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*“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”*

*Colossians 2:8*

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## Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

Last issue, we ended with verse 8 of chapter 1 of the book of Genesis, so now we move on to verse 9. Verse 9 moves us into the third day of creation. On this day, God starts by commanding the water to gather into one place, and allow dry ground to appear. We know from later verses, there were rivers that ran across the ground; God mentions four rivers in the description of the Garden of Eden. We also know from later verses, there was not rain as we have today, so rivers were not fed from rainwater, but water did come up from the ground and water the entire surface. (Gen. 2:6) This was obviously a much more efficient system for watering the dry ground, but the process of water draining its way back to the ocean was most likely the same.

Most secular scientists, and some Christian ones, believe that at one time the continents of this planet were all connected together. Not just by land bridges but literally connected into one large piece. Of course, secular scientists have their “billions of years” theory, but as Christians we would point to Noah’s flood. Unlike other ideas of trying to incorporate a secular idea - like saying God used evolution to create the world - this has real scientific basis. The shorthand would be to look at a globe. As you look at the continents, you’ll notice they are made up of shapes that could possibly fit together like a giant jigsaw puzzle. As you try to put the puzzle together, you find you do not have to move them all around the globe to get them to fit. It is more like they simply drifted apart, and all you need to do is push them back together. Add to this observation the fact that the oceans have been eating at the edges of these land masses for many centuries and you have a pretty good fit. Now, let me be clear, I’m not saying we know one thing or the other to be true according to the Bible, but the wording of verse 9 does say that God commanded the water to gather into “one place.”

Today, we know the surface of the earth is made up of plates. All of our dry ground is riding on these plates, and sometimes these plates will move and rub against each other. When this happens, many times we experience an earthquake. Sometimes, when this action happens out under the ocean, we have very large waves that will come into the land with a very destructive force. At the time of creation this may not have been the case. These “plates” may have been securely fixed together. It definitely would not have been paradise if there were earthquakes! If they were fixed together, the flood would have been the time in which all that changed, and that would have made it possible for the dry ground to drift apart.

While we are on the subject, there is one more thought I would like to pass your way. The continents may not have drifted apart as much as the ground that connected them was simply washed away. It never ceases to amaze me, when ground gets saturated by water, just how much it can sink and heave. There may have been far more dry ground before the flood than just after it! The fact the continents look like they could fit together like giant puzzle pieces may not be because they drifted apart, but they may look like this for the same reason two sides of a stream, many times, appear that they would match if pushed together. I don’t think we can comprehend all the destruction a worldwide flood could cause. Here in Genesis, the Bible tells us that God divided the waters and put some in the heavens and left some here on the surface. Even after God had divided the waters and made a firmament above,

P.O. Box 271, Loveland, CO 80539

(970) 593-9468

there appears to still be enough water to cover the entire surface. Then He commands the water on the surface to gather into one place. When God sends the flood, the fountains of the deep break forth and the water above comes down; and He allows all of this water to re-cover the earth. The damage this had to do is just unimaginable! We don't know for sure which answer is right or if either is right, but it would seem the movement, if not the existence of "plates," is a result of the flood. The fact Noah was walking out into a strange new world filled with new dangers, like earthquakes, is just another reason God felt it necessary to make a covenant with Noah, and let us know that as long as the earth remained there would be seedtime and harvest. (Gen. 8:21-22) There are many other things we could talk about on this subject, but for the sake of space, we will move on.

Verse 10 tells us God named these elements of creation, and then, once again, God saw that it was good. It deserves to be repeated that this means God saw it was complete. We know this earth is a complex set of systems working together to sustain life; and through the creation process, we see God putting these systems into place, piece by piece, and building the processes that make our world possible. He does not just throw it all out there; He takes the time to put it together step by step, and then confirms it is good. This should be a symbol to us of just how much God cares for us. God did not build this world and create us on a whim. He created us with thought and care. When we look at what we have done with the life God has given us, it should sadden our hearts. Man thinks he has made such incredible "progress." If this world is what man calls progress, then you can see just how hard man fights to not have the things of God in our world!

