

Exposing Some Myths Regarding The Bible

'Do not pay attention to myths and legends and endless genealogies which cause disputes, rather listen to God's administration that is in faith ... some have sinned and turned aside to useless talking. They desire to be teachers of the Bible but they do not understand what they are saying nor what they strongly affirm' (1 Timothy 1:4 to 7).

The Bible is a very complex, spiritual book that can only be fully understood by those who have a spiritual mind. 'God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth' (John 4:24). 'We did not receive the spirit of the world but the Holy Spirit which is from God, so we might know the things that were freely given to us by God, of which things also we teach, not in words the futile wisdom of man teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual things. The natural mind cannot receive the things of God's Spirit for they are foolishness to mankind, and they cannot understand them because they are spiritually discerned. Those who are Spiritual (filled with the Holy Spirit) discern all things and they are judged by no one. Who has known the mind of the Lord to instruct Him? We have the mind of the Messiah' (1 Corinthians 2:12 to 16). 'The god of this world (the devil) has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so the light of the Gospel of the glory of Jesus Who is the image of God, should not dawn on them' (2 Corinthians 4:4). 'The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are saved, it is the manifestation of the power of God' (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Most certainly the Bible is for everyone, and anyone who is able to read can read the Bible and those who can hear can listen to its teachings. The simple things in the Bible can be understood by anyone who reads or hears it, but the deep spiritual meanings are hidden unless God Himself opens their spiritual eyes so they can understand. 'He opened up their minds so they could understand the Scriptures' (Luke 24:45). Unless God opens our spiritual eyes and ears we cannot fully understand what is written. Many Christians have trouble understanding what God is really saying, as did the twelve disciples. 'They understood nothing of these things. His words were a mystery and were hidden from them, and they did not comprehend what He was telling them' (Luke 18:34). As a consequence of their inability to comprehend the spiritual meanings hidden deep within the pages of the Bible, many non-believers and lay-preachers have written stories, legends and myths about the Bible that are logical in their unspiritual minds, but are so silly, God Himself laughs at them. 'They speak insults and lies with their mouths and say, "Who hears us?" But You Lord, laugh and scoff at them' (Psalm 59:7 & 8). So-called 'experts' write stories that undermine the scriptures to 'prove' the Bible is just a nice 'story book', but every Word written in the Bible was either inspired by God or actually spoken audibly to the writers, who were told to write everything down for future generations. Every Word was 'God-breathed' (2 Timothy 3:16). The Lord is completely unimpressed by the attitudes of the people who refuse to accept Him and listen to His Word. 'He Who sits in the heavens laughs. The Lord has them in derision. He speaks to them in His anger and terrifies them in His fury or wrath' (Psalm 2:4 & 5).

There are Christian preachers who fancy themselves as prophets and teach false doctrines and sadly, the people they indoctrinate hold onto their errors and continue to teach them as fact. The Lord is not impressed with false prophets and their false doctrines. 'The time is coming when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but having ears itching for something pleasing, they will gather to themselves one teacher after another, chosen to satisfy their own desires and will turn aside from hearing the truth and wander off into false teachings' (2 Timothy 4:3 & 4). There are many more scriptures that deal with false doctrine. Jesus said to watch out for false prophets who come in sheep's clothing but are inwardly evil like ravening wild dogs and pass themselves off as Christians, leading many astray (Matthew 7:15; 24:11). The reason so many people minimise the Lord God in their own minds, listen to false doctrines and distorted Biblical teachings, is because they are rebellious and hate the name of Jesus. We are to glorify Jesus in everything we say, do and even what we think. To think evil is the same as doing evil (Matthew 5:28). To love Jesus and embrace the full Gospel means we accept the fact, one day we will all have to give an account of our lives to God on Judgement Day. Rebellious people do not like knowing they will have to give an account of their sin, so they choose an easier religion to follow. People who resent that fact have put up a barrier between God and themselves and refuse to accept they will all have to stand before Jesus when He sits on the Judgement Seat. Jesus said by their own words they will be sent to eternity with Him in glory or by their own words spoken on earth, they will be condemned for eternity (Matthew 12:37). We will look at some of these myths and false teachings that are leading people away from the deep relationship we can have with God our Father through Jesus our Lord.

Myth: The New Testament was written in Greek.

