

“The Foolishness of God is Wiser than Man”

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 1-25 remarks that “...the foolishness of God is wiser than man...” What a provocative statement! Who was Paul? Paul was perhaps the greatest of the apostles, at least in terms of the amount of the New Testament attributed to him and his influences on the early church as well as on the Evangelical beliefs to this day. He was not one of the original 12 but was a short time later chosen by the transcended Jesus. Originally named Saul and of the tribe of Benjamin, he was a Pharisee of the ruling class called the Sanhedrin. He was extremely bright, articulate and zealous in that faith until his conversion by Jesus. He was from a well-to-do Hebrew family, schooled in Greek and the classics, as well as by Gamaliel, the foremost Hebrew religious scholar of his time. As a most ardent foe of Christianity, he was probably the most zealous of the hired guns working for the establishment to root out all Christians and bring them to justice. It is noted that he even presided over the stoning of Steven, Christianity’s first martyr.

The context of this Pauline remark centers on the fundamental tenant of Christianity, the identity and fate of Jesus. Regarding this, he profoundly observes in 1 Corinthians 1:18 that “for the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God.” Read that again, because it is the summation of all that is Christianity! Then he quotes from Isaiah 29:14 God’s declaration, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.” In 1 Corinthians 1:21 Paul goes on “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” Finally in 1 Corinthians 27, he makes the observation that, “God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confuse the wise.”

These quotes reveal a fundamental aspect of the Scriptures, both the Old and the New Testaments. They make clear that the highest level of man’s wisdom is both trivial and ill conceived compared to the wisdom of God. God demonstrates this vast disparity by even fashioning some of His interventions in ways which are divinely effective, but yet

so strange and convoluted to the natural human mind as to be considered utterly foolish. There are several places in the Scriptures where the analogy of the pot to the potter is used to demonstrate this. As the pot has no wisdom through which it can comprehend the workings of the potter, so does man himself lack the wisdom to understand the Lord's ways. Understanding comes only after belief and faith have become manifest in the human spirit. Thus, the Lord in His wisdom has deliberately chosen ways which human wisdom finds foolish. In so doing, God is able to separate and easily distinguish the believer from the non-believer. The believer accepts the fact of God and of Jesus as the Scriptures proclaim. This belief opens the way for the Holy Spirit to enter the soul and spirit of the believer. Once there, the Holy Spirit unlocks the secret of God's wisdom revealing the unfoolishness of His actions.

Meanwhile, the unbeliever saturated in the pride of His own wisdom, sees only foolishness in what God has chosen to reveal to us. He is incapable of seeing the truth because he lacks the light of the Holy Spirit. God sees us as we truly are in relation to Him, that is, His children. As His children, He rightly expects us to believe and obey Him. As parents, we expect the same thing from our little children. What we do and require of them may seem foolishness and unfair to them. If we are wise and fair and loving as parents, we know that our wisdom is superior and that theirs is not yet even formed sufficiently to be called wisdom. Clearly the wisdom of God, our Father and Creator, our potter, is infinitely greater than even the brightest most wise of us, His children. How can we then, once we accept the premise of this God-man relationship, ever presume any capacity to comprehend His ways unless He chooses to reveal them to us? This He surely does for all believers, through the Holy Spirit.

Thus, we have a very important message here. God, through the Scriptures, is telling us that no matter how wise we are or think we are, we are no matches for Him. To prove His point, in the context of what I have just written, where He has intervened or directed events as recorded in the Bible, He has often chosen methods, which neither the so-called intelligent man nor any non believer, the natural man, considers anything but foolish. Hence, we get the absurd title of this paper. Here I've chosen but four examples as

illustrations of this presumed foolishness. These are, the use of Adam's rib for the creation of Eve, then the Noah and the Ark story, followed by the story of the Ten Plagues of Egypt and Exodus, and finally the culmination of them all, the advent of our Lord God Jesus Christ as a man and our Savior.

Before I begin my attempt to describe these few examples of God's "foolishness", I want to offer a note of encouragement to the beginner Bible student to whom this paper is dedicated, because I was there only three and half years ago, and can, therefore, appreciate the fears frustrations and disillusionments which grip every concerned beginner. I pray that the insights and elaborations with which I've tried to surround the following Biblical events will not only reveal His "unfoolishness," but will also illustrate the depth, the fullness and the beauty of God's Word in a manner which will give encouragement to the reader to seek for his or her self, similar soul edifying jewels from this glorious adventure. In reading this or any other human words, one should always remember and apply Peter's admonition in Acts 17:11 where he cautions everyone to have "... received the word with all readiness of the mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so." That means don't take my words as truth until you have checked them out yourself in the only reliable source of the truth, the Holy Bible.

For the beginner, the Bible can be very intimidating, confusing and at the very least, extremely difficult to understand in some areas. The simple fact that it is a translation from Greek and or Hebrew necessarily causes some ambiguities and loss of original meanings. Also, it was written thousands of years ago in the vernacular of the ancient world, and is filled with what now seem to be strange expressions, analogies, idioms and allegories. These along with a host of other unfamiliar forms of expression and manners of conveying ideas, greatly compound the difficulty. Nevertheless, it is by far the most read, most studied, most analyzed and most written about book ever to exist. Therefore, there is a world of assistance available by means of which the serious student can enhance his or her understanding as well as gain an appreciation of its richness, its accuracy, its wealth of profound knowledge, and its authenticity as the Word of God. It

is one continuous integrated divine message penned by over 40 writers over a period of thousands of years. It is a consolidation of 66 books, all of whose author is God Himself.

To the non-believer, the Bible can never be more than a quaint, suspect version of ancient history filled with mystical fantasies and events too absurd to have actually happened, let alone having been divinely orchestrated. To the believer, of course, it is the inerrant Word of God, accurate in every respect, the only problem being, how to understand it all. My advice, beyond careful reading and rereading and reference to the many available aids, is to pray to the Author to guide you through the difficult parts. If you are serious, so He will be also in His assistance.

Why should there be such great disparity of views regarding this great Book? If it's truly God's word, shouldn't its message be crystal clear to everyone? Wouldn't an all-knowing, omnipotent God keep His word updated, understandable and fully convincing to everyone throughout all the ages? How could a God so all knowing and all-powerful as the Creator of the universe, publish a book with so much ambiguity and foolishness as the Bible seems to contain? Not that believers have all the answers, but there are questions, which only the non-believer feels it necessary to ask. I have chosen the following examples of what may seem to be the foolishness of God because they are well known stories, and, therefore, may be useful to describe and to discuss in this context. Perhaps in examining some of this "foolishness" we may find in it some divine wisdom or purpose which the author included in a manner deliberately too subtle for the casual or skeptic reader to discern, but which deeper study may reveal insights with which even the non-believer can identify. Now let us examine some of these "foolish actions" of the Lord, which He recorded for our scorn or for our edification, depending on where our faith and sentiments lay. Here, I've chosen to give a synopsis of each event from what might be considered a secular perspective. Following this, I've tried to offer my personal understanding and beliefs as obtained from the Scriptures and from other writers to whom I've been blessed to have been exposed. Forgive me when I wander off on to tangents and peripheral thoughts. There is so much in the Scriptures, which I wish to

shout to the world, that I cannot help but get side tracked when I think of something, which I consider profound and feel compelled to share.

1. Adam and Eve and the Rib

From the dust of the earth God made Adam. That's sensible. What else should He have used? But Eve, He made her out of one of Adam's ribs. That doesn't make sense! Why a rib? Why not make her out of the same dust? Using natural wisdom the whole thing sounds foolish. But let's see if we can dig a little deeper into the Word to see if God gives us a clue to His wisdom. First, it is known that portions of some ribs have the capacity to regenerate. That is the part of the rib which God took from Adam, and which grew back, making Adam whole again. I used to wonder why I wasn't short a rib if this story was true. Other bones would not have done that. Now Eve, generated from his rib, had his genes and was, therefore, at the very least a very close blood relative. Thus, there was naturally a close kinship, a unique compatibility and a sameness, which God wanted them to have, and which He could most readily achieve in this manner. That this was achieved is evident in Genesis 2:23 where Adam said, "This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called woman because she was taken from man." It seems clear that by using a part of Adam to create Eve, and thus giving her his genes, God made certain that there would be an immediate and permanent physiological as well as psychological bond between them which otherwise could not have been. And yet, this was essential under the unique circumstances associated with the role, which they were ordained to play as the parents of all mankind.

The next verse is as profound as it is revealing in that it further explains the foolishness of this rib issue, and it is prophetic as well. Even so, to a casual reader it could easily slip by unappreciated. In Genesis 2:24 we learn "Therefore shall man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." What father and mother? There weren't any yet! Why did God put this verse here, instead of somewhere down the line where one might believe it to be more appropriate? This verse, of course,

anticipates the future and establishes the priority of relationships and the importance as well as the permanence of marriage. It's such an important message that God couldn't wait any longer to tell us! As you read the Scriptures notice how often God uses marriage as the major idiom by which to teach us about our relationship to Him as well as to our mates. Adam and Eve being literally of the same flesh were well able to successfully "cleave" (cling to, adhere to, stick). This made them the ideal prototype of all future men and women in marriage who are to "cleave" and be as one flesh."

