

Scripture Standard

Volume 78-2
June 2011

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SO GOD CREATED THE UNIVERSE - WHY? -

God does not do anything without reason. The creation has a specific purpose. Understanding this purpose puts the existence of the entire universe and everything in it, into perspective.

The Lord Jesus was the reason why God created the universe. It was **all** created **for him** and absolutely everything in it was created by him and he holds it all together.¹

Colossians 1:16 ... all things, that are in the heavens, that are on the earth, visible and invisible ... were created by him. All things were created by him and for him.¹⁷ And he is before all things, and all things subsist in him.

John 1:3 Everything came into existence through him, also, of everything which has come into existence not one thing came into existence without him.

So to fulfil God's purpose the universe had a beginning. but when it has fulfilled God's purpose it will have an end. 2 Peter 3:10 says:

... the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night; in which the heavens will pass away with a tremendous noise, and the elements will be dissolve with fervent heat, also the earth and the works in it will consumed.

The Covenants and Promises of God - 4

Derek L. Daniell - Tunbridge Wells

As we review the Covenants and Promises of God we see how vital the coming of Jesus is to God's eternal purpose for us, Ephesians 1:3-12. **God's first promise** was made in the Garden of Eden to Satan that he would receive a crushing blow through the death, and resurrection of **His Son Jesus**, Genesis 3:15 ***"For by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive,"*** 1 Corinthians 15:21-22.

In the **Covenant Promise** that God made with **Noah** we learn how by his **faith** and God's **grace**, he and seven others were saved by being brought safely through the flood, see Gen 6:6; 1 Peter 3:20-21; 2 Peter 2:5. Today we too can be saved by grace through faith, ***"and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God"***. Ephesians 2:8. Like Noah this requires our obedience to His commands in the gospel, 1 Peter 4:16-18.

Abraham is the next man of faith with whom God made a **Covenant with Promises**, Genesis 17:1-8ff. His descendants would become a great nation and possess the land of Canaan on which he, Isaac and Jacob lived as sojourners, cp Genesis 12:1-4. The third promise was that one of Abraham descendants (**Jesus**) would be a blessing to all the families of the earth. But by faith he looked forward to the city that had foundations, whose designer and builder is God, Hebrews 11:8-10. Like others who were faithful to God down through the

centuries they, "***did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect***", Hebrews 11:13-16, 39-40.

Moses having led the people of Israel out of Egypt became the mediator of the **Covenant** that God made solely with the nation of Israel at Sinai. Exodus 19:1-6 Moses prophesied that God would raise up another prophet, like him to whom they were to listen, Deut 18:15-19; Acts 3:19-26. **Jesus** was revealed as that prophet on the Mount of Transfiguration, (Matt 17:18), who would make a **New Covenant** as prophesied by Jeremiah, (31:31-34), cp Hebrews 8:6-13.

When Jesus came preaching the gospel of God he was saying, "***The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the gospel***", Mark.1:14-15. When asked if he was a king Jesus replied, "***I am a king***", but "***My kingdom is not of this world***", see John 18:33-37. **Jesus** was the son of David in fulfilment of God's **promise to David** that one of his descendants would sit on the throne of the everlasting kingdom, 2 Sam 7:12-13; Acts 2:29-36.

Jesus is the Mediator of the New Covenant by a new and living way through His death on the cross. He "***has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises***" ... ***When He said, a new covenant He has made the first obsolete ... and growing old is ready to disappear***" Hebrews 8:6-13.

Today, both Jews and Gentiles live under the New Covenant, see Ephesians 2:11-22. The gospel is to be preached to all people and nations. Those who obey the gospel are saved and added by the Lord to His Church, Acts 2:37-41, 47. They are also "***transferred to the kingdom of His dear Son***" Colossians 1:13, and their "***citizenship is in heaven from which also we eagerly wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ ...***"

Philippians 3:20-21. We have received the same kind of faith that they had "*seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them [we] may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust ...*" 2 Peter 1:1-11.

