

The New Horizons Newsletter

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Matthew 28:19-20

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In God's Image

Science cannot account for the origin of sexuality, nor explain how or when independent male and female species 'evolved'. It has been dubbed 'the queen of problems' for evolution.

For example, how did 'nature' evolve a female producing complex living 'eggs' and within her lifetime evolve an equally complex living male sperm capable of fertilizing them? How to explain the mystery of reproductive cell division (meiosis)? And why isn't this foreign protein (sperm) rejected by the mother's immune system?

Biology has demonstrated the impossibility of the process of reproduction as a result of random mutation. Both male and female must have emerged fully functional and in the same time-frame. The *how* and the *when* remain unanswered by science. But it's not rocket science! For once the blinders are cast aside the answer to both is simple. We—male and female together—were created by divine fiat at a specific point in time.

Origins

The Deity (Elohim) had prepared Planet Earth as a treasure store (Genesis 1:1-25, Isaiah 45:18) to provide for the coming pinnacle of creation - mankind. [Heb *adam*. The term is inclusive of male and female : Genesis 5:2.]

Having made the lower rank of sentient creatures God then created the beings for which the planet was formed—made in His image: '*...God created the man in His own image; in the image of God He created him. He created them male and female*' (Genesis 1:27). Different from the lower creation. A different kind of being.

The pair's first instruction was to: '...

Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it' (1:28). This—with the blessing of the Sabbath command—was the foundational guidance given to mankind, guidance reinforced through man's succeeding history and recorded in the Scriptures.

Purpose

One of the fundamental drives of human behaviour is the in-built desire to propagate the species. But given our post-Eden moral downward spiral the Creator established boundaries—ignored by mankind—to preserve the integrity of mankind and to avoid our self-destruction.

We were created with purpose! Man is not mere flotsam and jetsam afloat on a primeval evolutionary sea. Rather, the prophet Malachi sums up God's purpose for His unique human creation: '*...Didn't God create you to become like one person with your wife? And why did he do this? It was so you would have children, and then lead them to become God's people [KJV 'a godly seed']. Don't ever be unfaithful to your wife*' (Malachi 2:15). It's a theme that resounds

throughout the entirety of the Scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation.

All future guidance in the Scriptures assumes these foundation principles from Genesis:

- *male and female are both created in the image of God*
- *man and women are of equal value, potential and destiny, with different roles*
- *The weekly Sabbath was for all mankind*

The Image Marred

Our first parents walked in harmony with and talked face-to-face with our Creator. Until, that is, Adam was swayed by his wife to yield his God-given authority to a contrary

head—Satan (Genesis 3:1-8).

The consequences, clearly spelled out by God ('*...you will surely die*'), were catastrophic, and we live with them to this day. The 'battle of the sexes', for example. Confused identities. Or our inability, as we ignore God's solutions, to live peaceably together. Religious confusion, for many are blinded by the wiles of '*...the god of this*

Letting it slip?...or learning?

You are handling life differently now compared to your pre-conversion days. *I should think so!*. Isn't that what Jesus asks of us? Didn't you then commit to a whole new way of life? As wrote Peter to the brethren: '*...since you delight in obedience, do not shape your lives by the cravings which used to dominate you in the time of your ignorance, but--in imitation of the holy One who has called you--you also must be holy in all your habits of life*' (I Peter 1:14-15). Or Paul: '*... do not follow the customs of the present age, but be transformed by the entire renewal of your minds*' (Romans 12:2).

That commitment may have been twenty, thirty, even fifty years ago. So—have you let things slip? Do you act differently from that first flush? Does Jesus's admonition to the Ephesian church apply to you personally?: '*...Yet I have this against you--that you no longer love Me as you did at first. Be mindful, therefore, of the height from which you have fallen. Repent at once, and act as you did at first, or else I will surely come and remove your lampstand out of its place--unless you repent*'. Do other brethren accuse you of being lax, 'Laodicean'?

Learning Curve

At our baptism, then, we are set on a course of behavioural transformation, to develop those divine characteristics exemplified by Jesus in his earthly life. That means a constant, ongoing conquest of our fallen nature: '*...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us*' (Hebrews 12:1).

