the sixth to ninth chapters of Genesis

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in your Bible. It is a true story, it really happened and the Bible is a record of this tragic event.

Yet the Bible shows that the great flood was not only a means of destroying the world that was then, but it was also a prophetic picture of the final, end time judgement that is yet to come: it was like a real-life parable—a real story that spoke of something much greater.

The apostle Peter (one of Jesus' disciples) wrote:

But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgement and perdition of ungodly men. (2 Peter 3: 7)

God promised Noah that he would never again destroy the world by water. He has kept this promise. However, God also promised that he would destroy this world by fire as judgement upon all who will not have faith in him and follow him, like those of Noah's generation. This event will be by the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The real ark

As in Noah's day, when God purposed to save the faithful by the ark, so today, God has purposed to save those who believe in Jesus by an ark—but this time, the ark is his church. The only vessel that will survive the coming judgement on this earth is his church, that is, his people.

The gospel message of salvation has gone out to the whole world, imploring men to believe, repent, follow Jesus and be added to his church. As Noah spent many years building the ark in preparation for the day of wrath, Jesus Christ has been building his church and drawing into it all who will hear and believe.

The threat to the earth of any human-caused global warming pales when compared to the threat that the Bible foretells for the future. When Jesus Christ came the first time, two thousand years ago, he came as the solution to man's guilt before God: he died on the cross in the place of sinners. When he comes the second time, he will *complete* this plan of dealing with sin: he will destroy all who have rejected this offer of salvation and have thereby remained guilty before God.

There is not one person on this earth who can truthfully say, "I have not sinned."

What Peter said

There was climate change in Noah's day: rain like they'd never seen before. Yet the current climate change movement assumes that the earth will always continue as it is: Jesus will not come back to judge sin in this world as he said he would. So lest we turn environmentalism into a religion, we exhort our readers to put all things in perspective: the most important issue for mankind today (it always has been) is *sin*. The most important matter for you is your relationship with God. Have you acknowledged that you are guilty before God? Have you heard the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ and believed? Have you stepped into the Ark of Salvation (his church)?

Listen to the words of the apostle Peter, who saw down to our time:

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. (2 Peter 3: 3-4)

Peter knew that in the end times there would be much unbelief regarding Jesus Christ's return. We are living in those days and this is certainly the case today.

Jesus promised that when he returns, he will bring those who loved and followed him to a new home—this time, one without sin . . . and yes, without pollution too. There will be no wickedness, there will be no violence, there will be no evil of any sort—not one bit.

Listen to the words of the Bible concerning this new home:

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. (Revelation 21: 4-5)

We exhort you to believe and follow the Bible's message of salvation by Jesus Christ and enter into the new ark in faith. There you will find the one true God, lasting peace, everlasting life and a refuge and shelter from the coming storm. ■

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the psalmist speaks of here is the rationale for doing right, that is, the *moral basis for right conduct*. Progressively over time, society has witnessed the systematic undermining of the moral foundation for doing right, a constant erosion of truth through a humanistic and anti-Biblical approach to all matters of morality and conduct.

Unfortunately, many people in today's world are growing up completely adrift to what is actually *right*. The foundation is being destroyed and the

trend is such that society must ultimately reach the point of becoming beyond remedy. Then there is nothing the righteous can do.

This happened in Noah's day; it happened in the days of Lot and it is happening again today. Things cannot and will not just continue as they always have done. There is coming a day of reckoning when all will stand before God and give account for the lives that they have lived.

God is a just judge, giving eternal life

to the righteous while punishing the wicked. The goodness of God is such that while there is no hope for a world living in rebellion against him, there *is* hope for those who would turn from their sin and accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and saviour. God is offering us the free gift of eternal life if we will believe in him. The choice is ours.

Jason Daniels is the pastor of the Motueka Christian Fellowship. ■

Jesus saved me and healed my daughter

In church recently, **BONNIE STARKEY** shared how she came to follow Jesus. We share this now with you.

I was married with children and I didn't know who Jesus was. My husband and I never got married in a church because neither of us had ever been inside one and we didn't know what happened inside them. We thought people who went to church were strange and we'd heard at school that those who went to church got teased with little rhymes.

My brother came and boarded with us and during that time, he had become a Christian. My husband and I teased him real bad, so he left staying with us. About two years after he left, our second daughter became ill with a blood disorder that had twisted her wee body and made it stiff. The doctors didn't give us much hope. We thought each day would be her last. So we stayed at the hospital in shifts so that one of us was there all the time.

It was getting near Christmas and I saw out my kitchen window my brother whom I hadn't seen for two years, walking up our drive whistling. I went

to greet him and as soon as I did I broke down in tears and told him about our daughter's condition. He took me by the hand and said, "Come with me." We sat at the kitchen table and he told me of God and Jesus. I said, "I have heard people speak of a God, but who is Jesus?" My brother explained and showed me where Jesus healed people in the Bible.

My brother said, "If I give you a gift, you say 'Thank you,' don't you?" I said, "Yes." He said that God through Jesus will give me the best gift ever, as he will heal our daughter. Then he asked for a handkerchief or something that belonged to our daughter, so I got him a handkerchief. My brother said, "I'll go to the church as soon as the service starts and we will pray over this handkerchief and I'll meet you at the hospital. When I get there, we'll put this handkerchief on your daughter and you thank Jesus for this great gift he's going to give you." So we met at the hospital and I went into the room, put the handkerchief on my

daughter and thanked God real big. After a while, she began to move. She hadn't moved for days. I could see her improving right in front of me and then I was crying and thanking God at the same time. Later, a doctor came in and saw the improvement. He asked what we did, so we said we had prayed to God. He said, "Well whatever you're doing, keep doing it!" A couple of days later, we were able to take her home. She had lost a lot of weight, but she was healed.

I had to eat a lot of my words as far as my brother was concerned. I am so grateful that he came to visit and held no grudge against us for teasing him in the past. I gave my life to Jesus after that and will worship him as long as I live.

Bonnie Starkey has lived in Motueka for forty years. This story happened when she was twenty-five years old. She is now in her sixties and worships at the Motueka Christian Fellowship. ■

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