

# REASON & REVELATION

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES

DECEMBER 2000

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Alden Bass, Joe Deweese, Kyle Butt, and Bert Thompson**

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Ensuring the soundness, success, and future continuity of Apologetics Press always has been one of my primary concerns. The fact has not been lost on me that those who are considerably younger than I am represent the next generation of this work. I therefore try to be alert to the possibility of locating young men who possess keen minds, innate talent, proper balance, and a genuine love for the Truth—and whom I can train from a young age to “pick up the sword” when I have to lay it down. It is with pleasure that I introduce two such young men to you in this issue. Alden Bass is a straight-A high school senior honor student from Waynesboro, Tennessee, and 2000 summer intern at Apologetics Press; Joe Deweese graduated as valedictorian from his high school in Troy, Illinois, and currently is a freshman biology major at Freed-Hardeman University. I have asked them to assist us in writing this month's articles, with an eye toward their authoring additional articles later, and then possibly working with us in the future upon completion of their graduate degrees.]

**Q** Will there be degrees of reward in heaven? Similarly, will there be degrees of punishment in hell?

**A** Any topic relating to the specific nature of man's ultimate, eternal abode should be of great interest to all accountable people, since every human eventually will inhabit eternity (see Thompson, 2000a, pp. 33-39; 2000b, pp. 41-47; 2000c, pp. 49-55). It is not surprising, then, that questions of what conditions will be like in the afterlife often occupy our thoughts. Whenever questions of spiritual import are under con-

sideration—as they are when discussing the destiny of the soul—the only reliable source of information must by necessity be the One Who is the Originator and Sustainer of the soul. God, as Creator of all things physical and spiritual (Genesis 1:1ff; Exodus 20:11), and Himself a Spirit Being (John 4:24), is the ultimate wellspring of the soul (Ecclesiastes 12:7). The Bible, then, as God's inspired Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21), must be the preeminent authority on this subject. It therefore is to Holy Writ that we must turn to answer any question about eternity.

### DEGREES OF ETERNAL REWARD

First, it is important to note that **every** faithful follower of God eventually will receive an **eternal reward**. Writing in the book of Revelation, the apostle John described in striking language the destiny of the righteous when this world finally comes to an end: “Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them.... He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son” (21: 3,7, RSV). Earlier, John had encouraged his readers with these words: “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10). John's coworker, the apostle Paul, referred to those who had served Jesus faithfully as “heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:7). The writer of the book of Hebrews spoke of Christ as having become “unto all them that obey him, the author of eternal salvation” (5:9).

Second, it is equally important to realize that every saint will be rewarded “according to his deeds.” Matthew wrote: “For the son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds” (16:27). Paul used practically identical words in Romans 2:5-7: “But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up for thyself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his works.” Such a concept was taught even in Old Testament times. Solomon wrote: “If thou sayest, ‘We knew not this,’ doth not he that weigheth the heart consider it? And he that keepeth thy soul, doth he not know it? And shall not he render to every man according to his work?” (Proverbs 24:12).

Parables from the mouth of the Lord similarly demonstrate that every person will be judged according to his or her deeds. The parable of the pounds, recorded in Luke 19:11-27, is a perfect example.

A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called ten servants of his, and gave them each ten pounds, and said unto them, “Trade ye herewith till I come.” But his citizens hated him, and sent an ambassage after him, saying, “We will not that this man reign over us.” And it came to pass, when he was come back again, having received the kingdom, that he commanded these servants, unto whom he had given the money, to be called to

# CONTENTS

## ARTICLES

### *Questions and Answers*

Alden Bass, Joe Deweese,  
Kyle Butt, and Bert Thompson . . . 89

## DEPARTMENTS

### Note from the Editor

Announcing: *Reason & Revelation/*  
*Discovery* 2000 Bound Volumes  
Bert Thompson . . . . . 96

**Reason & Revelation** is published monthly by Apologetics Press, Inc., a non-profit, tax-exempt work dedicated to the defense of New Testament Christianity. Copyright © 2000. All rights reserved.

### Editor:

Bert Thompson, Ph.D.

### Annual Subscription Rates:

\$8.00 Domestic  
\$13.00 Canada & Overseas Airmail

### Mailing Address:

Apologetics Press, Inc.  
230 Landmark Drive  
Montgomery, AL 36117-2752

### General inquiries, changes of address, or international callers:

Phone: (334) 272-8558  
Fax: (334) 270-2002

### Orders:

Phone: (800) 234-8558  
Fax: (800) 234-2882

**On-line** Web store/catalog, subscription order/renewal form, current issues, archives, and other information (all orders processed on a secure server):

URL: [www.ApologeticsPress.org](http://www.ApologeticsPress.org)  
E-mail: [mail@ApologeticsPress.org](mailto:mail@ApologeticsPress.org)

### Discovery—Scripture & Science for Kids

is a sister publication for children. For more information, please contact our offices or visit the *Discovery* Web site at:

