

Eye-Opener Studies

Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law. (Ps. 119:18)

8: The Genesis Foundation

The term ‘New Testament Christians’ can be a useful defining definition of the hermeneutic which underpins our approach to the faith. In other words, it’s how we like to think of ourselves and our approach to the Bible and Christianity. It can also unintentionally mislead its own adherents if we are not very careful! It can so easily become a meaningless tautology, like the term ‘Born-again Christian’. There are no Christians who are not ‘born-again’ for Jesus said to Nicodemus: *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”* (Jn 3:3-8). What those who regularly use the label ‘Born-again Christian’ mean is an enthusiastic, fully-committed, gung-ho-type of Christian, obviously keen and eager to serve the Lord. So a ‘Born-again Christian’ is a certain type of Christian - usually an evangelical - in the eyes of those who think this way. So too there are no Christians who are not ‘New Testament Christians’ because we do not find Christianity in the Old Testament, or anywhere else for that matter. What is intended by the term is a Christian believer



Nicodemus meets Jesus at night

who strives to get as close to the practice and teaching found solely in the New Testament as he is able, as opposed to being involved in all the later historical add-on teachings and practices accumulated over two millennia and not found in scripture at all. In other words, those who use the term are thinking of those who strive to get back as close to the original, primitive, First-century church as found solely in the New Testament as is possible today, without any creeds or confessions added on, and who let scripture define scripture, not uninspired men no matter how well-meaning they may have been. Its a *sola scriptura* approach with an even narrower horizon than is usually accorded under that title since ‘*sola scriptura*’ normally refers to the whole Bible. It’s a sort of *sola New Testamentura* position (if we can be allowed to invent such a term to make a point!).

Danger for New Testament Christians

The danger is that New Testament Christians can be so focused on the New Testament that they virtually ignore the Old, or push it way down in their lists of priorities as far as serious studies are concerned.

Yes, they know the main characters and incidents (or think they do!) but mentally reference Colossians 2:14 where Paul informs us that, ‘... you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.’ (Col 2:13-15 emphasis ours). Jesus nailed the Old Law, the Law of Moses, to the Cross so Christians are not under its rules and regulations any more. Paul called the Old a guardian as he wrote to the Galatian churches: ‘Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.’ (Gal 3:23-29). If Christians are not under the Law, why bother too much with studying it?

Why bother?

There are many reasons why we should spend time, as Christians, studying in the Old Testament as well as the New. Evangelistically we want to tell the world about the good news of the Gospel of Jesus and the salvation He brought to the world. This is right and proper. Many Christians, however, forget that the four Gospels are, in fact, Old Testament, or Old Covenant, documents. The Gospel Age did not dawn in the written narrative until the Book of Acts, after the resurrection and ascension of Christ. Thus people like the repentant thief on the cross, who died alongside Jesus and was saved by Him, died as an Old Covenant Jew, under the Law, and not as a baptized Christian (you’d be surprised how many Christians fail to recognize this point). Jesus’s life and ministry rounded off, completed and fulfilled the Old. The way our Bibles are printed confuses this issue unless we think about it.

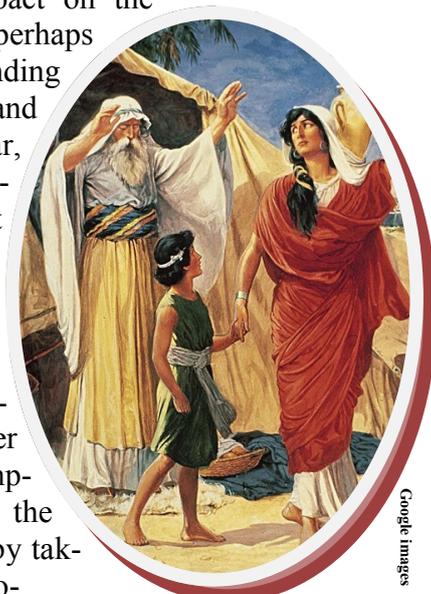
There is an old saying about the Testaments

that ‘The New is in the Old concealed; the Old is in the New revealed.’ The Book of Hebrews makes the links beautifully and would be incomprehensible were we to ignore the Old. But we must also not forget that only the ceremonial, religious Law of Moses was nailed to the Cross. Jesus did not cancel the moral laws at all. They transcend covenants and religious ritual practices. It is true that He redefined some of them, like anger being akin to murder, or lust akin to adultery (Mt. 5:21-31), but no moral laws were declared to be redundant by the Saviour. We are just as accountable for our personal morality as ever those living in the Old Testament times were, and more so because we have more teaching than they had to help us judge.

