

A READ-ONLY SERVICE FOR THOSE WHO CANNOT ATTEND EASTER SERVICES

GOD'S PLACE IN HISTORY

Before there was our earth or time as we know it, God existed as three interrelated persons, God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ) and God the Holy Spirit. How do we know this? One of the most famous men through all the generations of people, Moses, said this in Psalm 90: "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You (God) had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God."

Moses, a humble man, was known as a friend of God and has been accepted as the author of the first five books of the Old Testament Scriptures. Could he be wrong about God's pre-existence? Jesus' half-brother Jude wrote in the last verse of his book, the second last in the Bible: "All glory, majesty, power and authority are His before all time, and in the present, and beyond all time!"

To prove that God is all-knowing and everywhere-present, God gave a test that anyone can apply to the Bible. This book, made up of 66 individual books written over 1500 years by authors from all walks of life, contains nearly 25% as predictions of things that would happen in the future. This is God's method of proving He is the supernatural God, the only God.

One of the best-known predictions was given by an Old Testament prophet named Micah who said some 700 years before the birth of Jesus the name of the town where Jesus would be born. Many predictions have already come to pass. But in future times there are still many more things to happen because God said it would be so.

We must not listen to opinionated people who claim that the Bible is a book of myths. Many of these sceptics look for physical evidence of the Hebrew children leaving Egypt at the exodus and can't find any, so they deny that it ever happened. But our Almighty God in Isaiah Chapter 43 said that He organised this escape through the sea for the slaves. Who will you believe?

One of the most prolific writers of New Testament books the Apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." On Judgment Day those who have been critical and deliberately twisted Bible content will themselves be judged, shamed and punished. Every person who has ever lived on this earth will one day have to give an account of how they spent their time here.

Did the Lord Jesus accept the writings of the Old Testament? Jesus as the sinless Son of God often quoted from the Old Testament, sometimes to teach the importance of God's ways and sometimes to teach what all people should avoid in their own lives.

When God started earth time this is recorded in the first book of the Old Testament, Genesis Chapter 1, verse 1: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

And we sing praise to God's greatness:

HYMN 743 – How Great Thou Art – (in THFW&C - red book)

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds Thy hands have made
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed.

Refrain:

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee,
How great Thou art, How great Thou art,
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee,
How great Thou art, How great Thou art.*

Those people who are uncertain of God's amazing abilities should read Job Chapters 38 and 39. There God explains to Job and all of us His wisdom in the creation of the universe. He asks Job: "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" We are ignorant of these things if we don't accept the teachings of the Bible as fact and truth.

As part of His creation on earth God planted a garden and created two people to look after it. God had given them only one rule to obey to stay in that beautiful garden. For a little while God had fellowship with them each evening. But soon God's enemy Satan persuaded those two people to disobey God's rule and so they lost everything: their garden home, their meetings with God and their purity of spirit.

God promised to bring about a reconciliation between Himself and struggling people in Genesis Chapter 3. The generations born after Adam and Eve spread out over the land and most became evil and violent in God's sight. God was sorry He'd made humans and decided to wipe out all the wicked people, along with the animals by a worldwide flood. He saved a godly man Noah, his wife and their three sons and their wives. In Genesis Chapter 6 God told Noah to build a big boat to save himself, his family and two of every type of animals, birds and living creatures. And it happened as God planned.

After the flood God gave the people a promise that He would never flood the earth again in that way. The sign of His promise was a rainbow in the sky. The population of the earth steadily grew again. By Chapter 12 God chose one man whom He called Abraham and accepted as a godly person. God promised Abraham's descendants specific land in the Middle East. Years later when a drought came to the land, Abraham's grandson took his entire family to Egypt to live because God had graciously provided a large stockpile of food there.

Abraham's descendant numbers grew and grew until the Egyptians became afraid of them, turning them into slaves to work on the ruler's building projects. They stayed in Egypt for 430 years. God heard their cries for help against their cruel taskmasters and sent Moses to go to the ruler to ask that they leave Egypt to go and worship their God. The ruler refused and God sent ten plagues against the Egyptians gods, all of which harmed the people of Egypt.

The last one was severe. The Israelites, as a sign of faith in their God, had to take an unmarked lamb and slaughter it. They then had to paint its blood on the doorposts of their houses. When the death angel passed through the land that night those with painted doorposts escaped harm and this was called the Passover from then on. But those who didn't prepare, suffered the loss of their firstborn son and animals. The Egyptians were so upset that they were glad to get rid of the Israelite people. That night Moses led them out of Egypt, never to return.

It was quite a long time before the Israelite people were back in the land that God had told Abraham He would give to the Israelites. They were to drive out the people living in the land because they worshipped idols. God told them that they would stay in the land as long as they remained true to Him. But the condition was that they kept themselves pure from worshipping idols, which they repeatedly did not do. God punished them and the next generation would turn back to worshipping only Him.

In those times people often had household dolls for their gods. Rich people would have had gold plated objects. People these days are more interested in the gods of wealth, fame, success and power to control other people. Has God changed in His position against idols? Not in the least! We must be careful to reject anything which competes with our loyalty to God and our worship of Him.