“Thanks be to God”

Jonathan Ashurst - Byron, GA

When was the last time you thanked God for something?

Sometimes it is easy to take things for granted, or expect that we will always have them. In Luke 17:12-19, we see the importance of expressing thankfulness to God.

Luke 17:12-19

¹²And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

13And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. 14And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. 15And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, 16And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. 17And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? 18There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. 19And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

This passage tells about a time when Jesus met ten men with leprosy. Leprosy is a dreaded disease that affects the skin.

Here is some information about leprosy from the website of the U.S. National Library of Medicine:

“Leprosy is an infectious disease that has been known since biblical times. It is characterized by disfiguring skin sores, nerve damage, and progressive debilitation.

“All forms of the disease eventually cause nerve damage in the arms and legs, which causes sensory loss in the skin and muscle weakness. People with long-term leprosy may lose the use of their hands or feet due to repeated injury resulting from lack of sensation.”

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0002323>

There are still some places around the world where

people suffer from leprosy. Today we have medicine that allows people with leprosy to avoid isolation. But back in Jesus' day, they had no medical cure.

In addition to its debilitating effects, leprosy led to isolation. People who caught leprosy would have to leave their family, friends, and job. Because the lepers were not allowed to come close to Jesus, they called out to Him from far off.

When they begged for mercy, Jesus told the men to go show themselves to the priests. As Leviticus 14:2 explains, if someone thought they were no longer leprous, they were supposed to go the priest. The priest would check whether the person was healed, and decided whether or not it was safe for them to come back into the camp. The ten men followed Jesus' directions. On their way to the priest, they were cured.

One of the lepers, when he realized that the leprosy was gone, ran back to Jesus! He exclaimed praises to God "with a loud voice" and fell down to worship at Jesus' feet. The other lepers were probably just as overjoyed at their healing, but apparently they forgot to give thanks to the One who had healed them.

Jesus was shocked that only one person returned to thank him. After such wondrous healing, how could they neglect to show gratitude?

But often we do the same thing. Jesus has saved us from a fate much worse than leprosy. He has rescued us from sin and death, and in addition, has reconciled us to God!

(2 Corinthians 5:18)

Let us not be like the nine who forgot to give thanks, but instead like the thankful Samaritan, whom Jesus encouraged and commended.

2 Corinthians 9:15

Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Diotrophes – an Example to Avoid

Rose M. Payne

"I wrote to the church: but Diotrophes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church." 3 John 9/10.

Who was Diotrophes? A little nobody with a very good opinion of himself? He is not described as an elder, deacon or evangelist nor is he mentioned anywhere else in the scriptures, but he wanted to be the boss of a congregation and set himself up in competition with no less a person than the apostle John!

John had been chosen to be a disciple by Jesus himself and was a witness of everything concerning his life, death, and resurrection. He could even tell of other things which are not included in the scriptures for lack of space

(John 21:25). He also writes like a very kindly man. Who could want a better teacher? Yet Diotrophes seems to have become jealous. He presumably kept John's letter away from the church, otherwise we might have had a fourth epistle of John in our New Testaments, and he would not receive visiting brethren.

John's next letter was therefore sent to Gaius, who appears to have been a faithful member of the church in that district, one who was willing to exercise hospitality to travelling Christians, but who was not quite up to date with the current news.

Diotrophes was casting people out of the church. Paul shows how certain people should be disfellowshipped, when he requests the Christians at Corinth to exclude one of their number in 1 Cor. 5, and also possibly in 1 Tim. 1:20 where two men were handed over to Satan because they were blasphemers. This makes it very clear that they were among the lost unless they repented. Diotrophes, however, had turned this principle on its head. His way of disfellowshipping would result in sincere Christians being shut out of the assembly, and he would be left with those who did not know or care so much about the truth but wanted to keep in favour with Diotrophes.