It may surprise many Christians to realize that the Mosaic Age, from Mount Sinai to the resurrection, was only about one third of the time from Creation to the Cross. Over sixty per cent of the Earth’s spiritual history, until Jesus came, is contained in the account in Genesis. The covenant God made with Noah, and typified by Melchizedek (Genesis 14:17-24; Ps. 110, verse 4 specifically; Hebrews chapters 5 - 7), has never been revoked. Its details still apply. (We will pick up more on Melchizedek in Study number 10.)

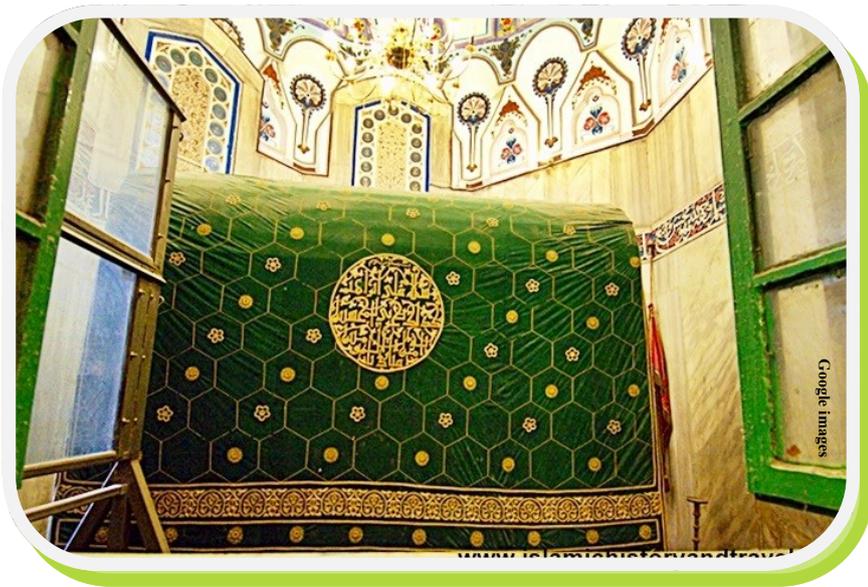
Abraham’s legacy

If we find we are guilty of thinking that the Genesis story does not impact on the world today, save, perhaps in questions surrounding origins in geology and biology in particular, think again! Abraham was a great man of faith and is praised to high heaven in the Bible - and rightly so because God says so - BUT, though never censured for his jumping the gun over the promise of an heir by taking Hagar as a surrogate wife and father-



Google images

Hagar and Ishmael expelled
ing Ishmael, he became the father of the Arab races as well as the Jews, and they have essentially been at each other’s throats ever since. Both rightly claim



Abraham's Tomb in the Cave of the Patriarchs, Hebron

Abraham as their father. Both Isaac and Ishmael came together to bury their dad (Gen. 25:7-11). Both 'families' have an equal share in guarding his tomb and final resting place today. Both see Palestine as their land of promise and the politics of the Middle East are a complete, convoluted mess. This has not been helped by Mohammed coming along and re-writing history to have Ishmael as the child of promise not Isaac, and the Muslims fervently hate the Jews down to this very day. Hagar and Ishmael were treated abominably by Sarah, and Abraham acquiesced to keep the peace, but God preserved and rescued them promising to make a great nation for Ishmael (Gen. 21:8-20) as well as Isaac, but we're still picking up the pieces. It's complicated, deep and nasty but we'll never ever begin to understand it if we think Genesis doesn't matter and thus ignore it.

The first eleven chapters

These are the most controversial chapters in the Bible at the moment. The whole Book of Genesis is the most quoted of all in the rest of scripture, and the first eleven chapters are the most attacked by biblical critics and liberal theologians. It is foundational to all doctrines, and atheists know that if you want to destroy a building you must destroy its foundations. It is all very well to say that we must preach the Gospel, or good news, of salvation; that Jesus came to save us, but to save us from what?