Truth: This would have to be the most ingrained myth of all because it has been preached as fact for more than 1,500 years. This myth minimises the power of the scriptures to foretell God's purposes, it minimises the plans God has for Israel and the Jewish people as laid out in the scriptures and it makes Jesus seem to be a Gentile instead of a fully Jewish Man who grew up in the Jewish nation of Israel, He spoke Hebrew (and

other languages), He was raised within the Jewish culture by two fully Jewish parents, He regularly attended synagogues and went to the Temple in Jerusalem. The Old Testament and the New Testament were both written in Hebrew by Hebrew speaking Jewish people. The Word of God was translated into Greek during the rule of Constantine at his behest and that is when the 'Jewishness' of the early church began to wane. The Lord gave the job of teaching the world about Himself, the heavens and His laws to the Jewish people and He said He would never give the task of speaking His oracles to another nation or another people and that would include another language. 'He reveals His Word to Jacob, His statutes and His ordinances to Israel. He has not done this with (or for) any other nation and they have not known His ordinances. Praise God' (Psalm 147:19 & 20). 'The God of heaven will set up a Kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will its sovereignty be left to another people' (Daniel 2:44). 'I will give to the people a pure language from pure lips so they may call on the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one voice' (Zephaniah 3:9).

Myth: The meanings in the Bible have been lost in translation.

Truth: This myth minimises the power of God and the power of His Word. The Lord is the Author of the Bible and He is the Author of all languages on earth and in heaven. He would not allow too many discrepancies to occur in His spoken Word. There are nuances within the Hebrew language and culture that are meaningless in other languages, but the truth of the scriptures and the promises in the scriptures are clear for everyone to see. For an unbeatable translation of the Bible, it is better to go back to the original language – Hebrew. We can buy a Bible translated directly from Hebrew to English – and of course that would be the best one to study. Other translations are good, but logically, not as good as the language in which the scriptures were originally written.

Myth: The scriptures were handed down via word of mouth.

Truth: This myth minimises the intention God has of teaching us through His own Words. Moses wrote down the first five books of the Bible, but the Lord told him exactly what to write (Exodus 17:14; 24:4; 34:27; Numbers 33:2). Moses did not write his own thoughts, he wrote God's thoughts. After Moses, Joshua wrote everything down (Joshua 24:26), then Samuel (1 Samuel 10:25), then Shemaiah the Levite scribe (1 Chronicles 24:6); Ezra wrote the book of Ezra. By the time of Ezra, the five books of Moses were several hundred years old, yet Ezra still had the books and used them (Ezra 7:6). In the original Hebrew text, the book of Nehemiah is part of the book of Ezra. King Josiah had the Book of the Law of Moses read out to him by Shaphan the scribe (2 Kings 22:8 to 10; 2 Chronicles 34:15 to 18) hundreds of years after the death of Moses. The book of Psalms was written by various authors. Solomon wrote all the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon. Isaiah was told to write in a book (Isaiah 30:8), then a scribe named Baruch wrote on a scroll everything Jeremiah told him to write, according to the spoken words of God, then Baruch wrote in the scroll with ink and he read God's Word aloud to the children of Israel (Jeremiah 36:4 to 18 & 32; 45:1). Later Jeremiah himself wrote in a book (51:60). Jeremiah also wrote Lamentations. Ezekiel drew the design and wrote down precise measurements of the new Jerusalem (Ezekiel 4:1 then chapters 40 to 48). Daniel was told to seal up the words of his book (Daniel 12:4). The prophets named Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi all wrote and recorded the events surrounding real people as they occurred. None of this information was handed down by word of mouth. The history of births, deaths and marriages were carefully recorded, and that can be proven by reading the family genealogies (Genesis chapters 5, 10 and 11; Matthew 1:1 to 17; Luke 3:23 to 38). Jesus read from the written words of Isaiah (Luke 4:17 to 20) and Jesus quoted the written Word when He overcame the devil with the Words from Deuteronomy using the prefix, "It is written" (Matthew 4:4, 7 & 10; Deuteronomy 8:3; 6:16 & 6:13). John was told to write down what he saw (Revelation 1:11). The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, plus the Book of Acts were written as eyewitness accounts of the events surrounding Jesus and His resurrection (Luke 1:2; 2 Peter 1:16). The remainder of the New Testament was written by the men who performed miracles through the power of the Holy Spirit. God Himself has books in which He records everything we say and do, both good and bad (Malachi 3:16; Revelation 20:12). The Lord has a Book of Life He has had since the foundation of the world. In that Book of Life, He has a list of names of people who have repented of their sin and who are devoted to Him (Exodus 32:32) and there are some people whose names were never written in the Book of Life (Revelation 13:8; 17:8). That would be because, in the divine foreknowledge of God, He knew they would never turn to Him. Those who believe in Him and are worthy of heaven, have their names written in the Book of Life (Luke 10:20; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5; 21:27). Those who reject God, have their names blotted out of the Book of Life (Exodus 32:33; Psalm 9:5; 69:28). If those same people repent and turn back to God, He rewrites their names back into His Book of Life, or 'grafts' them in again (Romans 11:23). On Judgement Day these books will be opened to reveal everything we have done and said, and whether or not we are to be accepted into heaven or sent to the lake of fire forever (Revelation 20:12 & 15).