We don't always win! Paul reminds us that all too often failure dogs us: '*...I do not understand what I do; for I don't do what I would like to do, but instead I do what I hate*' (Romans 7:15). We don't, however, throw in the towel, but we pick ourselves up—and learn the lesson: '*...a just one falls seven times and rises up again*' (Proverbs 24:16).

As the apostle continues: '*... What an unhappy man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is taking me to death? Thanks be to God, who does this through our Lord Jesus Christ!*'

The guidance God gives us through His Word is timeless—just as potent, as applicable, as effective to our lives as it was to Adam or Noah or Abraham. Our attitude must remain as the Psalmist's: '*...Your testimonies are wonderful; therefore does my soul keep them. The entrance of your words gives light; it gives understanding unto the simple [ordinary folk]. I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for your commandments*' (Psalm 119:129ff). It's an attitude of exciting pursuit of personal growth.

Worship Me!

In parallel to this vital and essential transformation of our moral behaviour and our outlook on life is how we 'walk with God', *how* and *when* we worship Him.

He reveals Himself as 'jealous' and has throughout the Scriptures made clear His pain when His people stray from His clearly-defined path—a path designed for our welfare, for our spiritual safety. He defines deviation from this path as *idolatry*.

God's Signature

Such idolatry distorts our vision of Him, and indeed led to the exile and dispersion around the globe of His people, Israel, and to a seventy-year enslavement of the tribe of Judah (the Jews). They had let slip their observance of the Sabbath, the weekly day God set aside for us—for *all* mankind—to observe for our benefit. Indeed the observance of this seventh day of the week (Saturday) is *God's signature*.

Having been set aside for all mankind *at creation* (Genesis 2:1-3) the Sabbath identifies Him as the one and only God and Creator of all things (Exodus 20:8-11). All other worship is idolatrous. When Israel became a nation God covenanted with them to observe it: '*...It is a sign forever between Me and the sons of Israel; for in six days Jehovah made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed*' (Exodus 31:17). To reinforce its importance penalties for failure to observe it were for the first time introduced on this, a physical nation—hence Israel's dispersion and Judah's enslavement.

Christian Observance

God still has the same signature! The church continued its observance, as is recorded in the New Testament. Some elements in the church (Pharisees—Acts 15) sought to continue the rigid enforcement of the unwritten restrictions the Jewish religious leaders had imposed on the Sabbath (along with circumcision)—laws which Jesus had vehemently taught against. Christians continued to observe 'God's creation signature' but *how* (not *when!*) it was observed becomes a matter of personal discernment stemming from individual faith as enlightened by the Scriptures. No longer a legality but by faith through grace.

Sadly, the church in succeeding centuries was overwhelmed by the pagan environment in which they lived and Sabbath was replaced by the then prevalent observance of Sunday—the signature of sun worship.

It is for each of us to 'grow in grace' in our emulation of the character of Jesus, *and* to freely worship God in the only manner He has revealed. Ω

God's Image cont'd

world', Satan (II Corinthians 4:4), who '*...deceives the whole world*' (Revelation 12:9).

Jesus the Messiah has dethroned Satan and made a way for mankind to restore that divine image. '*Repent and be baptized*' said the apostle Peter, and you will receive God's Spirit. It is the essential first step towards restoring that divine image. Ω

Request, free: [Should You be Baptized?](#)

A challenge!

Our readers, we suspect, are avid students of the source book of our faith—the Bible. So here is a challenge for you:

Provide convincing Scriptural evidence for the observance of the traditional ‘Christian’ holy days of Christmas, Easter *etc.*

Answers on a postage stamp!

Bible Festivals 2017	
Trumpets	September 21
Atonement	September 30
Tabernacles	October 5-11
Eighth Day	October 12

Letter from England

I wonder what the term ‘normal’ now means. It once meant well-behaved children. It meant quiet streets, and any rowdy drunken behaviour confined to the Public House. It meant police were concerned about public safety and security. The cell was for drunks. It meant a ‘clear distinction between the (two) distinct sexes. Normal was honesty in business and leisure.

