



Your Choice
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Your Choice ...



Each day you have choices to make ... what to eat, where to go, what to do ... but the most important choices are those relating to God and His Word - the Bible.

Please read this booklet thoughtfully ... and take time to consider some of the most important choices you will ever make.

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The Bible ...

Statistics!

We all know that facts and figures can be misleading. Often they are used as a crutch to lend support to decisions or viewpoints. That said, when it comes to the Bible we are confronted with some impressive statistics. The United Bible Societies estimate that since the turn of the millennium they have distributed over 3 billion Bibles (in whole or in part) worldwide! It has been translated into many languages, covering over 90% of the world's population. It has a regular 'top ten' listing as part of those books the nation (UK and Ireland) cannot live without. But how can we explain the Bible's enduring appeal?



Style!

Few world leaders can match the public speaking skills of Winston Churchill. On one occasion he remarked that 'we rest with assurance upon the impregnable rock of Holy Scripture'. Likewise, in today's changing world many people rest on the changeless Word of God. It was written over a vast time period with the finishing touches applied during the latter part of the 1st century. It has a consistent message even though it reflects the efforts of some 40 writers. Even in the 21st century it remains, for many, the definitive guide to daily living. But what accounts for its unique style?

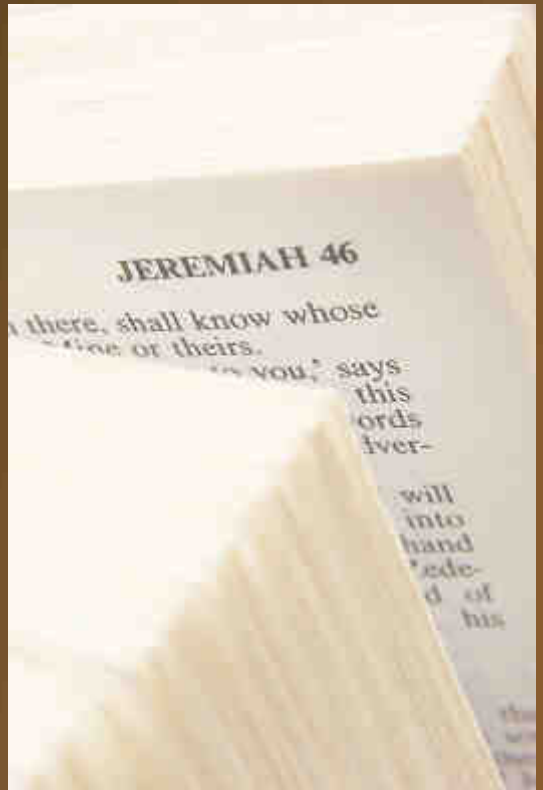
Good Book or God's Book?

Source!

Let the Bible speak for itself: 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God'¹ and 'the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God'². The interested reader, intent on locating the origin of Scripture, will find only one source - God! Accepting the source of the Bible also means we can be certain of its truthfulness, for 'God cannot lie'³. But what is the central message of the Bible?

Subject!


In broad terms, the Bible reveals the origin, character and impact of two individuals: Adam and the Lord Jesus Christ. In the beginning, Adam was made a man but the Lord Jesus became a man, though He retained all the attributes of God. Adam sinned in an idyllic setting - the garden of Eden - but the Lord Jesus never sinned nor, as God in flesh, could He sin. Adam's wilful disobedience brought sin upon his descendants - you and I - but the Lord Jesus died and rose from the dead to be the one true Saviour of sinners.



Creation ...

We still do not know one thousandth of one percent of what nature has revealed to us.

Albert Einstein



On April 1, 1995, Hubble snapped this image of pillar-like structures in the Eagle Nebula. These eerie, dark pillar-like structures are columns of cool, interstellar hydrogen gas and dust.

Chance or Design?

Choices! In our modern democratic world, politicians debate the freedom of choice and often we are called to make quick and informed decisions. The same holds when it comes to fundamental questions such as 'who we are' and 'where we come from'. The choices broadly fall into two camps:

Man-Made Theories

The dictionary defines 'evolution' as the doctrine according to which higher forms of life have gradually arisen out of lower forms. It is also known as the molecule-to-man theory. The main exponent - Charles Darwin - presented his thesis almost 150 years ago and it is now 'received wisdom' for many. The basic proposition is that life forms have 'evolved' over millions of years and, if we go back far enough, our 'family tree' will eventually arrive at the ape. But what has the 'general theory' to say about the origin of life? It appears very little. Furthermore, what is the probability of our existence being the result of evolution? Remote to say the least! Even Sir Frederick Hoyle, a scientist and the man who coined the term 'big-bang', calculated that the probability of evolution occurring is equivalent to a tornado assembling a fully functional Boeing 747 from the material it picks up in a junkyard!