Myth: Evolution is scientific fact.

Truth: Evolution is a lie taught by ungodly people who are rebelling against God. The tri-une God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit decided together to create the world and make it habitable (Genesis 1:1 & 2).

Throughout the entire universe, only the earth was made fit for habitation (Isaiah 45:18). Although there is water on other planets (Psalm 148:4), the planets are not fit to be inhabited. Once the decision was made to create this earth, Jesus Himself, before He was born on earth, created everything. There is not one thing that exists that was not created by Jesus because in Him is all life (John 1:1 to 4; Colossians 1:16 & 17). Men who deny the Lord with wickedness in their hearts, promote the lie of the evolution theory to the world and mock those who believe the truth. These people are deceived and those who believe them are being led astray. Millions of children are being taught the lie of evolution in schools, and that makes it hard for them to accept the Gospel. The Lord says, if anyone makes a child (spiritually) stumble, it would be better for a millstone to be tied around his neck and tossed into the depths of the sea (Matthew 18:6; Mark 9:42; Luke 17:2). We need to show the world the wonderful wildlife the Lord created, just as it is. Once people are born-again and their minds are renewed by the Spirit of God and their eyes are opened to the truth, they can see through the lie of evolution and see the Word of God is the truth. Evolution is not a scientific fact. It is a deception and there is no scientific evidence to support evolution. No 'missing link' fossils have ever been found, nor will they, because God created every animal exactly as they are. Evolutionist dating methods do not work and simultaneously, they ignore the earth dating methods that do work, which of course reveal we live on a young planet earth. Sinful people will choose any alternative over the truth of creation, and then seek to mislead others no matter what the scientific evidence really shows. These beliefs mislead people and make it harder for them to view the Gospel as the only logical alternative. Some people refuse to accept this earth was created for temporary habitation only, and will one day be destroyed by God Himself. Those who believe in Him will live on a newly created earth, created for eternal habitation (2 Peter 3:7 to 13; Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; Revelation 21:1). We ask these evolutionists: 'Men, why are you doing this? We are people who bring you the Gospel so you should turn away from these foolish and vain myths to the living God Who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything they contain' (Acts 14:15).

Myth: A third of the angels rebelled with the devil.

Truth: It is not written anywhere in the Bible, any angels rebelled at the same time as the devil and there is no verse in the Bible that says fallen angels work with the devil. What is written, the fallen angels did not care for, keep, guard or hold on to their own first place of power but abandoned their proper dwelling place in heaven, came to earth, raped women, produced extremely wicked human-like giant offspring called Nephilim (Genesis 6:1, 2 & 4), that were half human and half fallen angel and for that reason, the Lord did not spare these rebellious angels but cast them into pits of gloom and they are reserved in custody in eternal chains under thick darkness until Judgement Day when they will be sent to the eternal lake of fire (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 1:6). Those events did not take place at the same time as when the devil fell, but hundreds of years later. The devil rebelled before the creation of mankind about 7,000 years ago, but the angels rebelled after mankind had been on earth for some time. The angels' sin was the most incredible rebellion against God's will for them at many levels. Those angels are in chains down in hell awaiting judgement and cannot do people any harm. The erroneous myth regarding the 'third of the angels' (Revelation 12:4 & 5) says the devil swept his tail across the sky and dragged down a third of the stars and threw them to earth by force. To understand this verse we need to look at the Hebrew language. In Hebrew, the word for angel is 'mlak'. The word for stars as planets is 'kukbim' but the word for stars as people who stand out or Jacob's Star (Jesus) is 'Kukb'. If the devil had dragged angels out of heaven, indicating they were forced out, they would not have been held accountable and thus sent to hell to await judgement, so those angels willingly left heaven. This verse says stars (kukb), not angels (mlak), so the devil dragged a third of the 'kukb' out of heaven. The only time anywhere in the Bible, fallen angels are linked to the devil is where Jesus said the lake of fire was prepared for the devil and the fallen angels (Matthew 25:41) so we can leave the angels (mlak) out of this verse and find out what the stars (Kukb) really were. When the Lord refers to angels He says angels (mlak). In this instance He said stars (Kukb). The same verse says the devil was poised to devour the male Child (Jesus), the One Who is destined to rule all the nations and the new Christian church as it was brought to birth, then He was taken up to the throne in heaven to sit beside God the Father, which happened just 2,000 years ago. Why then, do modern pastors say the first half of this verse is placed about 7,000 years ago or more, then the second half of the same verse places the time period at just 2,000 years ago? It does not make sense to assume the two halves of this one verse are divided by thousands of years. The twelve stars (Kukb) on the crown placed on the 'woman's' head are symbolic of the twelve apostles helping the 'woman' to give 'birth' to the new early church (Revelation 12:1 & 2). The 'woman' had special protection from God against the attacks of the devil (verses 6 & 14). If those stars were evil, they would not have been worn by the holy 'woman', nor would they have received any protection from God. Stars are holy angels who shine; one for each of the churches and they are in the Lord's hand and He is in heaven (Revelation 1:16 & 20). That reinforces the symbolism of the 'stars' (Kukb) falling from heaven as being churches falling under the influence of the devil and being thrown to earth. There are many churches that started off well but have fallen away from sound teaching and have become cults, thus falling out of heaven and out of the Lord's hand of protection. Obviously that verse applied to some churches 2,000 years ago as the devil attempted to destroy the Gospel message, and history has shown us the church went into serious decline for over a thousand