Verses 11 and 12 tell us how God created the plant life. Verse 11 tells us what God wanted, and verse 12 confirms that is exactly what He got. Here we see the wording that gives us the greatest argument against God using the process of evolution to create the world. Once again, God simply speaks words, but He adds the statement that the plants should yield "after his kind." This statement is made three times in these two verses alone, and it will not be the last time we will hear it. God also says the seed would be "in itself." This means no matter what the method of procreation was, the ability for these plants to propagate was built in. They did not need another plant or life form to "evolve" into them; they could spread and live life on their own basis. The plants and animals of this planet do not mutate at random from one thing to another; they have God given instructions to be what they are. When we do find a "mutation" in nature, it is a degrading effect not a positive one. Because of our sinfulness, the world is waxing old and falling apart. (Ps. 102:25-27) The "positive" mutations that some may point to in nature are simply demonstrations of the God-given ability for life to make some adaptations in order to survive. This is a defensive mechanism, not an offensive one. God made things that were "good," not things that needed improvement. Man has also been given a mind, and as this world's environment falls to the ravages of old age, he is smart enough to find and force some adaptations, in plants and animals, to fight for his own survival. (Gen. 3:19) However, many times man does not know what he is doing, and in a push to move fast (because tomorrow we may die) he may have harmed his food supply far more than he has helped! The wages of sin is truly death!

Looking at verse 14 brings us to the fourth day. Here, we finally see the creation of the sun, the moon and the stars. Remember that the light and dark have already been divided, but here God creates two great lights to divide the day from the night. According to verse 14, these lights' main purpose is to act as giant timekeepers. From the very beginning, the sun, the moon and the stars have been for the purpose of telling time. This is something very interesting to look at. God placed these objects in the sky for the purpose of giving us a cycle to observe. If man had never taken of the tree in which God said not to, we would still have access to the Tree of Life. This would mean that even today, Adam and Eve would still be with us. If man lived here on this earth as an eternal home, time would not be as much of a factor in our day by day lives! We could truly take a thousand years just working on one project if we so desired, and we would not be any closer to the end of our lives than when we started. Today, that is hard to imagine. We need to make every second count, because we probably won't live for a hundred years, much less a thousand. Everything we want to do needs to be squeezed into this short life we have. That is how we think today, but if death was not a factor, we wouldn't care about many years passing; yet God gave us pieces of creation for the specific purpose of marking the passage of time, Why? The answer is, God did not give us these objects so we could worry about the passage of time as a whole, and He did not give them to us so we could worry about the future. These markers are physical objects that give us a cycle. They show us the passage of seasons, of days and of years. We were created to live in these ever repeating cycles; and once again, God confirms after the flood that the seasonal cycle will continue as long as the earth remains. Our physical bodies are connected to these cycles and intended to live by them. When we look into the false religions of this world, we see the worship of these cycles.

This activity is directly connected to the idea that man worships the creation rather than the Creator! (Rom. 1:25) It is not just the worship of the sun and so forth that man looks to, but the cycles as well. God creates these cycles for us to have continuity in our lives. They are there to remind us to take life one step at a time. If we would have lived here forever without sin, these cycles would have given us hope and reassurance; reassurance that as we went through life there would always be a new day, there would always be a new year, the seasons would change, but only to come back around again. In a way, we would always have a fresh start. I wonder how many of us wish we could go back to a certain time and do something different. How many of us would love to go back and live life with the knowledge we have now. If death did not loom over our heads at all times, we would not have these feelings; because life would always be new and fresh each day, week, and year. We would not lament the past so, because we would always have the future. I believe we would, at times, still turn to the right and wish we had turned to the left; but with God by our side, walking with us, the consequences of those choices would not be so drastic. Like a perfectly protected child, we would go through learning processes; and the consequences of these processes would never include irreparable harm. If childhood, in a loving home, is truly the "golden years," then life without sin in the world would truly be golden! This brings us to many of the scriptures Jesus gives us in the New Testament, and confirms He is not telling us something new, but trying to return us to that which we had in the beginning. Jesus tells us to take no thought for tomorrow. He tells us to take it one day at a time. He also tells us if we will strive to walk with God and put God first in our lives, then God will take care of us and it will all work out. (Matt. 6:24-34, Rom. 8:28) As each day dawns, there may be many things this mortal body will face while feeling the pains of the past; but even though this is true, we need to take each day to follow God. Take the opportunity to do His work, and know that the day is fast approaching when Jesus will return. When that day arrives, for those who put their faith in Jesus, it will not matter how bad of a condition our physical bodies are in, or even if they have fallen to death itself, we will be renewed! (I Thes. 4:16-18, I Cor. 15:50-58) For the one who follows God, each new day, week and year should not be filled with worry, but with the hope we may serve God in it! For one who puts his faith in Christ, life should be lived with an entirely different mindset than for the one who has only this life to live. (Matt. 6:19-21) This may be hard to do, but God has given us a renewing cycle in our physical world that was meant to bring hope and faith in Him. (Rom. 1:20)