Thus, in this convoluted foolishness of the rib story, God demonstrated foresight and wisdom which the natural man would not have considered, and in doing so, established at the very beginning, what He prescribes and requires of all marriages, which to Him, except for our union with Him, is the most sacred of all unions. You might counter all of this rib explanation by observing that God could have instilled these sameness qualities in Eve without using Adam's rib, if He had wanted to. Well, not exactly. God made Adam and Eve as He has all of us, with a sovereign will, a freedom to make choices independent of His will, choices which He does not micromanage. He certainly intervenes in events of the world as He sees fit, and to those who believe, He answers prayers. However, on a day by day, moment by moment basis, we pretty much choose our own thoughts and actions as influenced by our surroundings and by our individual personalities. Although we are not all stamped out of the same mold, but are instead unique individuals, we, nevertheless, carry choice influencing qualities in our genes derived from the composite of all of our ancestors. Adam had no ancestors. However, to insure compatibility and agreement in this choice-making realm, God wisely (of course) plucked out this replaceable rib full of compatible genes and made Eve in the manner in which she would be best suited to spend a happy eternity with Adam. This was a sort of required "jump start" to assure compatibility of the first couple who had no past, no history, no inheritable qualities which, clearly all subsequent generations would have. Of course, shortly thereafter they got started; she made a bad choice, and he made the choice to go along with her bad choice, so they only got to live together a little over 900 years. Unfortunately, that bad choice gene has been carried down through the

generations, as evidenced by history as well as the present condition of the world and of each of us, their children.

2. Noah's Ark and The Great Flood

This is a short story, which, to the non-believer can also be entertaining from the viewpoint of its fairy tale qualities. Here we have Noah, who "...walked with God..." (Genesis 6:9) given by God the chance to build a barge or ark as they called it; He wants to save Noah and his family and samples of the animal kingdom, while He floods the entire earth in order to kill all other land based life on the planet. Faithful to God's direction, Noah spends the next 120 years building this thing according to God's specifications. It has three levels plus a roof and is 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide and 30 cubits high. A cubit was the length of a man's arm from the elbow to the tip of the longest finger. This obviously varied with the size of the man. However, historians conclude that 18" was probably a good average and may have been standardized around that length, just as the foot later became standardized in England, based on the length of the king's foot. My cubit is 20 inches so 18 inches seems to be a reasonable value to use in converting cubits to feet and inches. Based on this, the ark was 450' long, 75' wide and 45' high. That is one and a half football fields long, almost a half of the width of a football field wide, and as tall as a five-story apartment building. This volume was one and a half million cubic feet. Can you imagine the jokes going around the neighborhood about this old coot that was building a barge the size of a stadium in his back yard because it was going to rain and flood the land? What's rain? There had never been any such thing as rain.

When the ark was finally finished Noah was 600 years old and his three sons were by then about 100 years old. Then, as the story goes, God told him to take with him his wife, his three sons and their wives and get into the ark along with a male and female of every species of animal, bird and creeping thing, plus seven pairs of "clean animals." Once they were all tucked in and settled down, God shut the door and commanded 40 days of solid day and night rain. This plus some "fountains" flooded the whole earth killing

everything and everyone on all the land, except for those on the ark. They stayed in the ark for over a year, 371 days to be exact, and then came out to begin populating the earth all over again.

To the non-believer or casual reader, all of this sounds pretty difficult to swallow. A 600-year-old man with three 100 year-old sons starting a whole New World population! That kills it right there! A flood over the entire world, even 5 mile high Mt Everest?

Collecting two of every species on the planet including elephants and rhinos, cobras, lions, sheep, dogs, spiders, etc.? All of these living together sealed in this barge for over a year? All coming out alive and well, redistributing, and propagating across the whole earth? No way! Could it happen? Too foolish to believe any part of it! We are supposed to believe that all of this actually happened when it's even more absurd than Greek Mythology? How could Noah build such a gigantic complex structure in such primitive times? How could he collect and corral every species of animal, bird and creepy thing? How could he control them and feed them, care for them, dispose of their wastes in such limited space for over a year? Where could all of the water come from? For a local flood maybe, but the whole earth---no Way! It's a fairy tale from beginning to end, OK for kids who believe in Santa Claus but not for us reasoning, thinking adults!

Well, that's probably how the majority of natural man, the non-believers, might view this major episode in the history of the world. Now let's see how the believer, one imbued with the Holy Spirit, one who has studied the evidence, might interpret and understand God's word as it was recorded. We'll try to examine each of the absurdities and the impossible elements of the story applying clues from the Scriptures along with available and relevant scientific information. Lastly, we'll apply the observations of other students of the issues along with our hopefully inspired thoughts, theories and conclusions.

a. Pre-flood people lived a very long time, around 10 times longer than people do today.

For instance Adam lived for 950 years, which means that he lived from 4046 B.C. as the Bible records the year of His birth, to 3096 B.C., therefore, he was alive for 163 years

after Methuselah was born in 3424B.C., while Methuselah was around for 98 years after Shem, son of Noah was born in 2038 B.C. It is also of interest that Noah lived for 950 years and died only eight years before Abraham was born. There were but 10 generations from Adam to Shem and 10 more from Shem to Abraham, however because of such long lives, there were only two generations separating Adam from Abraham in terms of direct memory trail. Methuselah had potential exposure to a living Adam for 163 years, while Shem had potential exposure to a living Methuselah for 98 years and to Abraham for 150 of Abraham's 175 years. Why do I mention this? Because, while not directly relevant to the subject, this should be of interest in terms of how easily it could have been for history, knowledge, wisdom, and culture to have been preserved and handed down with little loss because of so few generational transfers from the very beginning of time to outside the great flood. It may be the answer to a question which baffles historians and archaeologists, which is, why do all of the earliest known civilizations seem to have had advanced cultures and technologies at their very beginnings, with no evidence of any transitional or evolutionary growth.

b. Why did people live so long?

The short answer is because that is the way God made it. The longer answer involves clues both Scriptural as well as scientific, and includes a sprinkling of logic and reasoned assumptions. From the scriptures we know that it had never rained before until the 40-day and night deluge. That means that there may have been a greater amount of water vapor floating around in the atmosphere than there is now. It is also likely that other, since removed, protective atmospheric layers were present to block cosmic rays and other extraterrestrial bombardments which shorten life. There were probably no varying seasons, only one perfect year-round Hawaii type, ideal climate everywhere, given evidence of a past lush green world both under and north of the tundra, as well as all across Antarctica and every other part of the world. The atmosphere, the ground, the water, were all, most likely, free or nearly free of toxins, harmful bacteria and virus – a pristine environment, with only the most health-providing food, air and water. Human genes in this ideal environment no doubt contained fewer, if any, mutations of the type

that limit us today and which result from generations of exposure to diseases, radioactivity, toxins and other biological assaults. There is evidence that the earth's electro magnetic field gets weaker each year and that it may also be linked to diminishing health-providing conditions. I sleep with a magnetic pad under the mattress for that very reason. The resulting magnetic field is measured to be equivalent to what existed naturally 2000 years ago. This field was probably closer to optimal in earlier times, thereby providing benefits about which we know very little. Fossil evidence indicates that there were birds which, because of their structure, could have only flown if the atmospheric pressure and been considerably greater than it is now. Perhaps this also contributed to longevity. There is very convincing evidence, based on over 60 precise measurements, taken over many years, which indicates that the speed of light is slowing down and is certainly not a constant as has been generally accepted. Calculations based on these measurements suggest that the speed of light several thousand years ago was most likely several times faster than it is now. This, of course, based on Einstein's calculations, would have had a profound effect of entropy and the movement of electrons and atoms, and thus on all matter and life forms. There may have also been other conditions, about which we cannot even imagine, which were of great benefit at that time. However, those already mentioned suggest to me that the biblical assertion of such longevity is far from absurd and quite defensible even if it were not the word of God.

c. The preflood civilization was quite advanced

We know from the Bible that the preflood people populated cities, worked with iron and brass, and made complex musical instruments such as harps and organs (Genesis 4:21,22). The 450' long boat with a volume capacity of 1.5 million cubic feet and probably 20,000 tons displacement was also no small task for a primitive people. I have read where science has a problem with the fact that archaeological evidence indicates that prehistoric man, these "early people," had larger brains than we do today. Yet, larger brains are known to equate to greater brainpower that is greater intelligence. This may have been the case in these "prehistoric times." Combine a greater brain capacity with a life span ten times longer than ours, which continues in good health and vigor to the end,

and what might you logically conclude? Think of how much more Newton or Einstein might have accomplished were they able to sustain their health and sharp brain activity for seven or eight hundred years rather than the 30 or 40 years they actually had. I have no doubt that the civilization and technology of that time was far more advanced than is commonly assumed today, and that the flood and related upheavals destroyed nearly all traces of it. Noah and his family, however, would have brought much of its knowledge over into the “New World.” Once again, I suggest that this accounts for the archeological evidence everywhere of the “sudden appearance of a surprisingly advanced level of civilization at about that time.”

d. The ark was wholly adequate for the job it had to do.

The dimensions previously noted along with the following, clearly attest to the fact that the Ark was adequate and appropriate for the tasks. First, it has been estimated that there are or were approximately 18,000 species to deal with. It has also been estimated that the mean size of the composite of all species, say from dinosaur to elephant to mouse to spider, would be the size of a sheep. Taking this average size times 18,000, times two of each kind, one can approximate the space requirements.