years. This myth has taken that verse in Revelation completely out of context, and the myth does not fit in with the surrounding verses nor does it make any sense in the Hebrew language.

Myth: The devil has rights.

Truth: The devil does not have any rights. This myth was obviously perpetrated by the devil who loves to big-note himself and foolish people believe it. The devil is nothing more than a created being that rebelled and sinned, and has been rejected by God like all other sinners that will be rejected by God on Judgement Day. The only difference between him and earthly sinners, is he was given power because he was once an anointed cherub and he was at one time blameless in all his ways (Ezekiel 28:14 & 15), but once the devil is in the lake of fire with all other sinners, he will no longer have any power and people will look at him and wonder why they were so afraid of him because he will have a horrible end (Ezekiel 28:18 & 19). People will taunt him and say, 'Have you become as weak as we are? Have you become like us? Is this he who made the earth tremble and who made the world like a wilderness?' People will be astonished at how humiliated he will be once he is in the fiery pit (Isaiah 14:10, 15 to 17).

Myth: The devil was one of three archangels.

Truth: He was never an archangel. This myth was another one obviously perpetrated by the devil who loves to big-note himself. He was an anointed cherub (krub) (Ezekiel 28:14). Angels (mlakim) and cherubim (krubim) are different. Angels do not have wings and they look like people. Cherubim have six wings. Michael is the only archangel (Mikal Shrkim) and he is the prince or chief angel who looks after Israel (Daniel 10:13 & 21; Jude 1:9). Gabriel is a special messenger angel (Daniel 9:21; Luke 1:19 & 26).

Myth: Christians will be 'raptured off' in the middle of the great tribulation.

Truth: There will never be a rapture! This myth has been taught by false prophets bringing fear and confusion to millions because of the 'left behind' scenario which is not mentioned in the Bible. The Bible speaks about the first resurrection that will take place at the end of the great tribulation and that has been mistaken to be a 'rapture'. Jesus said, "Those who endure to the end (of the tribulation) will be saved" (Matthew 10:22; 24:13). Jesus called the end of the Great Tribulation 'the last day' (John 6:39; 6:40; 6:44; 6:54). Those who do not endure to the end and fall away half-way through the tribulation will be lost for eternity. Martha understood that fully when she said to Jesus, "I know Lazarus will rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (John 11:24).

Myth: The Christian church has replaced the Jews.

Truth: That teaching is utterly false and is bordering on being anti-Semitic. It is known as the Replacement Theology. The Jews will always be God's chosen people and Jesus made it very clear, He considers the Jews His family and we will be judged according to the way we treat His family (Matthew 25:40). God has not rejected the Jews. He punished them for sin but He will always love them and so should we, and we should never feel superior to the Jews nor be arrogant about our salvation. Christians are grafted into, or adopted into God's eternal family when we receive Jesus into our lives and we are joint heirs with Him, but we will never ever replace His first choice; the Hebrew people, the descendants of His beloved Abraham and Sarah (Romans 11:1 to 36).

Myth: Once saved; always saved.

Truth: This myth makes people think they can do whatever they like and still end up in heaven. Salvation is eternal as long as we continue to walk with God. If we slip away from God and return to the world, then our penalty will be worse than the unsaved because to walk away from Jesus is to cause Him shame (Colossians 1:23; Hebrews 6:4 to 8).

Myth: Jesus went to the cross naked.

Truth: That is not so. Where that myth originated is unknown. Jesus wore a seamless linen undergarment as an item of underwear, the equivalent of a modern-day long-sleeved, knee-length singlet. In the summer months, the tunic could be worn like modern men sometimes wear just a singlet on a hot day. It was winter when Jesus was crucified and the weather was cold (John 18:18), so logically, He would have been wearing more than just an undergarment. The scripture says He was wearing five items of clothing. He would have been wearing closed in sheepskin shoes, probably with knitted warm sock-like items made of wool to keep His feet warm. He would not have been wearing the light summer thongs that need to be tied with thin straps as He wore at His baptism which took place 3½ years earlier, in the summer (Mark 1:7). Jesus would have been wearing a normal linen robe similar to the ones Middle-Eastern men wear today. He would also have worn a woollen knitted cloak, possibly with a hood attached to keep His body and head warm. Most people do not realise Jewish men wore linen underwear; white linen trunks reaching from the waist to the knees, underneath the long linen tunic (Exodus 28:42; Leviticus 16:4). These items of winter clothing; linen under tunic (called a 'coat'), linen trunks, linen robe, woollen cloak and warm shoes, were not mentioned individually in the four Gospels that describe the crucifixion, but they were mentioned collectively. Only the