Two stories

There are two stories about how we got here, how

we have developed, and how it will all end, and they are not compatible. Those who attempt to forge a link fail totally because one story is God-centred and God-driven, the other does not want God in the picture at any price. Those who find that they want both soon find that they cannot have their cake and eat it too. If they kid themselves that they have succeeded - and admittedly many Christian believers do - quite frankly they simply have not studied the situation in any sort of depth at all. What they actually have done is swallow the so-called scientific, atheistic, humanistic narrative at the expense of the God-given biblical one and then sub-

merged God beneath a veneer of acceptable intellectualism which helps them hang on by their fingertips to some sort of faith at the expense of completely undermining the veracity and truth of God's Word. This frequently finishes up by destroying faith in the name of intellectual superiority where the world's view on any subject completely trumps what God has revealed.

A) God's story

The world was created in six days about 6,000 years ago, and each 'Day' was a normal time-span of 24 hours approximately. There was a beginning and there will be an end, when God decides to finish things. Only God is eternally existent, the 'I AM' without beginning or end. He is Triune and is omnipotent (all powerful), omniscient (all knowing) and omnipresent (all pervading, not located in any one spot). The Earth was created before the heavenly bodies (Sun, Moon and Stars) though the angelic hosts were the very first things He created. All were spoken into existence by God's Word (whom we later understand better as Jesus, the second person of the Triune Being we call God). None of them (including Satan) existed more than six days before Adam and Eve were created, who were the last beings put on Earth and were specially crafted by God from dust, in Adam's case, and from one of Adam's ribs in Eve's case, and not merely 'spoken' into life. They alone of every created thing were made especially in God's image; nothing else was. They were therefore the very pinnacle of the creative acts of the Word of God, and this creation was perfect. A



Adam and Eve in Eden before the Fall
 (Photo by the author in the Creation Museum, Kentucky, USA)

special Garden was planted for Adam and Eve to inhabit and look after in pure and sinless perfection living in complete harmony with God. They had one rule, or command/law to keep: ‘Do not eat of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the Garden’ (Gen. 2:16-17). That’s all; it wasn’t *that* hard, was it? There was an abundance of food provided for them, but they failed to do as they were told. The brightest, best, most splendid of the highest rank of angels - a guardian cherub - called Satan (see Ezekiel 28:11-19; *this is technically a lament for the King of Tyre but is couched clearly as a lament by God over Satan*) thought he could challenge God and win the obedience, affection and subjection of God’s special human beings, so he tempted Eve to try the very fruit they were told not to. Adam was standing there by her watching her do it without trying to stop her. When she obviously did not die instantly, as he appeared to have been told that she would, he joined her and risked the consequences, thereby failing in his duty as head of the household. (The very first sin actually was one of omission committed by Adam - a failure to do what he knew he should do rather than doing what he shouldn’t. Adam failed Eve.) They fell from sinless perfection, were cursed because of it, thrown out of their Garden, condemned inevitably now to die (albeit hundreds of years later in Adam’s case: aged 930 in

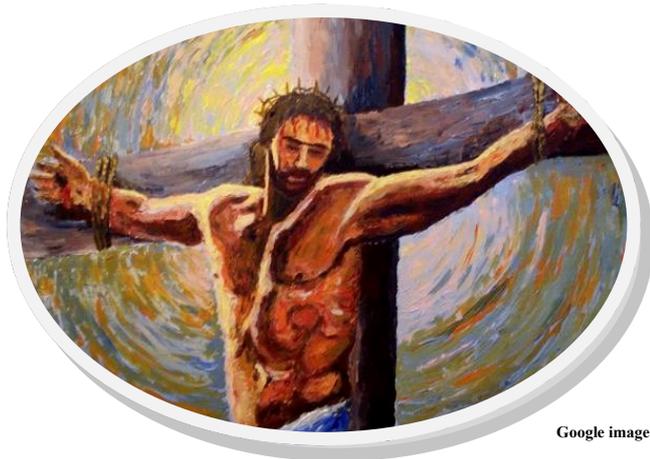
fact), and the sorry story of a perfect world, now fallen and ruined by sin (disobedience to the will of God), began. After 1656 years God decided to wipe out the sinful inhabitants of the Earth by a global Flood and start again with just one family, who were actually not perfect (Gen. 8:21) but whose patriarch, Noah, loved God, did his best and walked with Him in faithful love. God rounded up every kind of animal family group and preserved them for over a year in an Ark, built by Noah’s family under God’s guidance, and off they went again but in a very different world from which they had come. The family grew and quickly degenerated, save for a few truly faithful souls. They even wanted to rule the world as pseudo-gods so their now universal, post-diluvian language was confused, and they were scattered over the world. Some lived more successfully than others but few were truly faithful to God. Enter Abraham, and there we will leave the story for all the necessary foundational elements are in place.