The standard cattle car carries 240 sheep. Thirty-six thousand sheep “equivalents” would fit in 150 cattle cars, while the ark had volume capacity of 553 cattle cars or well over three times as much space as required to physically ship them in this hypothetical manner. Of course, supply space and human living quarters were also required. If one insists on dealing with this issue in natural, humanistic terms, issues such as food and water storage, elbow room, waste collection and disposal, care, and feeding, dealing with the sick, births, deaths, unruly behavior, etc., on a year long journey, the project is confronted with insurmountable problems. However, it must be remembered that this was God’s gig. He set it up and He provided. Just as there is no way that Noah and his three sons could have rounded up and held together 18000 species and led them into the ark, so also was it impossible for them to provide the animal husbandry that would have

been necessary for a year on the ark. God obviously directed these animals to and onto the ark and placed them in suspended animation or some form of hibernation for the duration of the trip. Thus, very little food or water was required, none mated, none died, and they all made the trip quietly and uneventfully. God may have also induced some form of hibernation on Noah and his family to help the time go faster.

The non-believer may consider this last explanation a cop out. I don't agree. Once you know as I do that God authored the Bible, you know that it speaks only the truth. It is evident from the Scriptures that God prefers to accomplish tasks using humans and natural means wherever possible. However, He never hesitates to use His supernatural power when no other means is feasible. There He uses the available Noah, the available animals, and the physical man-made ark. However, the very complex task of collecting, controlling, moving, storing and safeguarding the animals under the described circumstances is not one to be given to man or to nature. He had to do it Himself. It's as simple as that.

Before we leave the ark, there are a few other points of interest here regarding the "foolishness of God." In His instructions to Noah, He directs him in Genesis 5:14 "...and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch." When a boat is "pitched" it is done on the outside only to fill cracks and joints and to preserve the wood from the ravages of water. Pitching the inside makes no sense, is a waste, and makes the interior surfaces smelly, sticky and difficult to deal with. Why then would God require this internal pitch unless He had in His mind a long-term preservation well past the short-term use for which the ark was made?

There seems to be considerable evidence that the ark still exists. It has been observed from satellites, by radar, from airplanes, by telescope from nearby vantage points, and by mountain climbers who have been there and taken pieces of it. It sits at an elevation of 16,946 feet above sea level on the mountain of Ararat just where God had made a special point of telling us it would be. It is snow covered eleven months a year and rests on the side of the cliff where access is difficult, dangerous and even breathing is a problem.

This high, dry and difficult-to-access location is, of course, ideal for its preservation, especially with its preservation pitch “within and without.”

Given where He put it, how He ordered it to be preserved, and the fact that it apparently does still exist, suggests that the Lord may have had some as yet unfulfilled use for the ark. Perhaps it will be one of the certain evidences of the literalness and truth of Scriptures to be brought forth in the final days as one way to convince the unconvinced. Its more recent history seems in some ways to support this premise. It was mentioned as seen by Marco Polo and much later Tzar Nicholas of Russia formed an expedition to survey it. However the communists, who have restricted any examination of it for obvious reasons, deposed him. Being in Turkey near the Russian border, even the Turks have been hostile to its exploration. By all reports, the object in question on the side of Mt. Ararat is of the size and general description outlined in the Bible.

Based on what happened to the earth during the flood, Ararat probably was not nearly as high when the ark landed and was emptied. The upheaval of that region and elevating of those mountains could have occurred later as God chose to raise it up to where it would be safe, preserved and difficult to get to. This along with the political turmoil, which has existed for centuries in this region, seems to me to be all part of God’s plan for deferring its verifiable and generally accepted discovery.

e. We know that God was really “fed up” with the way His creation had developed.

Genesis 6 speaks of the “wickedness of mankind.” It also tells of angels mating with women and having children, which were giants. “...the same became mighty men which were of old men of renown. And God saw that wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” With that, He decided to clean house and destroy the whole thing, except that, “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” Noah was just a man and perfect in his generations and “...Noah walked with God.” These giants were also called Nephilim, the “fallen ones,” and were the real live titans of Greek, Roman and other mythologies. The wickedness of

man was, of course, compounded and probably even increased by the presence of Nephilim who, while probably superior physically and intellectually, were spiritually demonic as sons of Satan and his followers. At any rate, we know that God chose to wipe out the whole population and start all over again with a new Adam in the person of Noah who was “perfect in his generations.” Why didn’t He simply kill everyone some other way and rapture Noah as He did Enoch and then create a new Adam and Eve? I don’t know. As He said in Isaiah 55:8, 9 “...for My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” As noted, He saw in Noah a man “pure in his generations,” that is not contaminated with Nephilim ancestors, a just and faithful man worthy, of continuing the race. Incidentally, while there is nothing in the Scriptures to suggest that anyone else survived, it seems likely to me that God may have also raptured a sizable remnant of the faithful just as will occur just before the world ends again for the second and last time, as clearly predicted in the Scriptures. Also the abomination of this angel-woman union returned for a while after the flood as is evidenced by Anikan, the Amorites and other tribes at the time of Joshua and even later in the persons of Goliath and his four brothers. These, however, were also killed off eventually.

f. Where did all the water come from to flood the entire world?

There appears to be archeological evidence that there was a worldwide flood. There is also evidence that the earth topography has undergone severe convulsions in the past. This is a very plausible theory, which can explain many things and answer the question. Given the lushness of the world’s vegetation along with other evidence, it is likely that the world topography was more gently rolling than it is today, ie: there was no Mt. Everest or Rocky Mountains. Genesis 7:19 tells us, “...and all the high hills that were under the whole heaven were covered.” Then Genesis 7:20 says, “...Fifteen cubits upward did the water prevail; and the mountains were covered.” Both “high hills” and “mountains” are a translation of the same Hebrew word Har, which is in the singular

“mountain” or “range of hills.” Thus, it would seem to be literally translated as range of hills and not mountains. With an even climate, and little temperature differences, there would be little or no wind and no seasons. Given that the Bible speaks of “fountains of the great deep water” there probably did exist large Great Lakes sized subterranean water lenses. These would be necessarily under great pressure as are oil deposits today, which release as “gushers.” If released by, say an earthquake, these vast reservoirs of water would have burst upward and risen to great heights as fountains. This along with the first ever opening of the “window of heaven” would have provided enough water to well cover the entire gently rolling topography of the earth. This great displacement of these huge underground reservoirs of water would have also ensured major distortion of the earth’s crust, including displacement earthquakes and volcanoes, all capable of contributing to the deepening of the oceans and the raising of the mountains. It should be noted, that the amount of stored moisture in the atmosphere was probably not much more than it is today, and therefore its contribution to the flood was probably very minimal. It was the vast underground source, which provided nearly all of the floodwaters. These “fountains” probably shot up thousands of feet into the air and would have been widely dispersed coming down as torrential rain. For more information on this intriguing concept, see the book, “In The Beginning” by Walt Brown (Center for Scientific Creation, Publisher).

Perhaps related to this great upheaval is the recently revised theory regarding the Grand Canyon. Until recently an axiom of the geological sciences was that the canyon eroded to its mile deep condition over millions of years. The current theory is that somehow the edge of a gigantic lake opened up and the water burst forth at great velocity scouring the canyon very rapidly. Another exploding theory concerns fossils. An animal caught and buried in mud would necessarily decompose in a short period of time leaving no fossil, unless tremendous heat and pressure were applied very quickly, not through slow layer-by-layer depositing over eons. All of these conditions, the flooding of the entire earth, the formation of fossils, the tropical food still in the gut of quick frozen mastodons, the rapid rise of mountains and deep oceans etc., find plausible explanations in the aftermath of the opening of “window to heaven” and “the fountain of the deep.”

We know that the world into which Noah stepped out of the ark was not the same as the one he left a year earlier. God gave him the world's first rainbow because this had been the world's first rain. The atmosphere was lighter, the sky cleaner, there were now variable seasons, winds and different climates in different places. More of the earth was covered with water and there were great rivers and great oceans and great snowcapped mountains as well as deserts, green valleys and plains. Given that all these things exist today, it takes a "leap of faith" as well as scientific evidence mixed with a good deal of studied speculation, to feel comfortable with the acceptance of the fact that things were vastly different a mere 4000 years ago, especially when "science" tells us it took millions of years. Those who "believe" because they have been so inspired, and because they have dug deeply into God's word, find no difficulty in reconciling the evidence of nature with the Word of the Lord, for He has included within His word all that is needed to explain these mysteries.

g. Why such a long time in the Ark?

According to the Scriptures the ark rested on the "mountain of Ararat" 280 days after Noah got in it, and it took another 91 days before God let them out on a generally dry earth where some considerable vegetation had returned. Note that the dove came back a week earlier with an olive leaf. "...the waters prevailed on the earth for 150 days" (Genesis 7:24). My interpretation is that there was probably no dry ground anywhere until then, which is at least 5 months after the rain came. One reason for that long duration of total inundation may have been to assure that there were absolutely no other possible survivors. We don't know but we can assume with some confidence that there was water-borne commerce, that there were boats and even ships of substantial size. I suggest that Noah probably wasn't the only one who ever built a boat during that era. If that is true then it can be assumed that some people managed to get into boats with some supplies before their area was inundated. Five months on such a craft, however well fitted as it may have been, was simply too long to allow survival, especially with 40 days

of rain or spraying fountains filling the craft and thereby requiring around the clock hand bailing of the collected water.