seamless under tunic was mentioned when the Roman soldiers gambled over it. The reason that particular seamless garment was mentioned in the Gospels, was to show the crucifixion was foreseen and prophesied about in detail hundreds of years earlier, to prove our Messiah, really is the Messiah, because everything that happened to Jesus was foretold (Matthew 26:56; Psalm 22:18). Jesus knew He was about to be crucified, so it is not logical for Him to have gone without the normal set of clothing, which included two items of linen underwear; the trunks and the tunic. It is not once written in the Bible Jesus was naked on the cross, and drawings of crucified men during that time in history does not show them to be naked. That is a conclusion people have come to because they assume Jesus only wore the seamless undergarment because that is the only item of clothing individually mentioned and they do not know their Bibles well enough to realise men wore underwear or that the seamless garment was not an item of outer clothing. Like everyone else in the world, Jesus would have been wearing underwear. Besides all this, it is written Jesus was wearing His own clothes at the crucifixion. Initially, His clothes were stripped off Him (Matthew 27:28), then they put His own clothes back on Him before they led Him away to be crucified (Mark 15:20). After He was crucified, while He hung on the cross, they removed his blood-soaked outer garments and distributed His clothing among them then cast lots to see who would get the seamless tunic (John 19:23 & 24). Once Jesus was nailed to the cross it would have been impossible to remove His trunks without tearing them off and the soldiers did not want to tear His clothing. We can see by what is written, Jesus was wearing five garments shared between four Roman soldiers.

Myth: The Jews crucified Jesus.

Truth: This myth has been perpetrated by anti-Semitic people. No Jewish person took part in the death of Jesus. He was opposed by some religious Jews who called for Jesus to be crucified (Luke 23:21) because they were jealous of Him (John 11:48 to 53), however, apart from wanting Jesus dead and out of their way, the Jews played no further role in the torture and death of Jesus. Many Jews rejected Jesus, but many Jews followed Him and loved Him. It was the Gentile Roman soldiers who were the ones who surrounded Him like a pack of wolves, whipped Him, taunted Him, mocked Him, forced Him to carry His cross, tortured Him for hours, they gouged a 'crown' of thorns onto His head cutting into His flesh, they tore His beard off His face, leaving Him unrecognisable as a human, they crucified Him, piercing His hands and feet with huge iron nails, they stole His clothing then sliced open His side with a spear, cutting a gash large enough to fit a man's hand (John 20:27). The Jews did none of that.

Myth: If a person obeys the Ten Commandments, they will go to heaven.

Truth: Most people do not even know what the Ten Commandments are to begin with. We must do a lot more than merely obey the Ten Commandments if we want to enter the Kingdom of God. The Commandments were given to Moses as part of the Law. The laws were given to make people aware of sin (Romans 3:20; 7:7 & 8), and they were a vital part of the Old Covenant. Jesus came and fulfilled the Law (Matthew 5:17) and created a New Covenant of grace written in His blood (Luke 22:20). Jesus went one step further and said it was possible to break the Ten Commandments, not only by sinful actions, but also by sinful thoughts (Matthew 5:27 & 28). Obeying the Ten Commandments is not enough to get into heaven. To get to heaven, Jesus said we must be born-again (John 3:3 & 7), we must repent, believe and be baptised, be filled with the Holy Spirit and walk with God every day of our lives (Acts 2:38 to 40).

Myth: Mary, Jesus' mother, must intercede for us.

Truth: Mary was Jesus' human mother, but as a normal human person, she too had to be born-again to get into heaven. Mary was not divine – she was a normal lady. Her special calling – to give birth to our Messiah and raise Him in the Lord, was a calling no other person was ever called to do, and no other person will ever be called to do – but that does not mean she was divine. She died like all humans eventually do and she is with the Lord in heaven because she accepted Jesus as her Saviour along with His brothers (Acts 1:14), but she cannot intercede for us. We are not to pray to Mary. We are to pray to God the Father in Jesus' name (John 15:16; 16:23). Our Intercessors are Jesus (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25) and the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; Romans 8:26 & 27).

Myth: The pope is the holy father.