The picture is clear: the world was made perfect. There was no evil, pain, suffering and death in



God decides to start again after 1656 years

it but it did not last like this for very long. ‘Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.’ (Ro 5:12). The perfection had been ruined by man and his relationship with God was severed. This fall from grace could not be fixed by effort, remorse, good atoning works, financial payment or anything man could do by himself to wheedle his way back into God’s good books. There was only



The only perfect blood sacrifice

one way and that was by a perfect blood sacrifice as God decreed it. He had been the One wronged and it was therefore He who said what had to be done to put things right. Then He would accept it by His grace. He didn't have to. He said He would because He loves us, BUT... - there's always a 'BUT', isn't there? There was no perfect blood sacrifice to be found anywhere on Earth. Nobody could pay the price of sin, not even the best of us, and definitely not an animal. So He provided the sacrifice Himself for us. His Son (the Word, the Second person in the Trinity) would have to come down in perfection and shed His sinless blood on our behalf. The sacrifice was demanded by God, and then paid for by God, by grace out of love. We can only be restored by putting our faith in His grace, out of love, and not by anything we can do ourselves by our own efforts and merit. Salvation is God's great, loving gift to us and not something we can earn or demand by right.

In other words, we fell and would remain fallen had not God stooped down and lifted us back up. It was to be a salvation for all who would believe and have faith, nobody barred, but it would not be given to those who refused to accept it. Adam's sin affected everybody for we are all his children. Jesus's salvation is available to everybody but not universally bestowed because, just as Adam used his freedom of will to defy God in Eden, so we all have to use our freedom of will to turn back to God, do as He asks us to because we love Him, and the God who cursed Adam for sin will accept us again by grace.

The punishment for not accepting will be total separation from God for ever. God prepared a place of separation for Satan after he defiantly challenged

God for the love and souls of humans. Hell was not prepared for man but for Satan and his angels (Mt. 25:41). No other creatures were made in God's image for a love relationship with God - for '*God is love*' (1 Jn. 4:8, 16) not even angels, and Satan tried to woo humans away from God so he could have them for himself. He almost succeeded too after 1656 years when there was only one faithful man, plus his immediate family, whom God could find to save, and use them to start again - though not massively successfully (see what Jesus said in Matthew 7:13-14). This was the work of the devil, as John told us in his First Letter: '*Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.*' (1 Jn 3:8).

This was why Jesus came and had to die. Salvation is salvation from eternal separation from God in a situation we call Hell. Whatever Hell actually is, Hell is where God is not. The blessings which come from God are: '*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*' (Gal 5:22-23). Just try to imagine a situation where there were none of these blessings present: no love, no joy, no peace, no patience, no kindness, no goodness, no faithfulness, no gentleness and no self-control. Forget eternal burning fires or cold outer darkness for the moment, just try to imagine



Hell is where God is not

existing without any of these things. That's what Jesus came to save us from. This is why He willingly came to die for us, and all of this springs out of a foundation laid in Genesis. Remove the Genesis account and the Cross is rendered incomprehensible, a pointless divine charade, and the Christian

edifice comes tumbling down as Jesus has nothing eternally important to offer. We cannot make sense of the Gospel without such a foundation and that this foundation is true and not merely a metaphor.

B) The world's story

The Universe is a vast age, beginning some 13.8 billion years ago. This is an American billion which is a thousand times smaller than a good old British one, but it's still a huge amount of time. When written out it is 13,800,000,000,000 years, which is a little longer than the biblical Creation date of 23rd October 4,004 BC, according to Archbishop John Ussher's calculations. Their guesstimate of the age of the Universe is constantly in a state of flux depending on the methods used to calculate it, the recalibrations being made based on new data or thinking, and the reliability of the assumptions on which it is based. It would be a mistake if those who believe in the biblical age of things were to dismiss these long ages in a fit of spiritual pique for they are not drawn like raffle ticket numbers out of a scientific cosmological bucket. They have good reasons for their dates and must be countered with respect, dignity and a solid scientific base of doubt that, since their theories cannot be falsified, they are matters of faith, more akin to religion than to true science. Scientists, who dismiss the Creationist's date, quite normally mock their intellectual naïvety without realising that their own foundational axioms are as unreliable as shifting sand.