We are so used to living with religious divisions that we do not easily appreciate the seriousness of the situation in those days. There was only one Christian church then and anyone excluded from that assembly would be understood to have lost his or her chance of salvation. Diotrophes intended to keep out of heaven those

members who rebelled against his assumed authority. This would surely be a very serious matter for which Diotrophes would have to answer in the final judgement.

We do not know the ending of this story. Maybe John did come to set things right and appoint a proper eldership. Diotrophes would have had to repent and be received back in a humbler position, or else he would have met the same fate as he dealt out to others and been excommunicated himself.

Of course, in the last resort, only the Lord knows who is or is not a faithful Christian and can rightly divide the sheep from the goats. Unfortunately all down the centuries there have been individuals acting the part of Diotrophes. Too often they have been lacking in the Christian charity so prominent in John's writings, but come down very hard on differences of opinion about the meaning of the scriptures and so caused many divisions.

TAKE HEED... (Part 4) ... “ WATCH AND PRAY”

James Neil, Skelmersdale

(Mark 13 : 33)

Watch or to watch can have a variety of applications and as Christians we should aim to apply them all to our life.

For example, we are told in **Hebrews 13 : 17** to appreciate and to cooperate with those who *watch out for our souls* as this is for our own good. We are told that those in this position will be accountable but that we also

have a responsibility to watch over or to put it another way, to examine in the light of scripture our own behaviour, so that their task is a source of joy to them and not an experience which is dogged by us taking the wrong attitude and being contentious .

Matthew 24 : 42 ... tells us to “**Watch** because we do not know when the Lord will return”

and of course this is not so we do not miss his coming, no-one will miss that event, but rather that we will be ready for it, prepared for it, some will spend time trying to predict when it will happen but apart from the scriptural fact that this is not for us to know, what does it matter when the lord comes as long as we are ready?

In preparation for the Lord coming, there are some things which sheer common sense, as well as scripture tells us to watch ...To put it in a modern vernacular “Watch your mouth” is one of these things.

Matthew 12 : 36-37 ... “*But I say to you, that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgement, For by your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned.*”

What a huge area this covers, Gossip.. Foul language, ... False doctrine .. Divisive talk ... and so we could go on... well might **James in his letter chapter 3**... warn against an uncontrolled tongue.

2nd Timothy 4:5 ... Paul tells Timothy to “*Watch in all things*” and what better advice could we have than is

contained in those simple and yet powerful words?

Can we say that we do watch in all things? ... our actions? ... the company we keep and how we behave in that company? ... don't get caught out, don't put your salvation on the line is the warning for us to consider.

We are each responsible for watching out for ourself but also we are responsible for watching out for each other as well. (**Galatians 6:1**)

Jesus said. "*Watch ... **and pray***" This would seem to tell us that one without the other is ineffectual Rather like "*Faith without works*"

Prayer is our communication with God, it is a source of encouragement to know that he listens to us. But even so effectual prayer is built upon faith. Built upon the conviction that when we pray we are indeed speaking to God ...That God is there. ... If we are not convinced of this then are we praying "Just in case"

Prayer must also be done in sincerity if it is to be effective, for example ... it is no use praying for forgiveness if we don't believe He will forgive us. Just as it is no use praying for forgiveness if we carry on committing the same sin intentionally.

"Take heed that you watch and Pray" But let us not pray for help in watching, if we constantly refuse to accept what God shows us through his word

THE WORLD TODAY

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell

We live in a rapidly changing world. It is difficult to keep pace with all the developments most of the time. I try to keep abreast with what is going on politically, economically, scientifically and religiously, but it is not easy. Here are a few interesting statistics that I have gathered recently:

In 1970, in Africa, about 17 million described themselves as born-again Christians. Today, the figure has soared to 400 million. Many are Pentecostals.

In the past six decades, the rainforest has been reduced by over 60%. Two thirds of what remains is fragmented.

The Colorado, the Murray-Darling and the Indus rivers no longer reach the sea.