The fact that the flood was coming was known by at least some for over 969 years, just as our era has known that there again would be final days “as in the days of Noah.” Our era has known of the coming end for over 1900 years, or since John wrote the Book of Revelation. The signs of the times are known now as they were then. Back then Enoch had prophesied it and even named his son Methuselah as a living prophecy. His name in the original Hebrew means, “his death shall bring” which was meant to identify the date of the end of time, or the predicted flood. The flood did come the very year he died. Of course as it is today, so it was then; few if any took it seriously and believed the Word even when they saw Noah, a prophet and a man “who walked with God,” working for 120 years building the ark. The Scripture also clearly describes the events immediately preceding the coming end times as it did then. In the Book of Daniel can be found the prediction that the Jews would be back in the Promised Land on the very day that the State of Israel was proclaimed on May 14, 1948, 1878 years after the beginning of the Diaspora in 70 AD. It also predicted that Jerusalem would be back in Israel’s control; it is; that Babylon was to be rebuilt; it has been under reconstruction for over 20 years; that the Temple would be rebuilt; over 200 priests are being trained, and temple furniture is being constructed along with other appropriate religious equipment and vestures, all with the firm expectation that the temple will be reconstructed also as prophesized and as evidence of the final days.

h. One more “foolishness of God”

This isn’t really foolishness, but it clearly is of God, because no one else could have pulled this off. It is clever, far beyond any human contrivance. I’ve noted it in previous papers, yet it fits so well here, I must repeat it. Below is a list of the direct line of descendants from Adam to Noah. To the right of the list are the root Hebrew meanings of those names.

Adam	Man
Seth	Appointed
Enos	Mortal (frail, incurable)
Kenan	Sorrow
Mahalaalesh	Blessed God
Jared	Shall come down
Enoch	Teaching (teacher)
Methuselah	His death shall bring
Lemoch	Despairing (from which we get Lamentations)
Noah	Comfort (to bring relief)

Now let's put that into a sentence.

“Man (is) appointed mortal sorrow; (but) the Blessed God shall come down teaching (that) his death shall bring comfort to the despairing.”

WOW!!! That is a one-sentence summary of the whole history and purpose of mankind! Through the original sin, that opening of Pandora's box in the Garden of Eden, man was appointed mortal (subject to death) sorrow, but God (Jesus) shall come down teaching, that His death (crucifixion) shall bring the comfort to the despairing (salvation and eternal life). End of story.

I got this, as well as so many other marvelous insights, from the writing and tapes of the truly blessed Chuck Missler.

What does that tell you about God's Authorship of the Bible? I guess it must tell us that somewhere along the way those who wrote the Torah, or some latter rabbis, got together and composed that list of names so that it would read as a prophecy of a coming Messiah whose death would bring comfort to the world. No? Not likely? Then maybe our Lord Himself, in His clever foolishness left us a lightly coded message about His son, who would come and die for us. You have to keep a sharp eye on this Author and His Book,

because He has planted dozens of these little gems throughout both the old and new sections of His masterpiece.

There are two sides or perspectives to every story. There is the perception of the spirit and the perception of the flesh that is of natural man. This paper regarding Noah and the event surrounding the flood begins with a short summary as it might be viewed by the casual, uninspired skeptical reader. I've tried to dissect the story into several components with the attempt in a cursory manner to apply the subtle clues found in the scriptures along with relevant scientific thoughts and evidence liberally sprinkled with plausible conjecture and hopefully spiritual insight. In this way, continuing for the most part from the perspective of the flesh, I have tried to explain the cause of the longevity of early man, the reason for the flood, the manner in which the flood was physically possible, its consequences relating to the character of the earth, and the physical adequacy and feasibility of the ark in fulfilling its purpose as well as its possible future purpose. With the exception of the final item, the prophetic nature of the names of Noah's ancestors, I have refrained from reporting the wealth of spiritual insights and messages with which the Lord has blessed this portion of Scripture. These would include such things as Noah being a type or model of Jesus, the pre-Levitical evidence of Levitical law, the long-term significance of Nephilim, etc. In this paper, I've tried only to inspire the luke-warm reader to aspire hopefully to a burning need to read, to search, to learn and ultimately to know the blessed word of God as recorded in the Scriptures.

3. The 10 Plagues, The Passover and the Exodus

Here we have a series of events about as far fetched as any good fiction writer could imagine. To the non-believer, this story is more like a fairy tale fantasy full of foolishness, magic and wizardry, rather than the orchestration of an omnipotent God. We have the Pharaoh, ruler of the most powerful nation of that period, having a slave labor population of between one and two million people. These are the children of Israel whom he has making bricks and constructing cities. Then we have this 80-year-old man,

Moses, coming into the court and demanding that the Pharaoh release the whole population of slaves because his God says so. Now the Pharaoh considers himself a god, as well as the Nile River, frogs, snakes, cattle, and a number of other creatures and things that he and his people worship. Therefore, he is not too impressed when Moses shows him how his God can turn a stick into a snake; the Pharaoh's, magicians can do the same thing. Then He turns the river into blood, which the Pharaoh's boys can do also. The next plague is frogs, which again both parties seem to know how to do also. Now Moses, or God, starts turning the screw tighter with a plague of lice, which the magicians can't do; they are very upset, and finally admit to the Pharaoh that Moses' God is the real one. With that, they disappear from the story.

The Pharaoh stays stubborn even as Moses plagues him with flies, kills all his cattle, inflicts everyone with boils, drops big hail stones which ruin the crops, brings in locusts which eat everything that is still green, and then shuts down the sun for 3 days. Finally, when every first born of all people and animals dies as Moses said they would, Pharaoh is really impressed and lets them go. Throughout all of this, the plagues affect everyone except the children of Israel. Their water doesn't turn to blood; they don't get the frogs, lice, flies, boils, etc. However, they have to do something to avoid the first-born problem. They have to smear sacrificial lamb's blood on their doorposts and stay inside for the night. All of those who do this are spared this tenth and last plague.

After they have all left, bag, baggage, carts, cattle and everything, Pharaoh has second thoughts, and goes after them with his army and all 600 of his elite chariot corps. In the meantime, they take the worst possible escape route, one that leads to the shore of the Red Sea where escape is impossible, and where the chariots catch up to them and trap them. Pharaoh is thwarted, however, by a wall of fire that keeps him away from the people. In the meantime, Moses lifts his rod, the sea parts and the whole entourage travels safely between these walls of water to the other side of the Red Sea. Once they are safe, the wall of fire disappears so Pharaoh sends his whole force in pursuit only to be completely wiped out when the water engulfs them as the sea returns to normal.

The fame of this debacle spread throughout the ancient world, and Egypt never recovered its former greatness. It's political, social, economic, and spiritual structure was decimated, and its army destroyed. Yet, there never was a tangible physical enemy or any battle. It was just a bunch of slaves led by an old man and the foolishness of God confounding the wisdom of the wise and the power of the powerful. Now let's go back and examine the story a little more closely, paying attention to some of the subtitles and edifying clues, which the Author left scattered around in his Book. This alone could fill a volume, however, we'll try to limit it to the foolishness of God aspects, and as best as I can, how these tell us some not so foolish truths.

First, who were these people, these slaves? Why were they there in Egypt and why did God intervene in their fate? These were all descendants of Jacob who 430 years earlier had moved there during the 7-year famine when Egypt, through the grace of God, had stored enough food to feed everyone during the entire period. This is another one of those "foolishness of God" stories where Joseph, one of Jacob's twelve sons, had been sold into slavery and ended up number two man in Egypt, and the architect of the famine survival program, which made Egypt the most powerful nation of the period. In the ensuing four centuries, this family of 70 grew to an estimated one to two million people. At first, as the family of Egypt's hero and savior Joseph, they were welcomed and given the very best land by the Pharaoh. However, as time passed they grew in number and a new Pharaoh came into power "...which knew not Joseph" (Exodus 1:8). He feared that these people who "...are more mightier than we" (Exodus 1:9) might fight against him in a war, and so he decided while he could, to enslave them. How could this comparatively limited number of slaves ever be mightier than all of Egypt?

Here we have one of these wonderful opportunities to discover a hidden pearl, a clarifying bit of information, the clues which are in various parts of the Bible waiting to be found, to be savored and to be added to the thousands of other clues which prove the integrated wholeness and supernatural Authorship of this Book. Here we are told that the Pharaoh didn't know Joseph. In Acts 7:18, Steven is recounting this historical period when he mentions "... until another King arose, which knew not Joseph." This is not

much of a clue to anything unless you turn to the particular Greek word for “another” in the original Greek text. In the Greek, there are two words meaning “another.” They are “allaylone,” meaning another of the same kind, like another apple, and “heteros” meaning another of a different kind, like another fruit, but not the same as the apple I just had. Here the latter is used. This suggests that perhaps this Pharaoh was not of the usual kind but of a different kind, that is not an Egyptian or whatever “kind” the last one was. Perhaps it seems absurd to reach that far from so little a clue, until we turn left and go back in to the Old Testament to Isaiah 52:4 and read “...for thus saith the Lord God, My people went down afore time into Egypt to sojourn there; and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause.” WOW! Doesn’t that give you goose bumps? The oppressing Pharaoh was not an Egyptian! Something happened to the dynasty of Joseph’s time and it was apparently replaced by foreigners, in this case an Assyrian. Somehow this guy got control, probably with a relatively small cohort of Assyrians, which would explain why he feared this tribe of Hebrews. It must have been much smaller than the whole Egyptian population, yet probably was of a threatening size compared to those Assyrians who at the time were running the place.