God-Given Truth

However, there is an alternative to evolution. You can base your faith in someone who was actually there when the world came into existence - God! The opening words of the Bible are important: 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth'⁴. The verse reveals that there is an eternal God who predates creation and that He alone is responsible for the world - its size, construction and, yes, inhabitants like you and I. Though some consider belief in a supernatural Creator as a 'delusion', it is rather the exercise of faith in the inerrant Word of God. It teaches that God made us in His own image⁵ and thus mankind occupies a more noble position than the rest of creation. Of course, the implications of this are immense. We owe our existence to an eternal and powerful God. He is neither distant nor remote but desires the fellowship of those He made, both now and in the world to come. But He stipulates certain conditions - read on!

Sin ...

MRSA and *C Difficile* are only two of the more commonly reported hospital superbugs. Patients are falling victim to the 'bugs' and many find their health significantly worse than prior to their admittance. An interesting parallel can be drawn for some and their treatment of the Bible. They resort to it in times of adversity, looking for comfort and solace, but in so doing they learn about a deadly disease. The terminology is much easier to pronounce for only three letters combine to form the most notorious disease known to man - SIN! Take a moment to consider some of its features.



When did it start?

For some, the events in the garden of Eden are nothing more than fairytales. But God's Word is without error and the actions of Adam and Eve (in Eden) have huge implications. Their disobedience and the devil's temptation combined to bring sin into the world. Also, since mankind has descended from Adam and Eve, sin has permeated through the generations with the result that all have sinned⁶. The coverage is 100%!

What are the symptoms?

Every disease will manifest itself sooner or later and the same holds true for sin. One passage from the Bible⁷ teaches that the words we speak and the actions we take are all proof that we naturally rebel against the one Person who is without sin - God. Some people may display the traits of sin more clearly than others, but the evidence for personal sin is overwhelming.

Trivial or Tragic?

Is it serious?

Ill health usually results in a visit to the GP surgery. Sadly, the news of sin results in either annoyance for some or a shrug of the shoulder for others. However, sin is the most serious of problems and it demands the most serious of punishments - separation from God's presence and exposure to divine wrath forever.



What is the solution?

God makes it abundantly clear that there is one cure for sin. As in the medical world, only one cure is needed but sadly few people avail of God's healing for sin. It is found in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ but you need to turn the page to find out more about the cure!



Jesus ... Historical Figure

A well known internet search engine produced 152 million returns for 'Jesus' (in 0.08 seconds)! This is only one of a multitude of sources that outline the importance of His person and work and there is no doubting His pivotal role in the Christian faith. However, only one source is infallible - the Bible - and of all the verses contained within the sixty-six books, briefly consider the one below:

*'For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.'*⁸

This verse presents two important descriptions of the Lord Jesus - 'man' and 'mediator' and together they present important truth.

'Man'

Bethlehem is forever associated with the entrance of God's Son into this world. Unlike you and I that are born in sin, the angels were careful to highlight the uniqueness of His birth for He was born without sin. Also, as God manifest in the flesh He was unable to sin. This is mind-boggling and even the Bible itself speaks of it as a great mystery!⁹ His unique character is further evidenced by the various miracles He performed. Only one who is Creator could still the storms with a word¹⁰ or provide a meal for a multitude with just five loaves of bread and two small fish¹¹. And yet the question remains, why did He become man? Read on!



or Personal Saviour?

'Mediator'