URL: [www.DiscoveryMagazine.com](http://www.DiscoveryMagazine.com)

him, that he might know what they had gained by trading. And the first came before him, saying, “Lord, thy pound hath made ten pounds more.” And he said unto him, “Well done, thou good servant: because thou wast found faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.” And the second came, saying, “Thy pound, Lord, hath made five pounds.” And he said unto him also, “Be thou also over five cities.” And another came, saying, “Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that which thou layedst not down, and reapest that which thou didst not sow.” He saith unto him, “Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I am an austere man, taking up that which I laid not down, and reaping that which I did not sow; then wherefore gavest thou not my money into the bank, and I at my coming should have required it with interest?” And he said unto them that stood by, “Take from him the pound, and give it unto him that hath the ten pounds.” And they said unto him, “Lord, he hath ten pounds.” I say unto you, that unto every one that hath shall be given; but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him.

After reading this parable (and the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30), it is clear that certain individuals receive—and thus are responsible for—more pounds/talents than some others. The faithful servant who soundly invested ten pounds was awarded authority over ten cities. The second servant also was recompensed in proportion to the degree with which he fulfilled his responsibility to the master. He wisely invested five pounds, and in return was given authority over five cities. There is no reason to disbelieve, then, that had the third servant been equally faithful, he, too, would have been rewarded commensurate with his investment (which likely would have been authority over one city). This parable, then, teaches the following: (1) all of God’s servants are blessed with varied abilities; (2) all who are faithful stewards of the ability with which they have been endowed will obtain a reward; and (3) God’s stewards will be rewarded based on what they accomplished with the abilities that were entrusted to them. [This is not to say, of course, that heaven is “earned” by any

human works (see Thompson, 1999, pp. 47-49). Ephesians 2:8-9 states unequivocally that salvation is a free gift of God, not something bestowed because of any human merit. Rather, the works done in the here and now provide for the Christian an eternal weight of glory—a weight that differs from person to person (2 Corinthians 4:17).]

If believers are to be judged according to their works (Matthew 16:27; 25:31-46; Revelation 20:12), it logically follows that those with the **greatest responsibility** can expect the **strictest judgment**. Indeed, the Good Book teaches exactly such a principle. Jehovah charged the prophet Ezekiel:

Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, “Thou shalt surely die,” and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteous deeds which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thy hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning; and thou hast delivered thy soul (Ezekiel 3:17-21).

What an awesome and terrifying responsibility that ancient preacher and prophet was given. Millennia later, James offered this warning: “Be not many of you teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive **heavier judgment**” (James 3:1).

Those who suggest that God will reward every saint **equally** often appeal to the parable that Christ presented in Matthew 20:1-15 for support of their position. There, the Lord told of a certain landowner who was in need of workers to assist him in his vineyard. The man went to the marketplace to find laborers and, when he had located some men, agreed to pay them a denarius each. About the third hour, he went to the market again

in order to seek additional laborers. He went out twice more and then, at the eleventh hour, he found still more men to help. This last group worked only one hour, and yet when the end of the day arrived and all the men lined up to be paid, those “eleventh-hour” workers received their wages first—a full denarius. The rest of the men were given equal dues. When the master finally got to the laborers he had hired first that morning, he gave them the same amount he had given everyone else. Those “first-hour” workers were outraged! The very idea that they—who had been hired first and worked longest—should receive the same recompense as those who worked only one hour, was more than they could handle. The text in Matthew says that “they murmured against the householder” (vs. 11). But the man who had hired them responded simply: “Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things?” (vss. 13-15).

Those who teach that God will reward each of His faithful followers equally suggest that the denarius in this parable represents eternal life (see, for example: Wright, 1980, 122:531; Coffman, 1974, p. 307), and since every worker received a denarius, the implication is that there can be no “degrees” of reward. This, however, cannot be what the parable is teaching. In his commentary on the book of Matthew, renowned biblical scholar R.C.H. Lenski explained why.

Those who think that the denarius is eternal life, of course, regard the evening as the final judgment or the hour of death. Even in this verse this cannot be the sense, for eternal life is never **earned** by any man’s work. The combination of ἀπό with δός (δίδωμι) means “give what is due.” Eternal life is never **due** anyone either at the time of its first bestowal in conversion or at the time of its full enjoyment when the believer enters heaven (1943, pp. 772-773, emp. added).

If this parable were speaking about final judgment, it would indeed provide a cogent argument for the equality of each person’s eternal reward. But is the parable addressing final judgment and eternal rewards? No, it is not. In Matthew 20:11 the text clearly indicates that the ones who worked all day “mur-

mured against the householder.” In regard to those who did so, H. Leo Boles commented that “they were envious; their eyes were evil” (1952, p. 400). But the Scriptures make it clear that there will be no envy in heaven (Revelation 21:27). Lenski correctly observed: “Here, it ought to be plain, the possibility of making the denarius equal to eternal life is removed. The thought that a saint in heaven may murmur against God is appalling” (p. 775).