In 1955 there were 300,000 lions in the wild. Today there are 20,000.

The number of prisoners in England and Wales almost doubled since 1993.

The net gain of the Indian population in the past decade amounts to 180 million. In other words, there are thirty-four extra heads each passing minute.

Poland, among the Catholic nations of Europe, stands as the only place where seminaries are full and priests abound. 54% of the priests said they should like to have a wife.

France, in the 1950's, boasted 40,000 active priests. In a

few years, the number under sixty-five years of age will be a tenth of that. Some priests in France today have to cope with thirty churches.

In Syria, converting Muslims to Christianity is illegal.

Today there are 1.6 billion Muslims in the world. By 2030, it is estimated that there will be 2.2 billion.

Cities already count for half the world's population. The figure will be 70% by 2050.

South Sudan is the world's newest country: number 193, if you count by U.N. membership.

Forests of the world house more than half the world's species of animals, birds and creatures of all kinds.

Between now and 2050, the world's population will rise from 7 billion to 9 billion.

That's enough to be going on with! We know, of course, that God Himself knows exactly what is going on in the world. Nothing is hidden from Him. *"But all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do"* (Hebrews 4:13b). We often wonder what He thinks about the present state of the globe he created. Some things must cheer Him. Many other things must disturb and anger Him like sin, exploitation, false religions, atheism, apathy, indifference, etc. Interestingly, there are seven things that God especially hates detailed for us in the book of Proverbs: *"Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a*

false witness who pours out lies, and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers“ (Proverbs 6:17-19, N.I.V.).

THE INDIVIDUAL

God sees the billions, but he also sees me. He knows what is happening in the world and he knows what is happening in my life. He is some God! I learned a long time ago that my faith in Jesus is very much a personal faith and that, one day, I shall be judged as an individual. God is not going to get me mixed up with anyone else. He knows exactly who I am. In fact, He knows me better than myself. This world is on its way out and, so, one day God will destroy it and create a new earth with a new heaven (2 Peter 3:7-11; Revelation 21:1). I am on my way out too and, so, God needs to create a new me to dwell in the new world. The renewal process begins here (2 Corinthians 5:17), but will come to total fruition in heaven. Paul wrote: *“Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible (speaking of the body) must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory“ (1 Corinthians 15: 51-54).*

The importance of the individual can, for example, be seen in the seven letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor. To each congregation are the words: *“He who has*

an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches“ (Revelation 2:7,17, 29; 3:6,13,22). We most certainly are not going to be judged as congregations, but as individuals. Before the judgement seat of Christ it will be a one-on-one situation.

SUMMING UP

The history of the world has had its good times and bad times. The Bible deals with history truly, faithfully and accurately. Of course, the highlight of all highlights was the coming of Jesus to the planet to save all those on it. What a change there would be if everyone believed in Him and obeyed Him.

I do not know how long this world will last. I do not know how long I shall last in it. What is important is that, at the last, I am found faithful in Christ so that I can last forever in heaven and enjoy lasting pleasure.

Fruits of the Spirit - 2- JOY

Gretchen Ashurst, Stretford

- *Shout with joy and sing to God all the earth*
- *May the nations be glad and sing for joy*
- *Sing joyfully to the Lord, your righteousness*
- *My lips will shout for joy*
- *Everlasting joy will crown their hearts*
- *I will be joyful in God my Saviour*
- *Gladness and joy will overtake them*
- *Let them sing for joy*

All these statements are taken from the Old Testament where joy is mentioned more than 100 times. From the beginning God wanted us to be filled with joy, and has given all his people the gift of song, this makes it possible for people of all nationalities with their own languages, personalities, men and women, rich and poor, old and young to be united in joyful praise to Him.