Once the slavery was instituted and economy grew accustomed to it and dependent on it, no one wanted or could afford to see it ended. To add some additional credence to this, as if the Word of God needed any such thing, Manetho, the ancient Egyptian priest/historian, recorded that non-Egyptians ruled the country at the time of the construction of the great pyramids. Also, Moses himself, some 40 to 60 years before the Exodus, as the Pharaoh’s daughter’s adopted son, had been a likely successor to the then Pharaoh, had he remained in the palace and assumed the role for which he had been groomed. Josephus, the first century historian, tells us much more about the early Moses than does the Bible. From him we learn that Moses was extremely handsome, strong, and intelligent, schooled in the best and most that Egypt had to offer its nobility. He was highly esteemed by the Egyptians for his intelligence and noble ways, as well as his many military and diplomatic exploits. He even conquered an impregnable city in Ethiopia, partly because of his handsomeness and regal manner, when the princess of the city fell in love with him just watching him from the city walls as he rode around directing the

preparation for the siege. I wonder why Cecil B. DeMille didn't include this scene in his movie, Moses.

Now we have some important background as to why slavery, and why the great reluctance on the part of the Pharaoh to end it. But why did it happen in the first place, and why did the Lord choose to end it the way He did? We don't know all that happened, but those who have faith know the Lord had good reasons. My view is that He used the 400 years to grow a nation out of this one family to whom, through Abraham, He had promised certain land, which in His scheme of things couldn't be turned over yet as He said to Abraham in Genesis 15:16 "...for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." Also, it would seem that this move would not happen until they had grown sufficiently in number, had been tempered through servitude and tempted through exposure to pagan gods. Throughout this period they had preserved their ethnic purity and identity as well as a memory of their God. They had, however, succumbed to the paganism and idol worshiping as is evidenced numerous times during their 40 years in the wilderness. This is, in part at least, understandable because of their servitude wherein they were forbidden to worship their God in accordance with His earlier prescribed ways. This even extended to the matter of circumcision, which was forbidden to them because in the prevailing Egyptian culture, circumcision, for different reasons was allowed to be practiced only by the elite. Nevertheless, they were God's chosen, and so He chose this time to remove them toward this "Promised Land."

But why all this hocus-pocus with the plagues? Here God deliberately toys with the Pharaoh and rubs his nose in his own pride before he inflicts His retribution for the bondage of His people, for the pagan worship, and for the audacity of Pharaoh believing himself to be a God. These first few tricks, the snakes, the water to blood and the frogs weren't tricks at all; they were supernatural acts by both God through Moses and by Satan through the so-called magicians. These weren't magicians in the same sense as we think of magicians. This was not slight of hand or illusion; this was real. These magicians were actually priests, pagan priest, priests who had limited supernatural powers provided by Satan through what we might call evil spirits. When Moses did the

lice bit, they knew that they were out-matched and that God was really behind Moses. A vital part of the pagan (Satanic) ritual practiced by these priests required extreme body cleanliness and thus abhorrence of such things as lice. That is why the Egyptian priests always kept their heads and bodies shaved. The lice infestation was God's way of mocking them and thwarting any further comfort, which they or Satan might be to the Pharaoh. In turning the Nile red, God defiled it, one of their major items of worship. With the frogs, He made these particular items of worship so numerous as to make them sickening to everyone. He did so also with the locusts, the killing of cattle and demonstrating His power by hiding the sun, another major center of worship. Thus, God was demonstrating His power and the weakness of their gods as He progressively inflicted greater pain and retribution on this prideful head of an evil empire. Killing the first born was in remembrance of the number of male babies that Pharaoh had ordered killed, and from which order Moses had escaped through divine intervention and planning for this, then future, event.

Even though the plagues and the parting of water were spectacular evidences of God's supernatural power, the Passover, the sparing of all of the first-born housed where the doorways were marked with blood, is His greatest most remembered and revered act in this Exodus scenario. To this day, Jews celebrate the Passover on the fourteenth day of the Jewish calendar month of Nisan as one of the greatest of holidays, the day the Lord delivered them from bondage. Three days later they celebrated the Feast of First Fruits, also called the Feast of New Beginnings, which is associated with the actual beginning of Israel as a nation, the day they crossed the Red Sea. This is truly an interesting day, because in Genesis 8:4 the Lord chose to make particular note of the exact day which the Ark landed and a New Beginning for the earth also began, "...and the Ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat," again the seventeenth of Nisan! That's not all! Remember our Lord Jesus, the sacrificial Lamb of God, was crucified and shed his blood, which was smeared on a cross, the doorway to eternal life, on Passover the fourteenth of Nisan. Three days later on the Feast of First Fruits, the day of New Beginning, the seventeenth of Nisan, He arose from the dead to assure us a new beginning for all who believe in Him.

As I learned of this series of events, I couldn't help wonder and marvel at the logistics and the incredible supernatural aspect of this particular event, the crossing of the Red Sea. So far I have not found any detailed commentary on this event, and, therefore, the following is entirely my own amateurish conjecture. I picture this great mass of people, between one and two million, pressed against the shore of the Red Sea frightened and more likely expecting slaughter than a miracle. Then the waters part and they stream across to the other side. How wide was the spreading of the waters, which allowed them to walk on the dry bottom and cross to the other side? How deep was it? How far between shores? The scripture says that they crossed on the third day. Therefore, they must have done it in one day. From a very small map, I scaled a narrow point along the shore where the sea appears to be approximately 8 miles wide and at a location where they might have traveled in that short 3 days time. At 3 miles per hour, a very fast pace for such a multitude with children, pregnant women, and cattle, carts, etc. it would take the first person almost three hours to cross the 8 miles. If they were traveling at 50 abreast, and say, 4 feet, one behind the other, the people alone would create a column approximately 23 miles long. Again, ignoring cattle, carts, etc. the last person to arrive on the far shore would get there, assuming no stopping along the way, approximately 10 hours after the first person started to cross. It is impossible to make any defendable allowances of time for the delaying factors not here considered. However, under any "natural" scenario where hundreds of delaying circumstances would be inevitable, such as stopping to eat, or drink or rest, sickness, broken wheels, accidents, lack of 100 % control of pace and behavior, etc. this idealized 10 hour time could easily have become days. The fact that it was completed in a "day" attests to the fact that the wall of fire and of water were not the only supernatural manifestations at work that day. Just as it took supernatural orchestration by God to lead the "two of each kind" to and on to Noah's ark in a timely manner without incidents, so must have God also personally strengthened, fed, protected and guided each individual across that chasm and onto safety. Logistically it seems impossible to have happened otherwise. My simple calculation was based on an idealization of the conditions and the discounting of the many variables and conflicting factors, which would have necessarily confounded, delayed, and probably foiled the

whole operation. The fact that this event could have successfully occurred only through the idealization of all factors clearly proves to me that God did far more than spread the waters and hold the chariots at bay.

Playing a little more with the numbers and assumptions, I'm intrigued with how wide and how deep the parted waters might have been. I assumed people were moving along 50 abreast. There is no basis for this but only as a starting point from which to estimate other dimensions, such as the 23 miles long column of people and the resulting time it might take to cross. These merely offer orders of magnitude from which to better comprehend the problem. At 50 abreast in random order as civilians and not as regimented soldiers, the width would have to have been at least 150 feet. If it was that wide, probably the chariots could have averaged at least 4 abreast as they raced to catch up. Assuming the ground was irregular and so they averaged only 10 miles per hour and were say, 100 feet apart in the direction of travel, they would have created a line 3 miles long. At that speed, they could have, had God allowed it, crossed the 8 miles in less than an hour. It would be my guess that the depth of the water at this crossing may not have been more than 50 to 100 feet. More than that and it would seem that the climb down and back up would have thwarted the use of wagons and chariots. On the other hand, too much less than 50 feet might have made it possible for some of Pharaoh's soldiers to have survived the sudden inundation and swirling of the returning waters. And yet, if the sea was 8 miles wide and the slopes relatively gentle and smooth, the depth in the middle could have been several hundred feet. The four abreast chariot scenario seems plausible, and if close to fact, the sea must have been well over 3 miles wide in order that all chariots would be without exception, caught and destroyed.

To summarize this episode as it relates to the "foolishness of God" theme, I've already noted that though this series of supernatural acts, planned and unfolded in the manner recorded, the Lord accomplished several things.

- a. He rescued His chosen from slavery where they had grown into what could now be called a nation.

- b. Through Moses, He provided the leader they needed both physically and spiritually.
- c. Through the selectively inflicted plagues, He demonstrated to them, as well as to Pharaoh, just whose God He was and how great His power was, all in terms that were impressionable on even the most “stiff-necked” people.
- d. He demonstrated to the Pharaoh and all his people the impotence and true foolishness of their gods.
- e. He repaid Egypt in full for the years of slavery and the killing of the male Israelite babies.
- f. He demonstrated to the world at large that He was The God, and that these were His chosen people.