In addition, the master of the vineyard commanded the workers who labored in the field all day: “Take up that which is thine and **go thy way**” (vs. 14, emp. added). Lenski rendered the phrase, “Take up thine own and **be gone**,” and then observed:

This lord is done with him. And this is the climax of the parable. This ὄργη [be gone] cannot mean, “Go and be content with thy wages!” It is exactly like the imperative found in 4:10, and always means to leave, cf., 8:13; 19:21.... This is a man who works in the church for what he can get out of the church. He has what he worked for—and nothing more. He is treated exactly as the hypocrites are who are mentioned in 6:2, 5: “Verily, I say unto you, They have received their reward!” i.e., are paid in full. ...Those who will learn nothing about divine grace even when they are working in the church will finally be left without this grace; those who are set on justice and refuse to go beyond it shall finally have justice (p. 777).

If we interpret the parable to mean that the master of the vineyard represents God, and the denarius represents eternal reward, how, then, are we to interpret the fact that those who worked all day received a denarius, but were **sent away from the master** of the vineyard? Can such a view be squared with Paul’s word in 1 Thessalonians 4:17—“And so shall we **ever** be with the Lord”?

If this parable is not discussing final judgment (and it is not), and if the denarius does not represent eternal life (and it does not), what, then, is the point of the parable? It appears that Christ was instructing His Jewish listeners about the Gentiles’ place in the Kingdom—a topic that, as we learn from later New Testament writings, became somewhat controversial among first-century Christians. The late Guy N. Woods, former editor of the *Gospel Advocate*, wrote concerning Christ’s discussion:

It is possible, indeed probable, in the minds of many scholars that it was delivered to show that the Gentiles, who came in at “the eleventh hour,” would enjoy in the kingdom (soon to be established when these words were uttered) the same privileges as the Jews who had been the favored and chosen people of the Lord for many centuries. Though last in point of invitation, they were to become first through their acceptance of, and dedication to, the gospel; whereas, the Jews, through their rebellion and disbelief, would be cut off (1976, p. 231, parenthetical comment in orig.).

Numerous conservative biblical commentators have suggested exactly such a view, including Adam Clarke (n.d. 5:194-197) and H. Leo Boles (1952, pp. 400-401). One writer by the name of Watts put it like this:

It is not the design of this parable to represent the final rewards of the saints at the day of judgment, but to show that the nation of the Jews, who had been called to be the people of God above a thousand years before, and had borne the burden and heat of the day, i.e., the toil and bondage of many ceremonies, should have no preference in the esteem of God above the Gentiles, who were called at the last hour, or at the end of the Jewish dispensation (as quoted in Woods, 1980, 122:532).

While the parable of the laborers established that all who are deserving (Jew or Gentile) would inherit a reward, it also emphasized God’s grace. As Lenski remarked:

The warning represented in this parable suggests our responsibility. If we close eye and heart against grace, no matter how high we stand in the church or how much we work, we shall lose life eternal (1943, p. 781).

But what of the denarius? What does it represent, if not eternal life? Lenski concluded—correctly, we believe—that the denarius represents the blessings one receives here on Earth by being a member of the Lord’s church.

The denarius paid at evening constitutes the temporal blessings connected with our Christian profession and work, and these blessings are made ours already during the entire time that we work. Every one of us gets his denarius; every one enjoys the same temporal benefits that are connected with life in the church. They come to the new convert exactly as they do to the old, to the preacher as well as to the [member], to the child as well as to the octogenarian (p. 772).

## REASONS FOR UNEQUAL REWARDS

Lending credence to the idea that Jesus' parable in Matthew 20 is not discussing equality of eternal rewards is the fact that the Bible plainly depicts certain people being awarded a unique and distinguished position in heaven. Revelation 15:3 notes that in heaven "they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb." Surely none of us would be so bold as to suggest that the hosts of heaven will sing a song about us as they do about Moses. Furthermore, in Revelation 21:14 John wrote that "the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." While we recognize the somewhat figurative nature of certain terms employed by John, the principle nevertheless remains: the apostles ultimately will occupy a place of greater preeminence in the heavenly abode. Also, Luke 16 portrays Abraham as having more prominence and authority in the afterlife than Lazarus. Consider also Mark 10:40, wherein James and John asked the Lord to allow them to sit next to Him in glory—one on His right side and one on His left. Jesus replied: "To sit on my right hand or on my left hand is not mine to give; but it is for them for whom it hath been prepared." Some glorified beings (whether angelic or human) will occupy a place of distinction beside the Savior—a unique and special place reserved solely for them.

Some have argued against the idea of differing rewards by claiming that heaven will be perfect, and that something perfect can be neither improved nor diminished. However, Jesus observed that "even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, **more** [joy] than over ninety and nine righteous persons, who need no repentance" (Luke 15:7, emp. added). In at least some sense, then, joy in heaven can differ in degrees. The principle of degrees of heavenly reward—which is taught quite plainly in Scripture—should motivate every Christian to "work while it is yet day, for the night cometh when no man can work" (John 9:4).