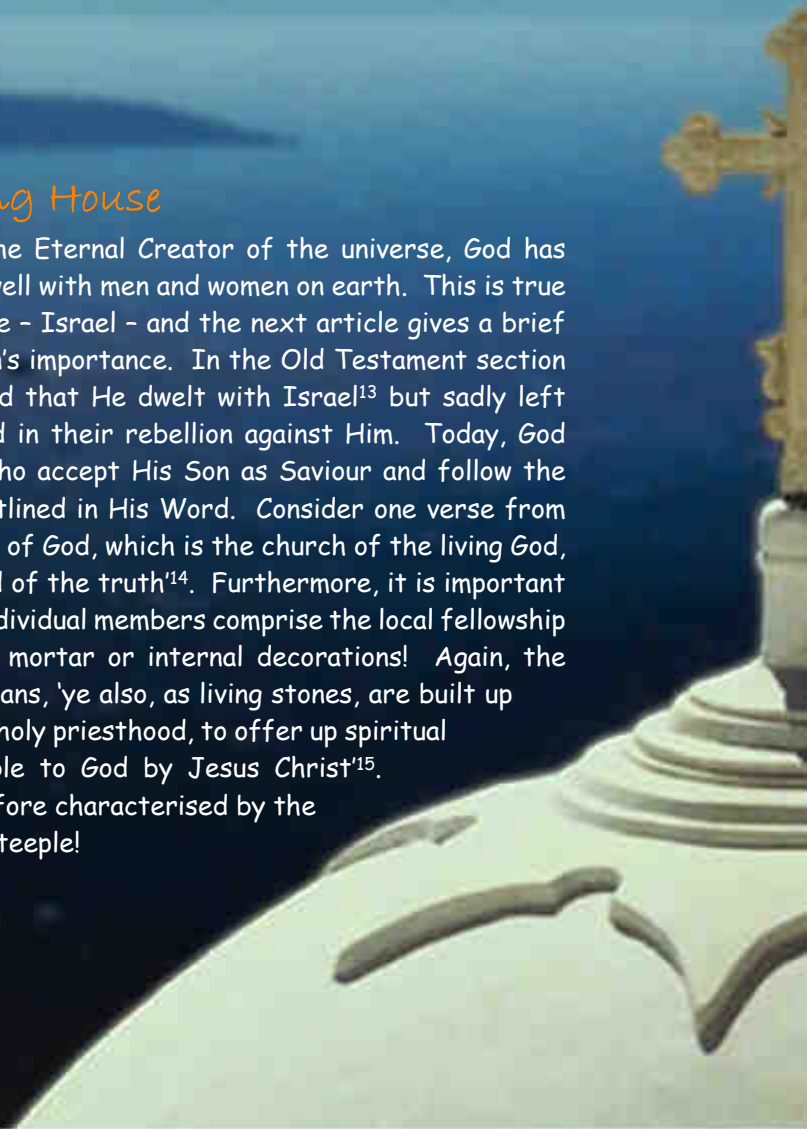
The entrance of sin into the world had driven a wedge between a holy God and His creatures. Christ became man so that, by His death and resurrection, He would bridge the gap and provide the basis for sinners to be reconciled to God. This is the essence of His work as mediator. Some of the famous bridges of the world, such as the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, span enormous gaps but their significance is trivial compared to the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross at Calvary. It was toward the end of His sufferings that He cried - 'It is finished'¹² - and this simple statement reveals that He had dealt with the sin of the world. However, we only enjoy the blessings of Christ as mediator when we receive Him as Saviour. This is the crucial decision of life and it is not made by accident or bestowed upon us by church rituals. Have you believed on the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour? Faith in Him bridges the gap between ourselves and God. This is the only basis to enjoy a living relationship with Him and become part of His family.

Church ...

'Home is where the heart is!' This simple phrase reflects the fact that people naturally seek to reside in the place where they find love and affection. Outside of heaven - the eternal home for the Christian - the phrase is an apt summary of the church or local fellowship. It is a special place on earth where Christians gather to engage in service. Attendance is not a chore, for the church represents the spiritual home for Christians. Consider some thoughts on why it is so important.

God's Dwelling House

Aside from being the Eternal Creator of the universe, God has always desired to dwell with men and women on earth. This is true of His earthly people - Israel - and the next article gives a brief outline of the nation's importance. In the Old Testament section of the Bible we read that He dwelt with Israel¹³ but sadly left when they persisted in their rebellion against Him. Today, God dwells with those who accept His Son as Saviour and follow the church practices outlined in His Word. Consider one verse from the Bible: 'the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth'¹⁴. Furthermore, it is important to remember that individual members comprise the local fellowship and not the bricks, mortar or internal decorations! Again, the Bible says of Christians, 'ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ'¹⁵. The church is therefore characterised by the people and not the steeple!



Steeple or People?

Christians' Meeting Place

In the Bible it says that early Christians sought to continue in 'the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers'¹⁶. Even today, this description remains a good summary for many church fellowships. We seek to follow the pattern of the New Testament gatherings and enjoy times of worship, Bible study and prayer.

But there are so many churches in the district and perhaps you find the choice confusing? If you are in agreement with the teachings of this booklet then please feel free to make contact with us (details are given at the end).

Israel ...