This final point is documented in Joshua 2:9 when Rahab tells the two spies (who 40 years later went into Jericho) all about their God, and the destiny of their people. She knew all about the plagues and the parting of the waters, as did the whole city who were all in great fear of what they knew was coming. As I read her description of that fear, I almost wonder if God didn't use the vibrations caused by the Amorites shaking in their boots, and the chattering of their teeth, as well as the trumpets and yelling of the Israelites to cause the walls to crumble. Apparently the 40-year-old news of the Lord's work in Egypt was, as He planned, disconcerting enough to totally traumatize these Amorite giants, rendering them defenseless. This Jericho story, how the walls collapsed as a result of the Israelites walking around them for six days in silence, and walking around yelling and blowing trumpets on the seventh day, is certainly another worthy “foolishness of God” story in itself. By the way, when it came time for the Israelites to cross over the Jordan and occupy the Promised Land, God provided an encore to the “parting of the waters” event by actually holding back the waters of the Jordan while the whole nation crossed. This also happened to be in the spring when the river was flooded and as much as a mile wide. If you are intrigued by coincidences, the scriptures make note of the fact that the location of this crossing is the very place where John the Baptist baptized Jesus about 1440 years later. However, do not be fooled! There are no coincidences in the

Bible! Whatever appears to be such is actually God's way of showing us that this Book and the events He chose to include in it are His work, His orchestration, His planning. This is strikingly evident as previously noted by His use of the seventeenth day of Nisan, the day of New Beginnings, to celebrate the landing of Noah's Ark, the Israelites reaching the east side of the Red Sea, and Jesus' resurrection. The Jews proclaim that coincidence is not a kosher word. They are correct. There are no chance happenings as the Scriptures illustrate.

4. Jesus, His Life, Death and Resurrection

How does one, a born again Christian, approach this event, which is the foundation and totality of one's belief, and do so in the context of the "foolishness of God," without appearing to be hypocritical and even blasphemous? I write this with sincere reverence and love for the Lord Jesus, and also with love and concern for any and all who might read this. I pray that my words will in some way ignite in the unbelieving, or the lukewarm, an interest and an increase in understanding of this, the most momentous event ever to occur in the history of the world. As with the previously narrated biblical events, I'll begin with the non-believer's view of the story and then try to analyze and elaborate, as far as my limited knowledge will take me along the study path, which the believer might follow in trying to understand the meaning and purpose of it all. I am well equipped to tell the story from the nonbeliever's stance because that is where I spent most of my life. I'm far less qualified to tell it from God's perspective; however, with His help I'm sure the result will surely be better than if I had not even tried.

As everyone knows, the story begins just about 2,000 years ago, when a son was born to this old man Joseph and his young bride Mary. She was already several months pregnant, but not by him, when they were married. He would have scrubbed the deal if an angel hadn't convinced him that the Holy Spirit had caused this virgin's pregnancy and that he was chosen by God to be the child's adopted father. The angel also told Mary the same

story, and that her son would be the promised king through the line of David, who just happened to be an ancestor of both Joseph and Mary.

Of course, a son was born on Christmas Day (what a coincidence) and they called him Jesus as they had been told to by the Angel. His birth had apparently been foretold centuries earlier by the prophets, so it wasn't much of a surprise to some people. The nearby shepherds knew, as they saw this big star move across the sky and stop right over the stable where the family was staying. They followed it there, found the baby, and worshiped Him, knowing who He was. Also, some Magi from another country who knew about where and when of the birth from old time prophecy even in their country, came by and gave him gifts. The news got to King Herod, who saw this as a threat to his own throne, so when he couldn't find the kid he played it safe and ordered every child under two in the whole nation to be killed. In the meantime, however, the angel warned Jesus' parents and packed them and their Son off to Egypt until things cooled down. Later, when Herod was dead, they came back and settled in Nazareth raising the Boy, as well as several of their own conceived in the usual manner.

We don't know about His youth except that on one occasion at age 12 He preached most impressively in the Temple in Jerusalem. Then around age 30, which is the earliest that a Rabbi can preach, he began his preaching and healing and miracle business. He seemed to know the Bible by heart, preached it with inspiration, and elaborated on its Commandments in an awesome way, preaching for instance that an evil thought is the same as the evil deed. For instance, looking with lust is the same as the act of fornication, and anger could be considered the same as murder. He also taught love and many other uplifting things. His miracles and preaching upset the "spiritual" hierarchy and they too felt their structure and power threatened as his fame spread and more and more people followed him, calling him King and Messiah. Because of this, the chief priests conspired to kill him and finally got the Romans to do it by crucifixion.

After he was dead his friends put him in a nearby tomb. For some time later he was seen by many, especially his apostles and close friends, alive and well, yet with nail holes in

his wrists and feet and a big gash in his side. Now he was able to enter a closed room out of nowhere and leave the same way. Later a few of them saw him ascend into the air and disappear.

Well, hardly any of the story makes any solid sense other than the fact that there was a nice guy named Jesus and that He had a nice warm philosophy about life and dealing with others. But changing wine to water, feeding 5,000 with only a few fish and loaves of bread and having more left over than He started with, bringing a man back to life who had been dead so long that he already stunk of rot, walking on water, driving out evil spirits, being himself brought back to life after that decisive kind of death, then appearing and disappearing at will, and finally visibly ascending to heaven? Then you add to all of this His claim that He was God, this man who died on a cross of wood, actually claiming that He made the hill on which He stood? That's all pretty hard to swallow. It defies logic, common sense and all areas of science. Are we supposed to believe that he was God and/or the Son of God and that he came here to do all of this just to free us of sins which we can not help committing, and which we have no other way of purging from our evil souls, but which must be purged if we are to avoid eternal hell? Let me get this straight. My flesh and bones will pass away, but my soul, my center of pain, pleasure and memory will go on forever either in heaven or hell? And without God Jesus having become a man, and his human aspect having deliberately died for the sole purpose of taking away my sins, that my only possible destination would have been hell? Am I to believe that my destination is really hell unless I believe in Him and in the truth of his mission? You're saying that He did it all, and that there is nothing that I can do to save myself except simply love and believe? That's even harder to swallow!

What about all of the other faiths in the world, and all the good people who do good things and live good lives but just don't buy this stuff? Are they doomed? Why do I need to believe anything else as long as I lead a good life, behave myself, harm no one, live by the Golden Rule, contribute to charity and do good works? Why should I end up anywhere bad, if there even is such a place? All other religions that I know offer some manner of salvation or reward for a good life. No god had to come down and suffer and

die for them; these people can rely on their own good conscience and various observances to assure themselves eternal reward. You're saying I can't do it alone or any of these other ways no matter how good I am unless I also believe this story and put my faith in Jesus? None of this makes sense, this God must be a strange one because this is downright foolish; other religions make more sense because they have more clearly defined causes and effects, things within the individual's control and effort from which one can derive just and fair reward. If you want me to believe this stuff you have some powerful convincing to do. When you talk about the foolishness of God, you've hit a home run here!

As may seem evident, what I just wrote summarizes a true story, my debate with myself not too long ago. Having said all of this, now how can I get God's point of view across convincingly? Only if he lets me, and if he considers me ready to do so. I have to allow for the possibility that this isn't the time or place yet, and that He is not guiding me in this. I pray for His guidance before I do things. Sometimes I think I have his blessing, sometimes I don't know. My ability at two-way communications with Him is yet at the Marconi level of development so I don't always hear his response. I just know that it's all true and that I must express this truth as best I can.

Perhaps, before I get into the main theme here, it might be appropriate to digress a little and relate some of the major milestones along my way to this belief and faith in Jesus, much of which I have written in detail elsewhere. My first reading of the Bible, the New Testament, about 4 years ago was the result of a curiosity regarding Christianity stemming from some other ideas which I was studying and writing about, and which required some knowledge of this belief. I read the entire New Testament understanding very little, in fact far less than I thought I did at the time. But I did get the main point, although believing it was another thing. Then I read several other commentaries such as More than a Carpenter by Josh McDowell and Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis. Lewis was another latter day convert who struggled mightily to resist the faith, but was finally forced to capitulate, as was I, because of the weight of overwhelming evidence as to the true identity of Jesus. I truly believe that it was only this researched evidence and no

other "earthly" reason that brought me to faith and belief. (Of course, there had to have been intervention from above.) This is because I had none of the typical motivations such as fear of dying or imminent danger, nor was I aware of any emotional emptiness or need for a crutch with which to support any perceived psychological weakness. In fact from early youth I developed an obsessive compulsion to be totally self-reliant. I needed no one or nothing, which I could not do or earn for myself. Habits such as smoking, drinking, or religion, or dependence on others for anything, were disgusting crutches needed by only the weak, sick and lazy. My acceptance of the Gospel, as best as I can discern, was strictly the result of the recognition that the evidence was irrefutable and there was no defensible alternative except to believe that Jesus was exactly who He said He was. Once I became convinced of the deity of Jesus, his birth, life, death and resurrection, the next vital step was to recognize the divine inerrant nature of the Scriptures. It contains its own proof of divine origin once it can be viewed in the light provided by the Holy Spirit. This light is made available the moment one accepts Jesus as his or her Lord and Savior. This is God's Word, every word! In it He reveals all things worthy of knowing. To learn this well, I was blessed with yet another discovery, the books and tape recordings of lectures by Chuck Missler, one of, if not the most, knowledgeable, sincere and effective Bible scholars and teachers in the world. The result of all of this is that the heavens have opened up, revealing themselves to me little by little, filling me with profound gratitude for every moment of my life, especially these last few years since my awakening and second birth. I also know that He was there with me from the beginning, suffering my ignorance, my arrogance, my mistaken belief, and my pride, waiting for that right moment when that faint pre-dawn hint of light was able to penetrate the life-long darkness, which I had mistaken for life. From there He commanded the sun to rise in my soul so that I could finally behold His brilliant truth. As I look back at these last three sentences, I can't help thinking that the non-believer reading this might be persuaded to suspect that God's foolishness is not the only foolishness being here described. I know that all of this was a side trip, away from the stated theme. However, for anyone who is seeking a path to understanding and faith, and may be interested in how someone else found it, the manner of my journey, I pray, might be of benefit.