## DEGREES OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

But if there are degrees of reward in heaven, will there likewise be degrees of punishment in hell? Yes indeed. On several occasions, when speaking of eternal torment, the Bible mentions those who will suffer to a lesser or

greater degree. And each time such a reference occurs, the punishment is proportionate to the opportunities missed. Those who are blessed with numerous opportunities to obey the gospel and still reject it will receive greater condemnation than those who have little or no occasion to accept Christ. Jesus echoed this sentiment in His rebuke to the inhabitants of the cities of Bethsaida and Chorazin.

Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be **more tolerable** for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted unto heaven? thou shalt go down unto Hades: for if the mighty works had been done in Sodom which were done in thee, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you that it shall be **more tolerable** for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee (Matthew 11:21-24, emp. added).

Jesus offered this censure to those Jewish cities where He had done much of His preaching, and where, on occasion, He even had performed miracles. The citizens of those towns had more opportunity to accept the Messiah than many others living around them, yet they persisted in their rejection of Him. On the other hand, the Gentile cities of Tyre and Sidon—renowned for their wickedness—would receive a **lesser** punishment at the Day of Judgment for the simple reason that they had been deprived of direct exposure to Christ's message and miracles. All were to endure punishment, for all had rejected God's law. But it would not be **equal** punishment. The writer of Hebrews further emphasized this point when he addressed the "sorer punishment" that was to befall those who had "trodden underfoot the Son of God" (10:29). Notice also Peter's stinging statement regarding the terrible fate that awaits unfaithful, backsliding Christians:

For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, **the last state is become worse with them than the first** (2 Peter 2:20-21, emp. added).

If Peter's statement teaches anything, it teaches degrees of punishment.

But perhaps the most convincing argument for the concept of degrees of punishment derives from Jesus' parable of the wicked servant, as recorded in Luke 12:42-48.

And the Lord said, "Who, then, is the faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall set over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will set him over all that he hath. But if that servant shall say in his heart, 'My lord delayeth his coming,' and shall begin to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour when he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint his portion with the unfaithful. And that servant, who knew his lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with **many** stripes; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with **few** stripes. And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more" (emp. added).

The meaning of the last section of this parable is inescapable. All the wicked will be punished; however, those limited in their opportunities to learn about Christ will be punished "with fewer stripes" than those who knew the truth and obeyed it not.

Does the Bible teach degrees of reward in heaven? Yes, it does. Does it also teach degrees of punishment in hell? Yes, it does. The good news, of course, is that heaven's offer of salvation is open to everyone (John 3:16; Romans 6:23). No one **has** to go to hell. When Christ was ransomed on our behalf (1 Timothy 2:4), He paid a debt He did not owe, and a debt we could not pay—so that we could live forever in the presence of our Creator (Matthew 25:46). God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:23; 33:11). Nor should we. As one writer put it: "No one who has been snatched from the burning himself can feel anything but compassion and concern for the lost" (Woodson, 1973, p. 32). As we discover the hideous nature of our sin, we not only should desire to save ourselves "from this crooked generation" (Acts 2:40), but we also should be passionate about warning the wicked of their impending doom (Ezekiel 3:17-19). **AB/KB/BT**

## REFERENCES

- Boles, H. Leo (1952), *A Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate).
- Clarke, Adam (no date), *Clarke's Commentary* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury).
- Coffman, Burton (1974), *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Abilene, Texas: ACU Press).
- Kurfees, M.C., ed. (1921), *Questions and Answers by Lipscomb and Sewell* (Nashville, TN: McQuiddy).
- Lenski, R.C.H. (1943), *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg).
- Thompson, Bert (1999), *My Sovereign, My Sin, My Salvation* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press).
- Thompson, Bert (2000a), "The Origin, Nature, and Destiny of the Soul—Part III," *Reason and Revelation*, 20:33-39, May.
- Thompson, Bert (2000b), "The Origin, Nature, and Destiny of the Soul—Part IV," *Reason and Revelation*, 20:41-47, June.
- Thompson, Bert (2000c), "The Origin, Nature, and Destiny of the Soul—Part V," *Reason and Revelation*, 20:49-55, July.
- Woods, Guy N. (1976), *Questions and Answers* (Henderson, TN: Freed-Hardeman University).
- Woods, Guy N. (1980), "Editorial Note" accompanying an article by Cecil N. Wright, "Are There Degrees of Reward and Punishment in Eternity," *Gospel Advocate*, 122:531-532, August 21.
- Woodson, Leslie (1973), *Hell and Salvation* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell).
- Wright, Cecil N. (1980), "Are There Degrees of Reward and Punishment in Eternity," *Gospel Advocate*, 122:531-532, August 21.

Q What are "polystrate" fossils, and what is their significance in the creation/evolution controversy?

A To the man on the street, one of the most impressive arguments for an ancient Earth is the testimony of sedimentary-rock layers (many of which are thousands of feet thick) strewn around the planet. Scientists (and park rangers) subject us to examples like the Grand Canyon and present their spiel so effectively that—as we observe layer after layer of sedimentary rocks piled one on top of another—the only explanation seems to be that vast amounts of geologic time must have been involved. Each division of the rocks, we are told, represents a time that long since has passed, and an ancient world that long

since has ceased to exist. Creationists, however, beg to differ, and suggest that a closer look at the "record of the rocks" suggests youth, not antiquity, for our home planet.