‘Grin and bear it’ was normal. The cane was for unacceptable behaviour—just part of life. Hard grind at school was expected, as was being confronted by challenging ideas. A death in the family was normal and didn’t engage us in emotional spectaculars. (I, too, had a parent die when I was fifteen.) Normal enabled us to triumph over our enemies.

It was all a world away from what today passes for our civil (‘snowflake’) society. Certainly science and technology has made life easier—electricity, washing machines, cars, mobiles, computers *etc.* But is life better?

Back then perhaps half the population attended church and read the Christian Bible. ‘Normal’ was mum at home guiding their offspring and caring for the elderly. Not easy but normal. It was a reflection of teaching widely absorbed from school and Sunday School and Bible reading. God’s commandments (instructions) counted. Rare today.

The past holds positive lessons! All of us should diligently study the Word—and daily apply it to our own life.

James

**‘...You are doomed! You call evil good and call good evil. You turn darkness into light and light into darkness. You make what is bitter sweet, and what is sweet you make bitter’
(Isaiah 5:20)**

Your Health

That our health is greatly influenced by what we put in our mouths is axiomatic. Indeed our society is obsessed with a surfeit of sure-fire weight loss diets and ‘health’ foods, smoothie recipes, five/two, high protein, superfoods, ‘clean’ foods. *Today’s* super-diet, however, is ousted from the magazines by tomorrow’s latest celebrity fad.

Even the medical profession spins a web of confused advice. *Yesterday*—low fat. *Today*—bring on the butter. *Yesterday* one egg a week and *today* one a day. Red wine good, then red wine bad. And, of course, the pharma industry stirs the pot with widely conflicting advice on their miracle-working products.

Earth’s bounty has been delivered to us for our nourishment—but also to enjoy: ‘... *the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy*’. From the stance of the average man, listen to Solomon’s advice: ‘...*What is the best thing to do in the short life that God has given us? I think we should enjoy eating, drinking, and working hard. This is what God intends for us to do*’ (Ecclesiastes 5:18). Tempered, of course, by the apostle Paul’s advice: ‘...*Let your moderation [freedom from all excesses] be known unto all men*’ (Philippians 4:5).

In this sin-laden world we will never get ‘perfect’ food. It is heavily contaminated and we can but eat ‘natural’ as much as possible. But pay attention to God’s guidelines for ‘*clean and unclean*’—*ie* flesh foods He has designated for our nourishment (eg Leviticus 11). These are ‘...*sanctified [separated, set aside] by the word of God and prayer*’ (I Timothy 4:5).

God through nature has also provided mankind with a cornucopia of remedies for our healing. For example, Ezekiel’s vision of the thousand year reign of Messiah describes a river with trees watered beside it: ‘...*the fruit thereof shall be for [food], and the leaf thereof for medicine*’ (ch 47:12). To this day medicines are largely based on the vast number of plants growing around the world. [It is a mistake, and to our detriment, for us not to make use of these ‘drugs’ to ease our way through life! After all, our daily food is a ‘medicine’.]

Every truly converted person is a ‘temple’ for the holy Spirit: ‘...*you surely know that your body is a temple where the Holy Spirit lives. The Spirit is in you and is a gift from God. You are no longer your own*’ (I Corinthians 6:19). Clearly every Christian is commissioned to properly care for this temple: ‘...*God has not called us unto uncleanness [physical or moral impurity], but unto holiness*’ (I Thessalonians 4:7). **Ω**

read:

Are some Foods Unfit to Eat?
<http://cgom.org/Publications/Articles/AreSomeFoodsUnfitToEat.pdf>

Rest in Peace

The very thought of losing a child—through illness or accident or stillborn—is abhorrent. We expect the ‘grim reaper’ to call sooner or later—but for one so young? Talent wasted. A future gone. Family ties unravelled. A gaping void.

‘Why?’ challenges us. For many such an event provokes anger or bitterness. ‘God’ is blamed. Could he not have intervened? Isn’t he portrayed as ‘...gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works’ (Psalm 145:8-9)? It’s a puzzle.