Probably the first and most important question to be answered is why did God choose to become man and be killed in order to convey His message and to purge us of sin? Doesn't this seem to be an absurd and foolish way for an omnipotent God capable of any and all things to deal with this issue? Why didn't He choose from a limitless supply of more sensible, easier and painless alternatives instead of this strange cumbersome and "seemingly" foolish procedure? When viewed from today where we can see its history, it appears to have been a failure both from the pain and suffering which has occurred in the "name" of Christianity, and in the dwindling number of its real believers. Again, I've entered the role of non-believer for just a moment in order to better focus on the main question of Christian credibility, which I will now try to address.

Let's look at it this way, skipping the issue of creation, the fall from Eden, and the existence of angels, and just examining God's problem, which He chose to solve through His walk on earth followed by His crucifixion. God created mankind it would seem, in order to have a population of loving subjects whom He could love and care for. Why else should He bother to go through all the trouble of creation in the first place? Remember, that He is a profoundly loving God. You could say He is love. Furthermore, as God and King, He not only rules but he also makes the rules. As far as I can see for a Christian, all of His prerequisites for getting into His Kingdom boil down to just three. First, you must love him with your whole heart, soul and mind. He wants His love reciprocated; that's a fair enough requirement. Second, you must believe in Him, have faith in Him, and trust Him in all things, choosing to have His will be your will no matter what seems to be the consequences. If He is truly God, you must expect to spend eternity with and under Him; you can never become a happy camper unless you do have complete faith in the leader. He needs to know before hand that you aren't going to be another Satan and rebel once you get to heaven. Third, you must be sinless when you enter His Kingdom. He is a stickler for cleanliness. Sin is dirt. There is no dirt in heaven. Note that the earth is not now His Kingdom. It will be His fairly soon, after the end times, but right now for some reason it belongs to Satan, whose job seems to be to make it ever more difficult for anyone to qualify for God's eternal kingdom. (Oh, You don't buy this business of Satan's

world? Believe it! I'll show you later where the Book tells you so). Examining these three requirements, it is evident that the second follows without difficulty if the first is lived with sufficient intensity. As long as we live in the flesh, however, number three is impossible to achieve without divine assistance.

Now lets look a little closer to the first problem. How do you make someone love you? You can't; even God can't! Love is a choice, a commitment of a totally unencumbered free will. It cannot be forced or programmed, or contrived or purchased at any price. In Greek, the language that Jesus and his apostles often spoke, there are four different words for four different kinds of love. We need an adjective in front of our one word "love" in order to distinguish them. There is erotic love, brotherly love, conditional love, (I love you because, or if) and then there is unconditional love. We all experience the first three many times. These can often be motivated, influenced or dominated by emotions. But unconditional love is that pure choice love, the only kind having real substance and value in God's Kingdom. This is what He demands of us if we are to be one of His.

But how can God orchestrate this? How does He get us to completely and permanently commit to an unconditional love? He had to create us with free will in order for us to freely choose this love for Him. This, of course, leaves us also free to choose not to love Him. There was/is no other way even for God. Had He in any way stacked the deck in His favor, the resulting love would not be that pure, freely chosen love which he demands. Do you see the problem? There is no way that God comes out the winner in this situation. I mean He loves us all and wants us all in heaven, but the rules must stand. What kind of heaven would it be if they didn't? Therefore, He can't get us all because we won't all choose what He requires. Of course, He could change the rules, lower the standard, but then what kind of a God would he be? This sort of thing, this escape from accountability, has become common in our permissive society, but God is God. He never changes, never breaks his word and is 100% reliable yesterday, now and forever. Compromise is not a Godly quality. We must play by His rules if we are to play in His ballpark.

So now what could God do to cause us, of our own free will to love Him, believe in Him, and have faith in Him? This is a very sensitive situation. Too much force or persuasion could obviously compromise the free will condition, while too little evidence from which a positive free choice could be made would be just as unfair. So, for the long haul, He did what we humans can easily relate to when we want to tell a story or get a point across. He wrote a Book!

However, in the early years after creation, God did stack the deck a little by getting chummy with some folks. That's because there wasn't yet a Book or other evidence to which He could refer. But even with this He didn't bat a 1,000! Look at Adam and Eve! Even with His frequent presence, they failed. Cain blew it. Enoch walked with God and was so perfect that God took him directly to heaven. Noah made it, as did Abraham. Issac and Jacob left much to be desired, as did David and many others, but their faith and love were real; they properly disposed of sin, as it was dealt with on those days, and that was all that was needed. One thing that the Old Testament clearly tells is that this free will in the presence of worldly temptation presents a very difficult challenge for any human to overcome and to choose God and His way, unless the God choice is adequately publicized and evidenced. The history told in volume one of God's Books can be fairly characterized as the saga of just one group of people, the one that God chose to personally shepherd and with which to directly communicate. He appropriately calls them a stiff-hearted people, because in spite of His often evident presence, and His clear directions as to behavior, they would over and over apply their free will to grossly deviate from His way, receive punishment, and then behave for awhile, revert back to sin, get punished again, etc., etc.

To the non-believer, all of this would once again certainly suggest an impotent God, a God repeatedly failing His mission, a Shepherd who could not properly tend His sheep. Fortunately, God makes clear throughout the Scriptures that He is in charge, that He has a program and knows exactly how events will progress and how it will all end. That is the beautiful thing about His Book. As God, He knows from His position outside of the time dimension, everything that will happen and what He will do about it. He knew from the

beginning of the world that at this moment I would be writing this. He knew who would choose Him and who wouldn't. While He orchestrated events, He never compromised anyone's free will as to how he or she would respond to these events. The choice to do things His way or another way was always available and unencumbered.

But now, finally, the crux of the matter. He had in the early times dealt with His creation simply and directly. He gave them laws and rules; he gave them direct cause and effect, rewards and punishment; he showed Himself to his chosen leaders and prophets, and thus provided enough evidence from which everyone could intelligently but without coercion choose his or her fate. But he knew, for the long haul, with the advancement of civilization, the spreading and increasing of population and the stiff-necked nature of His creation, that a universal statement, a demonstration, a compelling and everlasting recognition of his omnipotence, His incredible love and His iron-clad clear and simple formula for salvation, must be provided for the many future generations of all people. In the past, He had walked personally with a number of men; He had talked directly with many others; He had personally spoken to the people from Mt. Sinai; and He had occupied the tabernacle and the Temple. He had always been a down to earth personal God throughout these early centuries. Could it now be time to make one grand appearance, a most compelling demonstration of His humility and great love, a love of which only He could be capable? Could there really be any other way to affect such a climax than to have God Himself appear personally and humbly among the common people and live and breathe and eat among them? But how could He do this without stacking the deck and without being so compelling as to compromise the free choice rule which He had originally established?

When examined in this context, it becomes far from foolish that He chose to come Himself to deliver His message. Not only that, but He also had to solve this sin issue, the number three condition for salvation. Had He come as a powerful transcendent God, or the all-powerful king of the line of David, which the prophets also predicted would come later. He certainly would have had everyone's attention and immediate belief and worship. However, this surely would have been a violation of the free will precept to

which we have repeatedly referred. Being born through the womb of a woman, a virgin, all as clearly prophesied, and raised in a human manner, becoming a meek, non-discript man, yet a Biblically well versed rabbi, an able preacher, an incredible miracle worker, He, nevertheless, established His true credentials, but not so powerfully as to preclude any from disbelieving. Of course many did, particularly the religious leaders of that time. The legacy, which He did leave, however, through his miracles, His death, resurrection and ascension provided the perfect balance for this free choice issue. What He did, and said as recorded by some of His apostles, as well as what others of them wrote through His inspired direction, provides all that one needs to be compelled to believe. Yet, unless approached in a sincere, seeking-the-truth manner, His whole message can be dismissed as unbelievable, again a demonstration of the sanctity of His free will pledge.

In case you have any doubts about who was in charge all this time, or think that perhaps God played it by ear all the earlier years, and then, when all else seemed to fail, decided to try something different, don't! He knew exactly what He was going to do! That's why He wrote the Book, so we would know that He knew! There are over 300 prophecies, history before it happens, which predicted His coming, the time, the place, and many details exactly as they happened. These are irrefutable proofs of His precise, before the world began, planning and His detailed implementation of that plan.

Perhaps by now, the sharp edges of the word "foolishness" as it pertains to God's program for physical appearance here as the Man Jesus, have been scraped off. But there yet remains the issue of a torturous crucifixion, death and then the resurrection to deal with where the word "foolishness" may still seem sharp and appropriate. The key to this aspect of His sojourn here is the sin issue, requirement number three for opening the gate to heaven. As has been said, no sin can enter heaven. But, we all sin. None of us has the ability to at all times, and under all conditions, go through life having not sinned. So we love God as He wants to be loved and we place our absolute faith in Him. We try our very best not to sin, but we are of flesh, therefore, we sin. How does one get rid of sin? Various cultures and faiths deal with this in different ways, some actually by denying that there is such a thing, the ultimate in rationalization and denial of accountability! But we

who have studied God's Book and know that He wrote it, also know that there is no escape from accountability and no way through our own efforts to wash away our sins.