Embedded in sedimentary rocks all over the globe are what are known as "polystrate" (or polystratic) fossils. [N.A. Rupke, a young geologist from the State University of Groningen in the Netherlands, first coined the term "polystrate fossils" (see Morris, 1970, p. 102).] Polystrate means "many layers," and refers to fossils that cut through at least two sedimentary-rock layers. Henry Morris discussed polystrate fossils in his book, *Biblical Cosmology and Modern Science*, where he first explained the process of stratification.

Stratification (or layered sequence) is a universal characteristic of sedimentary rocks. A stratum of sediment is formed by deposition under essentially continuous and uniform hydraulic conditions. When the sedimentation stops for a while before another period of deposition, the new stratum will be visibly distinguishable from the earlier by a stratification line (actually a surface). Distinct strata also result when there is a change in the velocity of flow or other hydraulic characteristics. Sedimentary beds as now found are typically composed of many "strata," and it is in such beds that most fossils are found (1970, p. 101, parenthetical items in orig.).

Morris then went on to explain that "large fossils...are found which extend through several strata, often 20 feet or more in thickness" (p. 102). Ken Ham has noted: "There are a number of places on the earth where fossils actually penetrate more than one layer of rock. These are called 'polystrate fossils'" (2000, p. 138). Such phenomena clearly violate the idea of a gradually accumulated geologic column since, generally speaking, an evolutionary overview of that column suggests that each stratum (layer) was laid down over thousands (or even millions!) of years. Yet as Scott Huse remarked in his book, *The Collapse of Evolution*:

Polystratic trees are fossil trees that extend through several layers of strata, often twenty feet or more in length. There is no doubt that this type of fossil was formed relatively quickly; otherwise it would have decomposed while waiting for strata to slowly accumulate around it (1997, p. 96).

Probably the most widely recognized of the polystrate fossils are tree trunks that extend vertically through two, three, four or more sections of rock-rock that supposedly was deposited during vast epochs of time. However, organic material (like wood) that is exposed to the elements will rot, not fossilize. Thus, the entire length of these tree trunks must have been preserved very quickly, which suggests that the sedimentary layers surrounding them must have been deposited rapidly—possibly (and likely) during a single catastrophe (see Ham, 2000, p. 138). As Leonard Brand explained, even if the trees had been removed from oxygen, "anaerobic bacteria cause decay unless the specimens are buried rapidly" (1997, p. 240). Consequently, it is irrational to conclude from such evidence that these formations built up slowly over millions of years. The logical explanation for such formations is that they must have been formed quickly under cataclysmic conditions. Ken Ham has observed: "For example, at the Joggins, in Nova Scotia, there are many erect fossil trees that are scattered throughout 2,500 feet of layers. You can actually see these fossil trees, which are beautifully preserved, penetrate through layers that were supposedly laid down over millions of years" (p. 138). In what surely must be a classic case of understatement, Rupke wrote concerning the Joggins polystrate fossils: "Only a wholly uncommon process of sedimentation can account for conditions like these" (1973, p. 154). [For reviews of the Joggins polystrate fossils, see: Corliss, 1990, pp. 254-256; Rupke, 1973, p. 154.] In other words, these erect fossil trees required a speedy burial to be preserved fully. What better evidence for a catastrophic event than trees fossilized in an upright position and traversing multiple layers of the geologic column? As Paul Ackerman remarked, the polystratic tree trunks "constitute a sort of frozen time clock from the past, indicating that terrible things occurred—not over millions of years but very quickly" (1986, p. 84).

This type of phenomenon is not an isolated one. Rupke produced a photograph of "a lofty trunk, exposed in a sandstone quarry near Edinburgh [Scotland], which measured no less than 25 meters and, intersecting 10 or 12 different strata, leaned at an angle of about 40°" (1973, p. 154). Thus, this particular tree must have been buried **while falling down!** In fact, one scientist who exam-

ined the tree, George Fairholme, commented on the fact that an inclined trunk constitutes a much stronger testimony for rapidity in deposition than an upright one because

...while the latter might be supposed to have been capable of retaining an upright position, in a semi-fluid mass, for a long time, by the mere laws of gravity, the other must, by the very same laws, have fallen, from its inclined to a horizontal position, had it not been **retained in its inclined position by the rapid accumulation of its present stony matrix** (1837, p. 394, emp. added).

In his book, *The Creation-Evolution Controversy*, R.L. Wysong presented a photograph of another extremely unusual polystrate tree. The caption underneath the photograph read:

This fossil tree penetrates a visible distance of ten feet through volcanic sandstone of the Clarno formation in Oregon. Potassium-Argon dating of the nearby John Day formation suggests that 1,000 feet of rock was deposited over a period of about seven million years or, in other words, at the rate of the thickness of this page annually! However, catastrophic burial must have formed the rock and caused the fossilization, otherwise the tree would have rotted and collapsed (1976, p. 366; see Nevins, 1974, 10[4]:191-207 for additional details).