Truth: Only God in Heaven is the Holy Father. Jesus called Him the Holy Father (John 17:11) and we are not to ever call any man 'father' in the same context as Jesus referred to God as Father (Matthew 23:9). The pope is the head of the Catholic church – he is not God's representative on earth. Jesus came as our Saviour, then He sent the Holy Spirit to us (John 14:26), and the Holy Spirit working within us as we serve the Lord, represents God on earth (Acts 1:8; 4:31; Romans 15:16; Titus 3:4 to 7).

Myth: Saints help and protect us.

Truth: People cannot do anything for us once they are dead no matter how holy they were on earth. The word 'saint', in Catholic tradition has been reserved for a few outstanding examples of Christian living, but genuinely Godly, devoted people were called saints as early as in Moses' time (Deuteronomy 33:3) and that

word has been used throughout the Bible since then. In the early Jewish based Christian church, 'saint' was commonly used to describe all believers in Jesus who were sincere, genuine, Holy Spirit filled believers. The word 'saints' simply means 'God's People'. 'To all God's beloved ones, called to be saints ...' (Romans 1:7). We do not have to be a Catholic to be a saint – we have to be Godly, obedient to God and a sincere believer, and those people can be found in every genuine Christian denomination.

Myths: People go to 'purgatory' as punishment for sin and when they have 'served their time' they go to heaven. Unbaptised babies and children go to a no-mans-land called 'limbo'.

Truth: Purgatory and limbo do not exist. They are imaginary places dreamed up by people.

Myth: Christians should meet together on Saturday.

Truth: The Jewish Sabbath, which starts on Friday night at sundown, was never given to Christians. The apostles and the early church always met on the first day of the week because Jesus rose on the first day of the week – the day after the Sabbath – our modern-day Sunday, and there are many scriptures to verify that fact. After rising from the dead, Jesus Himself had the very first meeting with His disciples on the first day of the week – so Jesus started the brand new church with that very first meeting on a Sunday evening and the apostles continued with that theme, gathering on Sunday mornings to share communion and offer their tithes (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2 & 9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1 & 19; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2).

Myth: Christians should meet in private homes and not in churches.

Truth: The early church believers met in private homes because they needed to avoid detection and thus persecution, and it is easier to secretly go into homes than public places. Also, the early houses were often very large – big enough to accommodate many people at once, so the need to build or lease halls was not necessary. Remember, the early church was the people within a city – not people in a particular denomination, or who exclusively attended a particular building, as they are referred to today. The Ephesian church for example, was made up of all the believers who lived in Ephesus. The Corinthian church was made up of all believers who lived in Corinth. The Lord does not mind where we meet together for fellowship, whether it be in a house, hall, garden, bus, park, chapel or cathedral – as long as it is in the name of the Lord and He is welcome to be in their midst (Matthew 18:20).

Myth: Eve's fruit was an apple.

Truth: It was not so much the fruit that lured Eve, but the look of the tree. 'When Eve saw the tree was good for food and it was delightful to look at, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate' (Genesis 3:6). It was the delightful sight of the tree that lured Eve. An apple tree is rather ordinary to look at, like most fruit trees. They have small green leaves, branches, a trunk – nothing special. We need to think about what fruit tree is delightful and desirable to look at. What tree does the next verse specifically speak about? 'They sewed fig leaves together' (verse 7). Where did they get fig leaves? Off a fig tree. Unlike any other fruit tree, the leaves and the fruit appear at the same time, and the leaves grow very large indeed – bigger than a man's hand, and are bright and shiny. For the fig leaves to be large enough to sew, they would have to have been mature leaves and the fruit would have been mature enough to eat. Fig trees are known to be an ancient fruit and were plentiful around Mesopotamia. It is the only area in the world where fig trees can grow wild, without any cultivation. The nourishing fruit is full of calcium, phosphorous and iron and are sweet and juicy. Apples are native to Asia – not Mesopotamia and the original species can still be found in China. Apple trees have been highly cultivated over the centuries to produce the big, juicy fruit we see today. The original apple was a small fruit, like a sour crab apple – and not desirable at all. If we put verses 6 & 7 together, we could come to the conclusion the fruit Eve desired was a fig. The fig tree, laden with fresh, juicy fruit (good for food) and its beautiful big, shiny leaves (delightful to look at) could have been enough to lure her. Why did people associate the apple with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Because the Latin (Roman) word for evil is malum, and the word for apple can be either malum or a similar word – malus. In the 4th century AD, the word malum appeared in the Latin Vulgate translation of Genesis. Malum was used to describe the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and from that time onwards people associated the piece of fruit Eve ate with an apple. There is one other strange event involving the fig tree we can only wonder about. When Jesus saw a fig tree that was void of fruit because it was out of season, He spoke to the tree, cursed it and made it wither (Mark 11:13, 14, 20 & 21). Why did He do that? Jesus created the trees so He would have known there would not have been any fruit on the fig tree because it was out of season. There is no logical or scriptural explanation, why Jesus would do such an unusual thing as to curse a fruit tree! Even His disciples were left wondering. We do not know the exact reason either because the scriptures do not tell us, but we could imagine it could be because Jesus knew He was going to suffer terribly and die, to undo the curse on mankind Adam and Eve caused when they ate the fruit of the original fig tree. To put the curse on the tree, took the curse off mankind, and we know that is the reason Jesus left heaven to come to earth. If we look at His actions in that light, it makes sense.