The current Iranian president remarked some time ago that Israel should be 'wiped off the face of the earth'. The language was extreme for a world leader in the 21st century and it was condemned by many in the developed world. However, other leaders have similarly pursued a campaign of hatred against the Jews with Adolf Hitler the most notorious. Why is world history cluttered with people who display intense hatred toward the Jews? Only the Bible has the full and accurate explanation.

Israel's Past

The Jewish nation was chosen by God as the means by which He would bless the world. Consider the words of God Himself: 'For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth'¹⁷. A key person in the nation's history is Abraham, and God promised that he would be the father of a great nation¹⁸. This was confirmed to his offspring, including Jacob who had twelve sons, one of whom was called Judah from which the word *Jew* is derived. They were given various privileges including the law (commandments) and the Lord Jesus as promised deliverer, but He was rejected. Israel is therefore the subject of hatred because of who they are - God's chosen people - and how they responded to the claims of the Lord Jesus.



Ruin or Revival?

Israel's Present

For centuries the Jewish people lived alongside Arabs but in 1948, under a United Nations partition plan, Israel became a separate state. Ever since it has been the target of hatred and today the nation still divides political opinion throughout the world. However, the Bible points to an escalation of trouble in the future.

Israel's Prospects

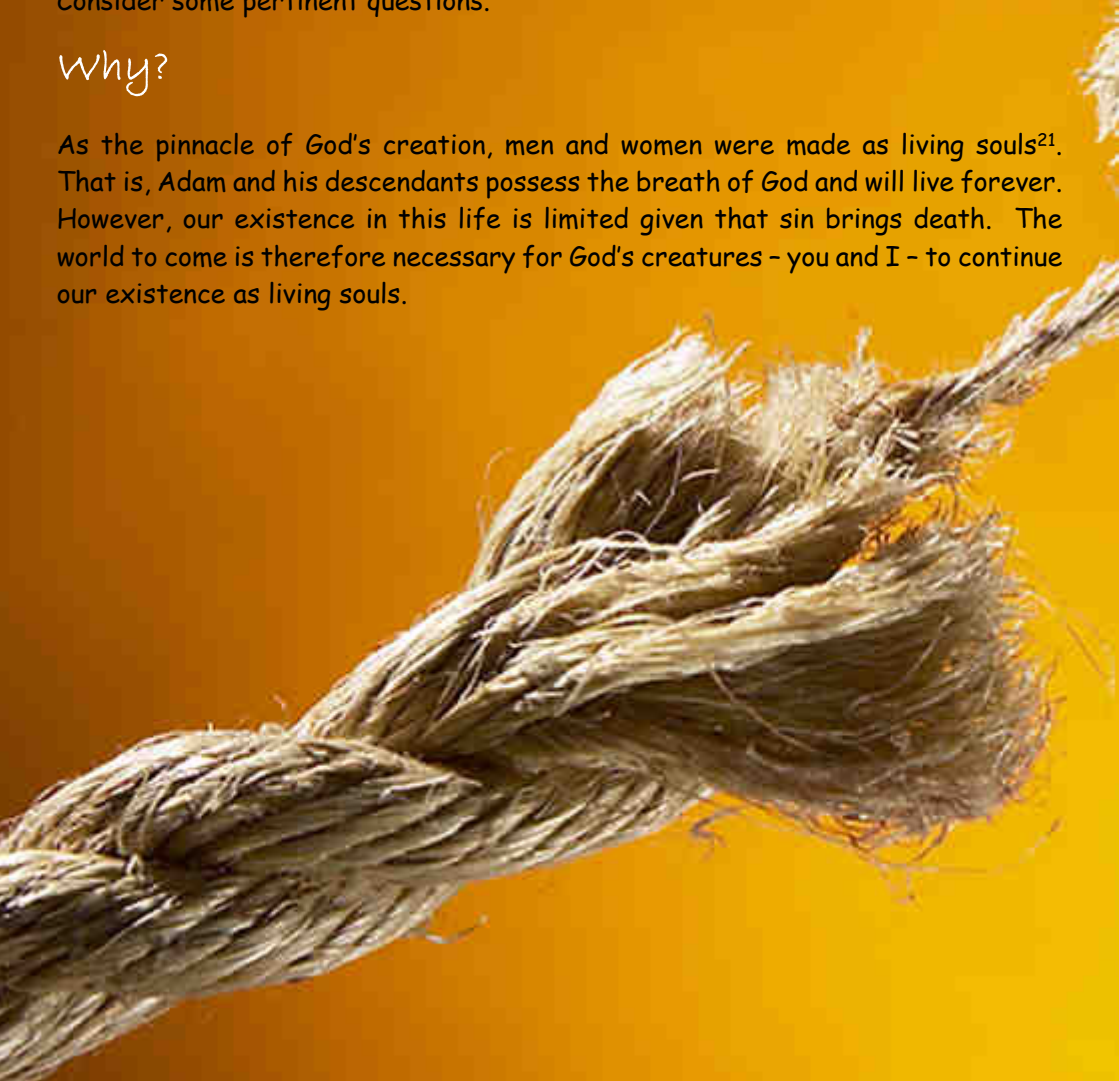
In a future day, the Bible portrays a scene¹⁹ with Jerusalem surrounded by its enemies with hope of survival all but extinguished. However, the Lord Jesus Himself will personally intervene with His armies and, for the first time, the nation of Israel will recognise and accept Him as their promised deliverer. God will fulfil His promise to Abraham, and the Lord Jesus will establish a kingdom, with Israel as the head, and only then will the world enjoy a period of unparalleled blessing. This is more than history and prophecy for it reveals an important truth - God and His Word are to be trusted!