HYMN 366 – I Surrender All – (in THFW&C - red book)

All to Jesus I surrender, All to Him I freely give,
I will ever love and trust Him, In His presence daily live.

*Refrain: I surrender all, I surrender all,
All to Thee my blessed Saviour, I surrender all.*

All to Jesus I surrender, Humbly at His feet I bow,
Worldly pleasures all forsaken, take me, Jesus, take me now.

*Refrain: I surrender all, I surrender all,
All to Thee my blessed Saviour, I surrender all.*

All to Jesus I surrender, Make me Saviour wholly Thine,
May Thy Holy Spirit fill me, May I know Thy power divine.

Refrain: *I surrender all, I surrender all,
All to Thee my blessed Saviour, I surrender all.*

All to Jesus I surrender, Lord, I give myself to Thee,
Fill me with Thy love and power, Let Thy blessing fall on me.

Refrain: *I surrender all, I surrender all,
All to Thee my blessed Saviour, I surrender all.*

Each year the Israelite people were to follow God's instructions and offer animal sacrifices for their sins. They were required to bring a perfect lamb, kill it, and burn it on an altar as a covering for their sin. After four thousand years God sent His sinless Son from heaven to earth to take on human form so Jesus could become the final sacrifice for human sin. Jesus made many predictions, one of which was that He would rise from death three days and nights after He was killed. This He did but with a different type of body. And one day in the future His faithful people will rise from their graves with the same new type of body.

It was predicted in the Old Testament that Jesus would be betrayed by a friend in Psalm 41:9. He was given illegal trials, beaten until unrecognizable and hung on a Roman cross to die. He died for the sins of everyone who has ever lived on earth. Jesus' death and resurrection brought in a new way where anyone at all and not just Abraham's descendants could become part of God's kingdom.

Does this mean that everyone is going to go to heaven? God decides who goes to live with Him in heaven. Firstly, we need a right attitude towards God. Hebrews 11:6 says: "without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."

Secondly, we have to be aware that our many sins have made a big separation between us and the holy God of the universe. He does everything right but for us to cross this sin barrier we have with Him, we need to ask the Lord Jesus who died for our sins, to forgive us and blot them all out. This amazing act of sacrifice shows just how great is God's love for us.

Thirdly, we need to surrender our will and ambitions to God's will. This means that we are prepared to follow His plan for our lives. Jesus sends His Holy Spirit to live in us. There will still be times when we do wrong things, our conscience troubles us and we need to ask for forgiveness whenever we realise that we've caused grief to God.

Fourthly, we need to get to know God's ways better by studying the Bible each day, by praying to God for help to live the Christian life and by meeting together with other faithful Christians to help with personal spiritual growth. This salvation from sin is more than a feeling – it's believing God's Word is true and gives assurance of our salvation: John 1:12 promises: "To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

Fifthly, make Jesus Christ the Lord of your life day after day, sharing your faith in Him with others as opportunities open up to you. Gently tell those who mock you what Jesus has done for you but don't get into arguments. Pray for ways to help others struggling with their burdens in life.

Those who accept Jesus as their personal Saviour can experience a wonderful relationship with Him that will climax when we are called up in the Rapture to be with Him in heaven or finish our life span here on earth.

But those who reject Him must suffer separation from Him forever and eternal torment in hell. There is no middle ground. Jesus said in Matthew 12:30: “If you are not on my side, you are against me. If you don’t gather in the harvest with me, you scatter it.” Once a person leaves this world, there is no way to change where their future lies.

Our ability to trust God’s promise of salvation relies upon our ability to trust everything He says about history, from beginning to end. If we can’t trust His claims about the past, how can we trust His promises about the future? Without faith it is impossible to please God.

When all the prophecies in the Bible are completely fulfilled, earth time will cease. Then those faithful godly people who love Jesus will be with Him in heaven’s bliss for ever and ever. No temptation to sin from Satan will ever come to them again. Satan will be completely defeated by the Lord Jesus.

HYMN 235 – At the name of Jesus – (in THFW&C - red book)

At the name of Jesus Every knee shall bow,
 Every tongue confess Him King of glory now.
 ‘Tis the Father’s pleasure we should call Him Lord,
 Who from the beginning was the mighty Word!

At His voice creation sprang at once to sight
 All the angel faces, all the hosts of light,
 Thrones and dominations, Stars upon their way,
 All the heavenly orders in their great array.

Humbled for a season to receive a name
 From the lips of sinners, unto whom He came,
 Faithfully He bore it, Spotless to the last,
 Brought it back victorious when from death He passed.

In your hearts enthrone Him, there let Him subdue
All that is not holy, all that is not true.
Crown Him as your Captain, in temptation's hour
Let His will enfold you in its light and power.

Brothers, this Lord Jesus shall return again,
With the Father's glory O'er the earth to reign,
For all wreaths of empire meet upon His brow,
All our hearts confess Him, King of glory now.

Prayer:

Thank you dear Lord Jesus for dying for my sin and paying the penalty I owed to God. Help me to live for You each day. Thank you so much for the gift of eternal life. May I guide others looking for a Saviour from sin to find You. In Jesus' Name Amen.

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