After discussing the effects of the May 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens, Trevor Major commented: "...upright tree stumps found in many coal beds represent, not the remains of trees growing in a peat swamp, but the effects of a flood or similar disaster" (1996, p. 16). William J. Fritz, an evolutionist, recognized the phenomenon in fossilized trees at Yellowstone National Park and stated: "I do not think that entire Eocene forests were preserved *in situ* [in place-JD/BT] even though some upright trees apparently **were preserved where they grew** (1980a, p. 313, emp. added). In another article published the same year in the same scientific journal, Fritz wrote:

Deposits of recent mud flows on Mount St. Helens demonstrate conclusively that stumps can be transported and deposited upright. These observations support conclusions that some vertical trees in the Yellowstone "fossil forests" were transported in a **geologic situation directly comparable to that of Mount St. Helens** (1980b, p. 588, emp. added).

Evolutionary uniformitarianism would have us believe that the same processes going on in nature today have formed the Earth as opposed to large-scale catastrophes (like, for example, the Flood of Noah recorded in Genesis 6-8). However, in light of the evidence from polystrate fossils, creationists believe that just the opposite is true. Some scientists have suggested that the fossil forests in Yellowstone may have been transported by geologic and/or volcanic activity possibly associated with the Noahic flood (see: Brand, 1997, p. 69; Roth, 1998, p. 246). Furthermore, as Morris and Parker have discussed in their book, *What is Creation Science?*

Polystrates are especially common in coal formations. For years and years, students have been taught that coal represents the remains of swamp plants slowly accumulated as peat and then even more slowly changed into coal (1987, p. 168).

If polystrate fossils must form quickly in order to be preserved, and if (as many evolutionists believe) coal has been formed over periods lasting millions of years, how could there be so many (or any!) polystrate fossils in coal veins? The answer, of course, is that the evolutionary scenario requiring vast eons of time for the origin of coal (and, for that matter, oil) is wrong.

Yet tree trunks are not the only representatives of polystrate fossils. Even animals' bodies form polystrate fossils (like catfish in the Green River Formation in Wyoming—see Morris, 1994, p. 102). But perhaps the most intriguing of all animal polystrate fossils is that of a baleen whale discovered in 1976. K. M. Reese reported the find in some detail in the October 11, 1976 issue of *Chemical and Engineering News*.

Workers at the Dicalite division of Grefco, Inc. have found the fossil skeleton of a baleen whale some 10 to 12 million years old in the company's diatomaceous earth quarries in Lompoc, California. They've found fossils there before; in fact, the machinery operators have learned a good deal about them and carefully annotate any they find with the name of the collector, the date, and the exact place found. Each discovery is turned over to Lawrence G. Barnes at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. The whale, however, is one of the largest fossils ever collected anywhere. It was spotted by operator James Darrah, and Dr. Barnes is directing the excavation. The whale is standing on end in the quarry and is being exposed gradually as the diato-

mite is mined. Only the head and a small part of the body are visible as yet. The modern baleen whale is 80 to 90 feet long and has a head of similar size, indicating that the fossil may be close to 80 feet long (1976, 54[4]:40).

In a letter to the editor in the January 24, 1977 issue of *Chemical and Engineering News*, Larry Helmick, professor of chemistry at Cedarville College in Ohio, wrote: "Such phenomena "cannot easily be explained by uniformitarian theories, but fit readily into an historical framework based upon the recent and dynamic universal flood in Genesis, chapter 6-9" (55[12]:4). In the March 21, 1977 issue of *Chemical and Engineering News*, Harvey Olney III, of the Texas Tech School of Medicine in Lubbock, Texas, wrote in agreement (55[12]:4).

The amazing part of this story, however, concerns the response of evolutionists within the scientific community to Reese's report, and to Helmick's and Olney's letters to the editor. One evolutionist, Don Weinschank, of the Natural Sciences Department at Michigan State University, wrote in a letter to the editor of *Chemical and Engineering News* on April 25, 1977:

At the moment, I don't know why that [expletive deleted] whale is standing on its tail. As a scientist, I'm going to wait until somebody with reasonable competence in paleontology—somebody who knows firsthand the pitfalls of interpretation in this area—has a chance to look at it (p. 3).

The interesting thing is that reputable scientists "with reasonable competence in paleontology" **have** had "a chance to look at it," and an adequate explanation is no nearer now than it was when the whale was first discovered. [For an in-depth technical report on the baleen whale polystrate fossil, see Snelling, 1995.]