Eternity ...

This booklet started with reference to some important statistics and it ends on a similar note. Every day, on average, 150,000 people in the world end their journey on earth. Life expectancy may be increasing due to improving medical treatment but this only delays the inevitable. In light of this sobering fact, most people will wrestle from time-to-time with the question - 'Is there life after death?' It is an important question and one that needs an unequivocal answer. The Bible, as God's Word, rises to the occasion. In unmistakable language, we are reminded that 'it is appointed unto men once to die but after this the judgment'²⁰. Consider some pertinent questions.

Why?

As the pinnacle of God's creation, men and women were made as living souls²¹. That is, Adam and his descendants possess the breath of God and will live forever. However, our existence in this life is limited given that sin brings death. The world to come is therefore necessary for God's creatures - you and I - to continue our existence as living souls.



Myth or Reality?

When?

For all the welcomed advances in technology the ability to accurately pinpoint the day of our death remains impossible. Isaac, one of the Old Testament patriarchs, perceptively remarked on one occasion that he knew not the day of his death²². But it eventually came! Again the Bible says that there is 'a time to be born and a time to die'²³. Death only marks a bend in the road of life - not the end!

Where?

As a God of order it is not surprising to learn that He has made provision for His creatures as they leave this world and enter the next. In one solemn passage in the Bible²⁴, the Lord Jesus pulled back the veil of eternity and presented some sobering facts. On the one side, there is a place - heaven - which is characterised by holiness, joy and fellowship with those who love God. The lyrics of one pop song suggest that 'heaven is a place on earth' but the Bible teaches that it is the abode of those who receive the Lord Jesus as Saviour. In contrast, there is a place of torment - hell - which later becomes the lake of fire²⁵. Those who fail to receive God's Son as Saviour will be forever excluded from heaven. It really is **your choice**.

References

All quotations from the Bible are taken from the Authorised Version.

The Bible - Good Book or God's Book?

- ¹ 2 Timothy 3:16
- ² 1 Thessalonians 2:13
- ³ Titus 1:2

Creation - Chance or Design?

- ⁴ Genesis 1:1
- ⁵ Genesis 1:26-27

Sin - Trivial or Tragic?

- ⁶ Romans 3:23
- ⁷ Romans 3:10-18

Jesus - Historical Figure or Personal Saviour?

- ⁸ 1 Timothy 2:5
- ⁹ 1 Timothy 3:16
- ¹⁰ Mark 4:37-39
- ¹¹ John 6:5-13
- ¹² John 19:30

The Church - Steeple or People?

- ¹³ Exodus 25:8
- ¹⁴ 1 Timothy 3:15
- ¹⁵ 1 Peter 2:5
- ¹⁶ Acts 2:42

Israel - Ruin or Revival?

- ¹⁷ Deuteronomy 7:6
- ¹⁸ Genesis 15:18
- ¹⁹ Zechariah 14:1-5

Eternity - Myth or Reality?

- ²⁰ Hebrews 9:27
- ²¹ Genesis 2:7
- ²² Genesis 27:2
- ²³ Ecclesiastes 3:2
- ²⁴ Luke 16:19-31
- ²⁵ Revelation 20:14-15

Graeme Hutchinson and Lawrence McHugh are members of a Christian Assembly who meet at the Gospel Hall in Newtownbreda village where there is a Gospel meeting held every Sunday at 7 pm. We would encourage you to go along and hear the good news of salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ at a Gospel Hall near you. Entrance is free and there is no collection. You will be made very welcome.