Myth: Only good people will go to heaven; sinners cannot.

Truth: Nobody is good (Matthew 19:17). We are all sinners (Romans 3:23). Jesus said we all have to believe in Him, repent, be born-again, be baptised, filled with the Holy Spirit and obediently serve Him if we want to enter the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:15; 16:16; John 3:3 & 7). When people are born-again and have turned away from their old lives, and seek to obey God's commands to be holy, righteous, giving, sharing, kind and loving, that is when, over time, people behave more God-like and they shun evil. They can be perceived as being 'good' people, but even Christians who have been believers for 50 years, are still sinners and have to frequently repent of their sin and confess their sins to God, just like everybody else. We are all sinners, saved by the grace and mercy of God, through the blood of Jesus shed on the cross of Calvary. We cannot be 'good' on our own; we need His help. We need the redeeming blood of Jesus to cleanse us from our unrighteousness and forgive our sins (1 John 1:9).

Myth: There were three wise men who visited Jesus.

Truth: There were wise men who visited Jesus soon after He was born, but we do not know how many there were. The scriptures say they brought three gifts; gold, frankincense and myrrh, but there could have been two men, or there could have been twenty-two men. The Bible gives the exact number and names the gifts, not the exact number of men who brought those gifts (Matthew 2:1 to 16). The scripture says they came from the east. A country to the east of Israel was Babylon. During the days of the Babylonian Empire, thousands of Jewish people were forced from Israel to Babylon. Many eventually returned to Israel, but just as many remained in Babylon and their descendants still live there today. The wise men of the east were probably Jews from Babylon, descendants of the original Diaspora. The Bible does not say they were Pagans. They were waiting for their Messiah and King so they could worship Him. Pagans would not have been waiting for the Jewish Messiah, nor would they have referred to Jesus as their King. No Pagan would ever worship a Jewish baby! Nor would a Pagan, who were idol worshippers, be able to listen to and obey the voice of the Lord as they did. They were wise because they obeyed the warning of the Lord and took a different route back to their own country, which gave Joseph, Mary and Jesus time to escape into Egypt.

Myth: Mary was alone when she gave birth to Jesus.

Truth: Mary was certainly not alone. She was with many people when Jesus was born. Joseph was of the House of David so he had to be registered in Bethlehem along with Mary his wife (Luke 2:1 to 5). Because of the numbers of people who had to be in Bethlehem at that time, there was no room for Mary and Joseph in the inn. We need to keep in mind, because Joseph was from Bethlehem, logically, so would his family be from there. Mary would have had assistance from the women in Joseph's family. That is so obvious, Doctor Luke, the writer of the Gospel would not have thought it necessary to add such a footnote. The place where Jesus was born would not have been a dirty, animal infested barn. The animals lived in a downstairs area to keep them safe and warm at night during the winter months while the people lived in the house upstairs. It is very likely, although not written, Joseph and Mary stayed in a house belonging to members of Joseph's family. If the house were full of people, then the next best place would have been downstairs. We know the animals were not in the downstairs area at that time, because the shepherds were watching their sheep outside (Luke 2:8). We know Mary was actually in a house, because when the wise men visited, they went to the house (Matthew 2:11). We know Mary had no baby clothes with her, because the angel made a point of saying Jesus was wrapped in swaddling clothes or strips of cloth (Luke 2:12). If swaddling clothes had been the norm, they would not have needed to point that fact out to the shepherds. When the shepherds arrived, they were still staying in the house where Jesus was born – and there were many other people there too. We know that because they marvelled at what the shepherds told them regarding Jesus (Luke 2:18). If the things the shepherds told them had been said to strangers, news would have travelled quickly, but if what the shepherds said, was said to Joseph's family, they would have taken it in their stride or dismissed it, and what Jesus said later in His ministry bears that out. "A prophet is not without honour, except in his own country, among his own relatives and in his own house" (Matthew 13:57; Mark 6:4). It was Mary who kept all these things to herself (Luke 2:19). She kept so quiet about the events surrounding Jesus' birth, it seems she did not even tell her younger children, because they taunted Jesus about His ministry (John 7:3 to 10). Even Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist, was never told. He said he did not know Him as the Messiah until Jesus revealed Who He was (John 1:31).

Myth: Jesus was an only Child.