After Dr. Rupke (who, remember, coined the term "polystrate fossils") cited numerous examples of polystrate fossils (1973, pp. 152-157), he concluded: "Nowadays, most geologists uphold a uniform process of sedimentation during the earth's history; **but their views are contradicted by plain facts**" (p. 157, emp. added). Contradicted by plain facts indeed! Rupke then wrote: "Personally, I am of the opinion that the polystrate fossils constitute a crucial phenomenon both to the actuality and the mechanism of a **cataclysmal deposition**" (1973, p. 157). What "cataclysmal deposition" could have produced the types, and numbers, of polystrate fossils that have been discovered around the globe? How about the Noahic flood? **JD/BT**

## REFERENCES

- Ackerman, Paul D. (1986), *It's a Young World After All* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Austin, Steven (1994), *Grand Canyon: Monument to Catastrophe* (El Cajon, CA: Institute for Creation Research).
- Brand, Leonard (1997), *Faith, Reason, & Earth History: A Paradigm of Earth and Biological Origins by Intelligent Design* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press).
- Corliss, William (1990), *Neglected Geological Anomalies* (Glen Arm, MD: The Sourcebook Project).
- Fairholme, George (1837), *New and Conclusive Physical Demonstrations, Both of the Fact and Period of the Mosaic Deluge, and of Its Having Been the Only Event of the Kind That Has Ever Occurred Upon the Earth* (London: T. Ridgeway & Sons).
- Fritz, William J. (1980a), "Reinterpretation of the Depositional Environment of the Yellowstone Fossil Forest," *Geology*, 8[7]:309-313.
- Fritz, William J. (1980b), "Stumps Transported and Deposited Upright by Mount St. Helens Mud Flows," *Geology*, 8[12]:586-588.
- Ham, Ken (2000), *Did Adam Have a Belly Button?* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books).
- Helmick, Larry S. (1976), "Workers Find Whale in Diatomaceous Earth Quarry," *Chemical and Engineering News*, 55[4]:40, October 11.
- Huse, Scott M. (1997), *The Collapse of Evolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), third edition.
- Major, Trevor (1996), *Genesis and the Origin of Coal & Oil* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press).
- Morris, Henry M. (1970), *Biblical Cosmology and Modern Science* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Morris, Henry M. and Gary E. Parker (1987), *What is Creation Science?* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books).
- Morris, John D. (1994), *The Young Earth* (Colorado Springs, CO: Master Books).
- Nevins, Stuart E. (1974), "Post-Flood Strata of the John Day Country, Northeastern Oregon," *The Creation Research Society Quarterly*, 10[4]:191-214, March.
- Olney, Harvey O. III (1977), "A Whale of a Tale," *Chemical and Engineering News*, 55[12]:4, March 21.
- Reese, K.M. (1976), "Workers Find Whale in Diatomaceous Earth Quarry," *Chemical and Engineering News*, 54[4]:40, October 11.
- Roth, Ariel A. (1998), *Origins: Linking Science and Scripture* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association).
- Rupke, N.A. (1973), "Prolegomena to a Study of Cataclysmal Sedimentation," *Why Not Creation*, ed. Walter E. Lammerts (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Weinshank, Don (1977), "The Whale Got Me," *Chemical and Engineering News*, pp. 2-3, April 25.
- Wysong, R.L. (1976), *The Creation-Evolution Controversy* (East Lansing, MI: Inquiry Press).

## 2000 INDEXES

### SUBJECT

- Annihilationism, soul and 20:35-39
- Behe, Michael, 20:83-85
- Cell, the, 20:60-61
- Christ, historical, 20:1-6
- Chromosomes, 20:66-71
- Creation, definition of, 20:78-79
- Days of Genesis 1, 2 Peter 3:8 and, 20:31
- Dembski, William, 20:73-79, 81-85
- Design  
Characteristics of, 20:81  
Inferring, 20:81-85
- DNA, 20:66-71
- Evolution  
Definition of, 20:74-75  
Polystrate fossils and, 20:93-95
- Firmament, Bible concept of the, 20:25-29
- Genes, 20:66-71
- Genetic code  
Design of, 20:61-63  
DNA and, 20:66-67  
Origin of, 20:65-66
- Genetics  
Glossary of, 20:59  
Human Genome Project and, 20:57-63, 65-71  
Science of, 20:57-61
- God  
Male, is?, 20:21-23  
Scientists who believe in, 20:77
- Hell, Bible teaching on, 20:49-55
- Human Genome Project  
"Cracking the code," 20:57-63, 65-71  
Implications of, 20:86-87
- Intelligent Design Movement  
Definition and goals of, 20:73-79, 81-85  
Irreducible complexity and, 20:83-85  
Naturalism and, 20:75-79,
- Johnson, Phillip, 20:73-79, 81-85
- National Academy of Sciences, 20:74-75
- Naturalism  
Definition of, 20:75-79  
Epistemic, 20:75-79, 81-85
- Polystrate fossils, 20:93-95
- Punishment  
Degrees of, 20:92-93  
Necessity of, 20:44-47
- Reward, degrees of, 20:89-92
- Satyr, Bible and, 20:29-30
- Sin, nature of man's, 20:41-44
- Soul, the  
Definition of, 20:10-15  
Destiny of, 20:33-39, 41-47, 49-55  
Heaven and, 20:53-55  
Hell and, 20:49-55