Destiny

The default position of most Christians is that children who die ‘go to heaven’ or are not, at least, ‘suffering in hell’, and they derive comfort from that thought. After all, Jesus himself said : ‘...allow the little children and do not prevent them to come to Me, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven’ (Matthew 19:14).

The prophet Isaiah addresses it so: ‘...the righteous one perishes [surely including infants -Deuteronomy 1:39], and no one lays it to heart; yea, merciful men are gathered, with no one discerning that the righteous is gathered from the face of evil [adversity]’ (Isaiah 57:1). Nevertheless, soothing words don’t compensate for the sense of perpetual loss.

Reality Check

This sense of loss follows every passing of a loved one, heightened—as far as deceased adults are concerned—by concern as to their eternal destiny. Good—okay. But what if they weren’t ‘good’? That’s when bereaved Christians worry.

There is a misunderstanding here, almost universal throughout Christendom. It is that the dead are not really dead, but existing for ever in some form and consigned either to ‘heaven’ or ‘hell’. *Not so*—not according to Christianity’s source book, the Bible.

Note the words of King Solomon: ‘...the living know that they shall die; but the dead do not know anything; nor do they have any more a reward, for their memory is forgotten’ (Ecclesiastes 9:5). Or the Psalmist: ‘...The dead are silent and cannot praise the LORD’ (115:17). When we die—we are truly dead. But that is *not* the end.

Listen, pay attention to, what Jesus actually said: ‘...God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that everyone believing into Him should not perish [be fully destroyed], but have everlasting [perpetual] life’ (John 3:16). He offers us alternatives: choose unending life, or choose extinction.

He told his hearers: ‘...Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming in which all those in the tombs will hear His voice. And they will come out, the ones having done good into a resurrection of life; and the ones having practiced evil into a resurrection of judgment’ (John 5:28-29). Your destiny - the destiny of all of us—is to be resurrected, brought back to life, from wherever—or whenever—we finally come to rest. *For a period of judgment [assessment].*

There is indeed ‘...a spirit in man’ (Job 32:8). When we die our human spirit is reserved—inert, unconscious—until recalled to life through a resurrection. It is not bound for heaven or hell or limbo or purgatory. No suffering, no joy, but ‘asleep’. When we die we are truly ‘at rest’. Our human spirit preserves all that we are (eg our DNA) and all we have become throughout our lifespan (our ‘character’), and by means of it we are restored to life.

But the human spirit is *not immortal!* It has to be ‘...put on’ (I Corinthians 15: 53), for ‘...[God] only has immortality [Gk *athanasia*;, *deathlessness*]’ (1 Timothy 6:16). When resurrected the spirit is united to a body, either spirit or material. Those with the indwelling Spirit will have a spirit body (I Corinthians 15:44), and the rest will be restored to life in a physical body for a period of judgment (Revelation 20:5).

Divine Plan

Contrary to common belief, the Creator is not intent, at this time, on trying to save everyone. He makes salvation [*ie* becoming part of his spirit Family] available to all but selects only those who have ‘ears to hear’. Should you encounter the Creator you have a choice—shrug it off, or respond by dedicating your life to His service: ‘...All that the Father gives to Me shall come to Me, and the one coming to Me I will in no way cast out’ (John 6:37).

The Father, when you meet His terms, ‘begets’ you with His Spirit: ‘...if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his’ (Romans 8:9, I John 5:18). We are not born with it, but every new-born is assured of a restoration to life beyond the grave.

Your Choice

You can make a difference. A life-time of ‘good works’ will not buy this inestimable gift of the Spirit. It is freely available to us only through the sacrificial death of the only person to have walked our planet without sin—Jesus, the Messiah and God’s Son (John 14:6). *It is a gift.* But a gift so precious it can only be given to those who have been made pure through the blood of that sacrifice, whose sin is forgiven.

That means you must commit to the way of life pioneered for us by Jesus. It is called ‘repentance’. The way is sometimes arduous (Matthew 7:13-14, II Timothy 3:12)—but is the only way to live forever. **Ω**

God’s Terms

‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’ (Acts 2:38)