The irony is, instead of worshiping God, man has chosen to worship the creation; and a large part of what man hopes to accomplish in his religion is to tell the future or have good luck in the future. When you look at false religions, you find man tries to look at the stars in the sky to tell him what his future holds. This is ancient and far spread. I am sure many of you get a newspaper or some other media that still, to this day, contains a horoscope. Man wants to control his own destiny. He wants to know what lies ahead, and he would rather put his faith in his make-believe ability to read the stars and tell the future, than to walk with God each day. Reading the stars is not the only way man attempts to affect or know his future. The idea in many cultures of the past - and still many today - of sacrificing to false gods, is the idea of appeasing that god so it will either bless you with something good (like a good harvest) or at least not bring something bad. Many people try to worship God in this way! They think they can do something to appease Him so He will bless them; that if they go through certain steps or rituals they will receive some kind of blessing. They do not strive to live their lives according to God's Word out of a desire to do good and live as God created them. They try, for the sake of receiving something - maybe heaven itself! This is why we have so many vehement debates in our churches today, and throughout history, about what is right and what is wrong. Many times, we are not debating what we feel the Word is saying is right for our lives and the lives of those around us, but we are debating about just how much we can get away with and still make it to heaven! Many times, we try to serve God like a bunch of pagans! Oh, how it must sicken the heart of God. If we look at the Feasts and Holy Days laid down in the Law of Moses, we find they are not pagan rituals for the sake of appeasing God; they are celebrations of praise unto The Lord. It didn't matter whether the Jews believed they had something to celebrate or not. When the time came for a Holy Day, they were to celebrate! That is because the mind of God is not the mind of man. Our job is to seek each day to follow in the footsteps of God. If we do this, then we know that no matter what the outcome, it is all in The Lord's hands; and He knows what He is doing. The things of this life are too large for us to know, but God always knows just what to do. We need to find a renewed faith in God! We need to consider the lilies of the field, the birds of the air and the changing of the seasons. We do not need to look to the stars and try to figure out our future. We need to look to the stars and be reminded that whatever the future holds, we know who holds the future!

Go with God into this new year, and I'll see you next time!

# Do You See What I See!

By Philip E. Busby

The air was brisk and fresh that night, and a well of pride rose within his chest as he looked upon the stars. Was this one of the clearest nights that had ever been or was it just because of this marvelous tower he was standing on? As he looked down, Nimrod could see a hundred campfires below, sparkling on the ground like the stars above him. As he looked upon this scene, without even realizing he was speaking out loud, he said, "When this tower is completed we will reach into the heavens and know our future. We will advance as mankind, and this tower will stand as a legacy through all generations of how it all began. Just think what man can do and what he will accomplish!"

We have no idea whether the little story I just told above is in any way accurate to any night, but we do know the Bible tells us man wanted to build a tower that would reach into the heavens. We know this as the Tower of Babel: the place where man gathered, in one language, to build a religion the devil hoped would blot out the truth of God's love forever. We also know God would not allow this to happen; not because the people who were there at the time would be forced to believe and serve God, but because people of all generations deserved to have the opportunity to serve God - to find the truth and follow it. So, God would confound their languages, and men would separate and go into all the earth. Even though God did this, it did not stop many from serving this very same religious practice started at the tower. The world is filled with people who serve the creation instead of the Creator: ones who hope to know and control their own future. (Rom. 1:25) So many throughout the world would continue to look to the stars for a sign of what was to come. They would make many guesses about their future. Some would be right and some would be wrong, but they would continue anyway. Then something very interesting happened. In amongst the stars of the night, there appeared a new star. One that had not been there before. A star sent by God so all the world would look and see that their Saviour had come.

Even today, there are people all around the world who look for a sign in the heavens. It is hard to believe that at the time of Christ's birth there would not have been many who noticed this star! The statement the wise men make about seeing "His star in the East," would certainly indicate they were able to see the star from very far away! However, the Bible says only these wise men from the East came. (Matt. 20:1-16) The Bible does not say they were kings, and we do not know how many there were! We only know they brought three different gifts to Jesus. We don't know much about these men at all, but we do know that they were truly wise men, because they saw the Star of Bethlehem and followed it! It seems strange that out of all the world, only one group would follow this star. Maybe the people of the world were so caught up in their own false religion, they took it to mean something else; but these wise men from the East knew they were looking for The King of the Jews! (And they didn't mean Herod) (Matt. 2:1-2)

In a world where men have been taught to look to the stars for their future, God put a star that would lead them to eternal life! Many ignored this star; but for those few men who desired the truth, this star led them all the way to the house where Jesus was. There they found The King of Kings and The Lord of Lords. They found a Saviour - can you imagine? Man searching for centuries to reach the heavens, and these men got the opportunity to hold, in their arms, God Himself! ("...and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." Matthew 1:23) I've heard people say that because a large group of people believe in something, it means they can't all be wrong; but on any day of the week, I would rather be a part of that small group of men who found the Messiah, over being a part of the large group who chose to stay at home.