The popular theory of origins is 'The Hot Big Bang'. This postulates that a super-dense microdot,



The Hot Big Bang

no bigger than a full-stop on this page, containing all the stuff of the Universe encountered something like a gravity wave and exploded. As the force of the explosion diminished, fragments collided and

collected under the effects of gravity, coalesced to form stars and planets in galaxies, and that on one planet at least, life evolved over millions of years - though there must obviously be other forms of life elsewhere in the vastness of space, it's just that we have not found them, or contacted them, yet! Our Sun is middle-aged, having existed for half of its life, i.e. about 10 billion years old, and the Earth is roughly 4.5 billion years. Life slowly emerged from a primordial soup - somehow - and over vast millennia time and chance so altered things slowly but surely until microbes developed into man.

The notion that this evolutionary process going from cosmological evolution, through chemical evolution, to biological evolution has happened must be true because we are here, defies experimentation, falsification and repetition, yet it is believed with religious, fundamentalistic zeal in most cases and is almost universally accepted in these disciplines. Since 'nothing comes from nothing, nothing ever could', as Julie Andrews sang as Maria von Trapp in 'The Sound of Music', their eternally existing, uncreated necessities are matter and gravity waves. Just as the Christian Creationist believer has an eternally existing, uncreated God, who used His power and intelligence to start the Universe and create life here on Earth in a few days, so the 'world' has matter, which 'can neither be created nor destroyed' (the First Law of Thermodynamics), eternally existing and by pure random chance acting over billions of years happening to bring into existence everything we see and know and understand today. It is mindless, purposeless, and pointless, but its march is directionally in an ever-upwards curve where, in time, good will prevail, suffering and pain will have been eliminated, and we'll all sit here waiting for either the Earth to fill up and we starve to death or we'll all die as the Sun runs out of hydrogen, inflates into a Red Giant star consuming all its planets before shrinking back into a dense White Dwarf star - but nobody will be left anyway to witness its demise.

There is no hope here. It is a nihilistic scenario where we wretched humans are not even pawns in a game of cosmic chess. We don't have to worry about it for this heat-death the world will experience is approximately 5,000,000,000 years off. I don't know about you, but I think I'll be dead before it happens!

Comparing the two

Both of these scenarios have been very loosely and superficially described here. It is a vast subject with copious quantities of literature, including books and magazines, as well as DVD presentations to highlight it (see the box for information sources).

In the world's view there is no plan or purpose in the Universe; we are here by accident; no Intelligence designed any of it; there is no external source of morality and no ultimate authority to whom we must bow the knee. Right and wrong are decided by social constructs not by Divine decrees. We answer ultimately only to ourselves and when we are dead that is the end; it's as if we never existed. There never was a perfect world or situation from which we fell. We are not therefore fallen creatures; we are evolving on an upward march to ever higher glory and achievements. The graph of progress is a steady upwards curve; we still may have a long way to go but we are getting there and will get there eventually. Death is not a curse at all but an inevitable part of life. It is our ally, our friend for it weeds out the unfit to live and allows the best to survive. The Bible may inform us that *'the last enemy to be*

destroyed is death' (1 Cor. 15:26), but it's our greatest asset as a species. There is nothing special about human beings; we are simply highly developed animals, and should be treated as such. We kill off old and sick animals, so we should be allowed to euthanize the old and seriously infirm humans. We abort and kill off the deformed, imperfect and un-

wanted animals, culling them if necessary, so abortion, infanticide and genocide are perfectly, morally decent things to do, especially if our social and political rulers say we can.

But which picture best fits the facts? Are we improving as human beings or is it a fact that the world almost seems to be getting worse, no matter what technical improvements to life and living standards we employ? Are people less unkind, greedy, selfish, lustful, immoral, and perverted, or are we, in general, just as bad as we ever were at rock bottom? Does ignoring God and His ways make for more enlightened opinions or is there a break-down of family life, human standards of decency and morality, and more unhappiness

with divorce, homosexuality and calling right 'wrong', and wrong 'right'? I think these are rhetorical questions; the answer is obvious: it is NO.