In the New Testament we read of the birth of Jesus – told to shepherds by an angel who said *'I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.'* Luke 2:10

In 1 Thessalonians 5:16 we are given instructions for the way we should live. *'Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.'*

On days when the going is tough, it seems impossible to be joyful, but we are never left alone to overcome our problems. The God has promised that He will never leave us nor forsake us. (Hebrews 13:5)

In James 1:2 it says *'Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance'* and in 1 Peter 4:12 & 13 he says *'Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the suffering of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.'*

We thank God for helping us in every situation however hard to bear, and for giving us the gift of joy, through the

Holy Spirit. Jesus, too, was full of joy given by the Holy Spirit. Jesus said *'As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you...I have told you this is so that my joy may be in you and that your joy might be complete.'* John 15:9 & 11.

'Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.' 1 Peter 1:8-9

Philippians 4:1 *'Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends.'*

Romans 12:11-12 *'Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.'*

We see from all we read in our Bibles that we are truly blessed and joy is so much a part of our lives that we should spread it around to everyone we meet.

As Paul wrote of his joy at being with the brethren as he travelled around we too feel joy as we meet together – and often we sing hymns that lift our hearts and voices in gratitude to a loving Father. As we make melody in our hearts, we are thankful for the hundreds of hymns that have been carefully written and put together in books – it is interesting to see how many speak of joy. As we have a children's choice of song after the adult meeting is over, we all sing with great enthusiasm, and we hope and pray that the words they learn will be in their hearts for ever.

One of the favourites is - '**Joy, Joy, My Heart is Full of Joy**' – after singing this we all go out to face the world with smiles and hugs, knowing that our Saviour dear is ever near, and that's the reason why our hearts are full of joy.

OBITUARY

Alma Currie, Newtongrange. Midlothian, Scotland.

Our dear sister in Christ, Alma passed away on 14th. of March 2011. She had a few years of failing health and had spells spent in hospital over the last few months.

Alma was born on 19th of December 1920 and spent her childhood and school years in Newtongrange. She met her husband to be, Joe, where they worked at the Co-op. When war came along, Joe was posted overseas and they corresponded during these years. During that time Alma attended Bible Studies and Gospel meetings of the Church of Christ here in Newtongrange. When Joe returned after the war they were both baptised on Saturday 11th of August 1945 and were married on 15th of August 1945, V.J Day- 'Victory over Japan Day,' but Joe always jokingly referred to it as Victory over Joe day.

Brother Andrew Sharp led a service of remembrance for Alma at the church meeting place which was followed by a short service at Newbattle Cemetery, conducted by Brother David Fergusson.

Our thoughts and prayers are with brother Joe and the family at this sad time.

M. Hunter (Secretary)

Mary Gorton, Stretford, Manchester.

Our dear sister Mary Gorton went to be with the Lord on the 18th. of February 2011.

Her funeral was attended by many who loved her, and have happy memories of her cheerful smile and her warm hospitality.

We miss her. She was a gently loving friend, a caring mother and grandma and our prayers are with her family.

Graham and Mary were a great team and we miss Graham too. Their fellowship with all the brethren at Stretford Church of Christ for many years was a blessing to us all.

We thank our Heavenly Father for letting us have them for such a long time, they lives were wonderful examples of joyful Christianity.

Gretchen Ashurst

I hear a voice from heaven saying to me,

"Write!"

"From now on, the dead, dying in the Lord, are blest."

"Absolutely" says the Spirit,

***"So they can rest from their troubles
and their accomplishments do follow them."***

[Revelation 14:13. DIRECT TRANSLATION]

NEWS and INFORMATION

STRETFORD, MANCHESTER

Saturday Gospel Meetings

7.00 pm The Green Hut

538 Kings Road, M32 8JT

September 17

October 22 Ian Davidson

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www.eusebos.eu/d4web4s/longford.htm

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7.00 pm Message

August 13

November 12

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FOUR ISSUES PER YEAR (SUBJECT TO REVISION)

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION - UNITED KINGDOM £3.50

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The *Scripture Standard* is printed for the publishers by www.a2g-group.co.uk