Truth: Jesus was Mary and Joseph's Firstborn (Luke 2:7) but they had at least seven or eight other children after Jesus was born. The boys were named Joses, a shortened version of Joseph, Simon, James and Judah, and there were 'all the sisters' indicating more than two sisters (Matthew 13:55 & 56). The women who were watching the terrible events of the cross when Jesus died were Mary Magdalene; Mary, the mother of Jesus, James (the younger) and Joses', and a woman named Salome (Mark 15:40). Later it seems, they were standing by the cross, along with another woman identified as the sister of Jesus' mother Mary (John 19:25). If we put these two verses together, they indicate Mary's sister was named Salome. Salome was the wife of Zebedee and mother of James (the elder) and John, which means these two men were cousins of Jesus. When Mary Magdalene, with Mary, Jesus' mother, went to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body, they had

Salome with them (Mark 16:1), and another woman named Joanna (Luke 24:10). The scriptures say Joanna was the wife of Chuza, and she, along with Susanna ministered to Jesus during His ministry (Luke 8:3). Joanna and Susanna could possibly have been two of Jesus' sisters because these women were active in Jesus' life and in His ministry. Young ladies could not have followed Jesus and ministered to Him in the culture of the day unless they were closely related. They later stood at a distance from the cross, but close enough to watch Jesus die, and Joanna went to anoint His body and saw the empty tomb, so it seems these women were closely related to Jesus. The closest family members were the ones who tended to a dead body. The only time a stranger dealt with someone who had died, was when there was no family to do it. 'There were women looking from a distance who were of those who had accompanied Jesus, ministering to Him. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses (Jesus' mother) and mother of Zebedee's sons' (Matthew 27:55 & 56). There were three women named Mary at Jesus' cross; Mary, Jesus' mother; Mary, Clopas' wife and Mary Magdalene. Since we know Salome was there, and she was the wife of Zebedee, then we can see Salome and Mary were sisters, and since James and John were the first cousins of Jesus, it made sense for Salome to ask Jesus to put his cousins on either side of His throne in the Kingdom of God (Matthew 20:21). It also makes sense for Jesus to ask John to take care of His mother Mary (John 19:26 & 27). That will also explain why Jesus loved John so much and why they were so close (John 13:23; 20:2; 21:7; 21:20). The brothers James and John were the sons of Zebedee. This James was older than Jesus' brother James and that is indicated by Jesus' brother being nicknamed James the Younger (Mark 15:40), differentiating between the two boys in one family both named James, indicating once again the close family ties. James, son of Zebedee was killed with a sword (Acts 12:2), while James the Younger went on to write the book of James. John wrote the Gospel of John, plus the three epistles of John and the book of Revelation. Jesus' brother Judah wrote the epistle of Jude. Far from being an only child, Jesus was part of a large, close, extended family.

Myth: Noah only took two pairs of each animal into the ark.

Truth: Noah took seven pairs of each animal into the ark. Of every clean, that is edible animal, Noah took seven pairs; of the birds, Noah took seven pairs and of beasts that were not clean, Noah took two pairs of each kind. The sea creatures, reptiles and amphibians would have remained in the sea. 'You will take seven pairs of every clean animal with you, male and female. Of the unclean animals, take two, male and female. Of the birds of the sky, seven, male and female to keep the seed alive on the surface of the entire earth' (Genesis 7:2 & 3).

Myth: God gave us a free will.

Truth: God wants nothing less than total and absolute obedience; the type of obedience Jesus showed when He said, "Not My will Lord, but Yours be done" (Luke 22:42). If we had a free will, we could do whatever we wanted without incurring the consequences, and we know that is not the case. To prepare us for heaven, while we are here on earth, we need to learn how to be completely obedient to God because His will is always done in heaven (Matthew 6:10). If we want to join Him in heaven, then we have to do His will on earth (Matthew 7:21). God calls many people and of those, He chooses just a few (Matthew 22:14). He rejects all those who are disobedient. Whosoever of those who desire to obey God and come to Him (Revelation 22:17) must accept God's way of salvation and that way is through Jesus (John 14:6). They will find the way to eternal life, but their lives on earth are very narrow and straightened, and only a few will find the way (Matthew 7:13 & 14). We do not choose to follow Him, He chooses us and appoints us to serve Him and bear spiritual fruit (John 15:16). Our lives must be that of absolute obedience, which will produce holiness and righteousness as we conform to His will and purpose (Romans 8:28). If we refuse to conform to His will, then God will bring about circumstances to break our will. Remember, God did not even spare the angels who disobeyed Him (2 Peter 2:4), and if we humans disobey God, then we will face the same fate. It is nothing short of rebellion in the hearts of men who insist God gave us a free will.

We hope the truth will counteract the spread of all these myths.

Amen and God bless you.

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