Creationist organisations and contact details

Creation Ministries International (CMI): 15 Station Road, Whetstone, LEICESTER, LE8 6JS.
(tel. 00845 6800 264). Web: creation.com

Answers in Genesis (AiG): P.O. Box 8078, LEICESTER, LE21 9AJ. (tel. 0116 2708 400).
Web: <https://answersingenesis.org>

Creation Science Movement (CSM) (Formerly The Evolution Protest Movement: the original Creation group):
P.O. Box 888, PORTSMOUTH, PO6 2YD.
(tel. 02392 293988). Web: www.csm.org.uk

Creation Resources Trust (CRT): P.O. Box 3237, YEOVIL, BA22 7WD.
(tel. 01935 850569). Web: info@crt.org.uk

*Please note: The first two are the largest groups and produce wonderful magazines: **Creation** and **Answers**, plus DVDs, books, and tracts. They have speakers going around the country spreading the word about the truth and importance of Genesis. Their web sites are packed with information and answers. CRT produces excellent pamphlets and information sheets especially for young people.*

All of them are superb on Genesis 1-11 and on dealing with the science of the debate. However they are all doctrinally evangelical in outlook so are pre-millennial about end times and teach 'faith alone' for salvation with the 'Sinners' Prayer' route into Christ (baptism plays absolutely no part whatsoever in this process). So be aware of such matters if dealing with the later parts of the Bible, and especially their answer to the most important question of all: 'What must I do to be saved?'

The Creation/Evolution Debate

With the Book of Genesis being foundational to the Bible and providing the *raison d'être* for meaning, purpose and explanation of the story of salvation which follows, as God dealt with Satan, sin and opposition to His Divine will, purpose and plan, it is not surprising that it is the main focus of attack from the enemies of God. Remove it as an historical account, or render it unreliable, and the edifice of Christianity comes tumbling down. It explains the presence of disease and death amidst evil, pain and suffering. It proclaims everlasting judgement on sin, which is defined by God who sets the rules, and the triumph of good. It gives the basis of marriage, the family and sexual morality: one man for one woman, once (unless death unfortunately removes one of them, of course). It defines headship, equality and spiritual responsibility. Without it the meaning of the Cross disappears for Jesus died to no end. We talk about salvation, but 'Salvation from what?' if there's nothing permanently defined as 'sin'? Indeed is there actually really anything called sin, if there is no authority to rebel against? Destabilize Genesis 1-11 and the Gospel loses its power, and once it loses its power it is consigned to the back burner as a psychological anachronism. Fewer and fewer take any notice of it even if they don't actively oppose it and society drifts into a moral and spiritual vacuum devoid of ultimate hope, where 'I do it my way' and trust it's the best that can be done, for, in the last analysis, only I matter.

The Creation/Evolution Debate today is the 'Does God exist?' debate of yesterday, and it is far from being just for eggheads and intellectuals; it is one which should be engaging all Christians who care about their faith. As Evolution rules out God so the next generation fail to follow the spiritual lead of their forefathers because they are not being given the foundation of the truth of the Bible from A - Z. If they believe it is unreliable over origins they rea-

son it is unreliable on salvation, life after death, heaven, and especially hell.

The thing many Christians fail to realise about this debate is the strength of the biblical position and the total emptiness of the evolutionary scenario. The media, especially the television, throw amazing scientific propaganda series at us, where evolution is never placed under the microscope for it seems so true it is beyond question. Schools are not allowed to query it even in the interests of searching for truth. Evolution, on any definition of what constitutes a science, is unscientific; it is a faith system: a religion. There is no repeatable 'evolution' experiment which can be lab-tested over and over again. It crumbles easily under a critical microscope, for it defies many proven laws of science, like the Second Law of Thermodynamics, but few with any power bother to look into it in any depth. Nevertheless the fight is on and slowly the message is getting recognition. Oddly enough as it does so the opposition tries even harder, and with more ruthlessness (yes, I really do mean 'ruthlessness') to squash it. That alone should tell us that 'they' are worried. To believe the Bible story you do not have to bury your head in the sand or leave your brains at the door of the meeting place as you enter! Both sides use and analyse the same evidence. It is the interpretation of that evidence which differs not the evidence itself. Scientists who accept the biblical viewpoint are every bit as scientific in their work as those who disregard the Bible.

The Question

The question we need to ask ourselves is 'Who do we believe when there is conflict? Do we believe that God's Word is the truth, or do we believe that science proves God's Word to be wrong?' The debate over the first eleven chapters of Genesis address these questions for they are the Genesis Foundation.

Task

Which aspects of Genesis 1-11 present you with particular difficulties, and why? Do you think it is important to resolve them, if not why not? If it is, how would you go about it?

Pick one major problem for you and discuss the pros and cons. (Guidance point: Look on either the CMI or the AiG web site (or both) to develop your research.)