- Nature of, 20:33-39, 41-47, 49-55  
Origin of, 20:17-20  
Scripture, use of word in, 20:11-15  
Spirit and, 20:13-14
- Unicorn, Bible and, 20:29-30
- Universalism, soul and, 20:33

### AUTHOR/TITLE

- Bass, Alden  
Questions and Answers, 20:89-93
- Butt, Kyle  
The Historical Christ—Fact or Fiction?, 20:1-6  
Questions and Answers, 20:89-93
- Deweese, Joe  
Questions and Answers, 20:93-95
- Major, Trevor  
The Intelligent Design Movement [Parts I & II], 20:73-79, 81-85  
What Now? Implications of the Human Genome Project, 20:86-87
- Thompson, Bert  
The Origin, Nature, and Destiny of the Soul [Parts I-V], 20:9-15  
17-20, 33-39, 41-47, 49-55  
Is God Male?, 20:21-23  
Questions and Answers, 20:25-31  
"Cracking the Code"—The Human Genome Project in Perspective [Parts I & II], 20:57-58, 60-63, 65-71  
A Genetic Glossary, 20:59  
Questions and Answers, 20:89-95
- Editor's Notes  
Introducing—Our New Director of Biblical Research, 20:8  
Announcing: Volume Eight in the "Scripture & Science Series," 20:16  
Announcing: The Return of the 1901 *American Standard Version*, 20:24  
Announcing: Volume One in the *Rock-Solid Faith* Trilogy, 20:32  
Announcing: "An Offer You Can't Refuse," 20:40  
Announcing: *The Mythology of Modern Dating Methods*, 20:48  
Announcing: *The New Rock-Solid Faith: How to Build It* Video Series, 20:56  
Announcing: The New DiscoveryMagazine.com Web Site, 20:64  
The Human Genome Project, the Christian, and Medical Ethics, 20:72  
"So You Believe in Intelligent Design—But Why?," 20:80  
A Sad, But Fond, "Farewell," 20:88  
Announcing: *Reason and Revelation/Discovery 2000 Bound Volumes*, 20:96



**NOTE FROM THE EDITOR**

**ANNOUNCING: REASON & REVELATION/DISCOVERY 2000 BOUND VOLUMES**

When we began publishing *Reason & Revelation* in 1981, we realized that many of the articles in the journal would remain relevant far beyond the month, or even the year, in which they were authored. We therefore decided to produce a bound volume of all twelve issues at the end of each calendar year. We never have veered from that commitment.

For well over a decade-and-a-half, many of our readers have made it a habit to purchase their personal copies of each year's bound volume of *Reason & Revelation*. No doubt they have benefited from having the articles available in a permanent format that permits continued study of the themes represented within the various articles. If sales of the bound volumes through the years are any indicator, I believe it is safe to say that our readers have profited from their availability.

Previously, we have had in stock bound volumes of *Reason & Revelation* for 1994-1999. With the collating and binding of all issues for 2000, we now have a total of seven years' worth of bound volumes available. Each volume contains all twelve issues for the year, as well as an extensive author/subject index and an attractive cover with comb binding.

The bound volume for 2000 now is available from our offices, and contains articles on such topics as: "The Historicity of Christ," "The Origin, Nature, and Destiny of the Soul," "Cracking the Code—The Human Genome Project in Perspective" "Questions and Answers (alleged Bible discrepancies, difficult Bible questions, creation/evolution issues)," "The Intelligent Design Movement," "Implications of the Human Genome Project," etc. You may purchase the 2000 bound volume (as well as those from 1994-1999) for only \$8 each. Or you may purchase the entire set (a total of seven) at a special price of \$50.

We also would like you to know that the 2000 bound volume of *Discovery*, our monthly magazine on Scripture and science for children, now is available. In addition, we still have in stock bound volumes for 1995-1999 (unfortunately, the 1990-1994 volumes are out of print permanently). Individual bound volumes of *Discovery* cost only \$12 each. The entire set of six (1995-2000) costs only \$65. Each bound volume of *Discovery* provides a veritable storehouse of knowledge for children on scriptural and scientific matters—much of which is either difficult or impossible to find elsewhere. Each issue not only contains articles on science and the Bible written by faithful Christians, but also is illustrated with beautiful, professionally produced artwork as well.

You may order any, or all, of these bound volumes via credit card by calling us toll-free at 800/234-8558. Or, you may order them by mail if you so desire. [Calculate shipping/handling at \$1.50 for the first volume, and \$0.50 for each additional volume.]

Bound volumes make extremely useful additions to personal, church, or school libraries. They also make valuable and permanent gifts for those men who are attending a preacher training school, students in college (especially those majoring in either Bible or science-related fields), and others. Why not consider giving one (or, better yet, an entire set) to someone for their future study and edification? These bound volumes truly are the kinds of gifts that "keep on giving" as they serve to educate both children and adults alike for spiritual service now, and as they inspire them to make the necessary preparations for eternity. If we may assist you in any way, call on us. We are here to serve, and appreciate your use of our products and services.



**Bert Thompson**