From the very beginning God provided skins for Adam & Eve to cover their newly recognized nakedness after the first sin. Then there was all that business with Cain and Abel. Here God instructed that the shedding of innocent blood was the only way to deal with sin. The whole Levitical system as it was set up had as a central theme animal sacrifice, or the shedding of innocent blood as atonement for sin. Only the most perfect, unblemished of the "clean" animals were worthy of this task. All of this wasn't as easy and as depersonalized as it may seem. Keeping God's rules and getting purged of sin was probably more difficult then, than it is now. The whole tribe of Levi, essentially one twelfth of the people, were non-producers who had to be subsidized by the other eleven tribes. A large portion of the accumulated wealth had to go to God for building the Tabernacle and the Temple, and to fill God's treasury. The many feast days with mandatory attendance put a strain on productivity, as did the Sabbath. Perhaps the major drain on the economy was the continuous donation of the very best of every herd for sacrifice, that is, many thousands of animals each year. Even then all sins were not covered in this manner. Some were not washable and required immediate capital punishment or other nearly as drastic measures. Just as circumcision was a "token" of a covenant between God and Abraham, so also, I believe, that the people knew, at least those who heard and believed the prophets knew, that this animal sacrifice was an interim ritual, for covering, not removing sin, and that one day a Messiah would come who would end this and "take away the sins of the world," that is all who would believe in Him.

But how would He do this? It couldn't be an easy matter. Sin is a serious issue with God, so serious that it absolutely cannot in any shape or form enter heaven. Yet, there had to be a way, which was available to, and within the capacity of, every human being to achieve. If you are a father or mother and your little child gets seriously hurt or sick, would you not gladly take that wound or that sickness onto yourself and away from the child, if you could? That's because you have that fourth kind of love, that agape love, the

unconditional love for your child. You would even die to save your child. God loves us the same way. Only as God He cannot die, and it's good for us that He can't! However, if He came here as man, He could accomplish two things at once! He could personalize and amplify, fulfill and validate Volume I of His Book, and at the same time the human aspect of Him could die so that we might be cured of our wound, our sickness, and our sins. Now, any of you fathers or mothers tell me that's foolish! Would you do anything less for your children?

Jesus was the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world through sacrifice of His own blood, the last and final and complete forever cleansing of sin. Was there any other way? Do you care to offer a scenario superior to the one God chose? The night before the crucifixion when He, of course, knew what was coming, Jesus' human aspect appealed three times to the Lord above "...Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless, not what I will but what thou will," (Mark 14:36). Here Jesus, the physical man, the one who must suffer, asked the Lord if there was any other way to wash away the sins of mankind, to please spare Him the incredible pain and suffering and indignity that was to come. Notice that He quickly adds that the Lord's will must prevail, not His. He literally sweat blood that night as He contemplated what He knew He must allow to happen the next day, that He would be mocked, ridiculed, tried unfairly, beat unmercifully, have His beard ripped off, disfigured, dragged through the streets, stripped and nailed to a cross and finally pierced by a spear six hours later when His mortal self died. You parents, to whom I referred earlier, would you go that far out for the love of your children? Our father, the Lord Jesus, did!!!

There are several other things in the Jesus story, which on the very surface from a simple reading of the Bible might appear foolish or at least strange. Having been blessed with some great teachers, I have learned a few things which the new student may not find for quiet a while and which can greatly enrich his or her understanding of the Book and hopefully stimulate excitement and desire to learn more. I'll do this by elaborating on a few highlights of His life on Earth.

a. His birth, When was Jesus born?

There is one thing for certain. Jesus was not born on December 25. While the correct date of His birth does not seem conclusive from any available evidence, we can be certain that it did not occur during the winter months. Two clues in the Scriptures make this evident. First, the Shepherds with their flocks were known to have been in the fields as they followed the directions of the angels to the manger. It is known that the climate in the area includes fairly severe winters, such that all flocks are out of the fields and in winter quarters by the first part of October. Second, Augustus Caesar had ordered the world to be taxed. This meant that all subjects had to return to their tribal homes, which in the case of Joseph and Mary, was the city of David, because they were of the lineage of David. This city was Bethlehem. The fact that they went when they did, with Mary ready to give birth, meant that this was a compulsory time imposed by the administration of Judea. Because Judea was all but impossible for traveling during the winter months, no competent administrator would have imposed such a requirement knowing that compliances would have been impossible for many where such travel was required. The Romans were, if nothing else, competent and efficient administrators and tax collectors. To needlessly schedule this event in winter and suffer the consequences inherent therewith is extremely unlikely.

There is another clue to the date of Jesus' birth. This is found by tracing the apparent date of birth of John the Baptist, and the known relationship between the date of birth of John and that of Jesus. This bit of scholarly detective effort is fascinating to follow, yet beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say, this effort, which is quite convincing, suggests that Jesus was probably born on September 29, 2 B.C. September 29 is arrived at strictly from known dates related to the conception of John and the age difference between the two. The 2 B.C. is confirmed from several directions including the tracings of John's birth date. These include known relationships between the year of His birth and the death of Herod, and also the year of the accession of Tiberius. Furthermore, there are reliable historians such as Eusebeus (264-340 A.D.) and Irenaeus (130± A.D.) who,

apparently from other bits of evidence, confirm this year of 2 B.C. I have seen the year 5 B.C. and 7 B.C. also referred to as the year of our Lord's birth. These seem to be based on some calendar mistakes made centuries later and to me are less credible than the evidence for a 2 B.C. date.

b. How then did December 25th get to be the official date?

Apparently the first recording or mention of the December 25 date was on the calendar of Philocatus in 354 A.D., which indicated His birth to be on a Friday, December 25, 1 A.D. Perhaps one of the worst days in the sordid history of Christianity was the day in 312 A.D. when Emperor Constantine declared Christianity a legal religion in the Roman Empire by issuing the "Edict of Toleration" which ended the official persecution of Christians.

While it ended physical abuse and persecution, it prepared the way in one giant leap into apostasy in its many forms, which was to evolve into the so-called Christian church. This may seem to be a much too strong condemnation of what evolved from the Edict, and perhaps it is given the many true martyrs in Jesus who continued the true faith. However, some of the results of this union of pagan Rome and the Christian church were for its day, as insidious and destructive as is the ecumenical movement of current times in terms of true Christian faith.

While early Christians apparently didn't celebrate Christ's birth, this December 25 date came to be accepted and celebrated under Constantine, and was later, in 440 A.D. made by the church as the official date of His birth. Why December 25? This was a pagan holiday insidiously slipped into the Christian calendar. Its origin can be found in the Bible from the days of Nimrod and continued into the Babylonian period, adopted by the Persians and then the Romans. Tammus, the son of Nimrod and queen Semiramis, was memorialized in association with their sun god. The religious tradition associated with him was that he died as the sun approached the shortest day in December. This death was symbolized by and paid homage to, through the burning of a log called the "Yule log." His rebirth the next day, as the days began again to lengthen, was celebrated by cutting a

tree, mounting it and then trimming it. Thus, we have to this day in the name of Christ a celebration of an ancient pagan holiday in place of His birthday.

Even His resurrection, which, Christians celebrate on Easter Sunday, has more relevance to a pagan observance than it does to the resurrection. “Easter” is the anglicized “Ishtar,” the mothers’ goddess of Babylon and of the fertility rites of spring. Also Easter eggs commemorate the goddess Astarte and other fertility symbols such as the prolific rabbits. These are only two of many rituals, celebrating observances and beliefs which bore their way into the Christian faith system, polluting, confusing, diluting and perverting the original purity strength and even credibility of the Christianity.

c. Who were the wise men, or kings, or magi who brought gifts?

These were not kings. However, one might say that they were kingmakers, for they were of a powerful group of what might be called magistrate/priests from Parthia, a neighbor of Judea and adversary of Rome. They were more commonly called Maji or magicians (not what we today think of magicians). More specifically, they were a hereditary priesthood the likes of which could be found in many ancient cultures such as Egypt and Babylon, Persia and Media. One could also compare them to the Levi’s priesthood of Israel, except for the false nature of their various gods. The prophet Daniel after being carried away into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar became the head of that king’s Magi around 604 B.C.

The particular group, and there were many more than just three, there were probably a dozen or more along with a strong military guard, all came from Parthia. They apparently knew from some handed down prophecy that a “king of the Jews” was about to be born, but they didn’t know where. Their King Phraetes IV was on in years and their job was to select a new king to take his place when the time came. A king such as described in prophecy, even a Jew would have been satisfactory to them, and thus they had come to see for themselves the nature of this potential king. However, it appears that God warned them in a dream that this was not for them, so they dropped the matter and

returned to their own country. Nevertheless, this whole affair alerted and frightened Herod, this non-Jew who had contrived and bribed for himself the position of king, and who feared the truth of the prophecy of which his own Magi were well aware. For in their search, the Magi had paid their respects to Herod and asked him where this king of the Jews was to be born. He, of course, didn't know but his priest did. They simply quoted Micha 5:2 (700 B.C.) wherein the prophet said "...but thou Bethlehem Ephratah, enough thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." This clearly is a prophecy of the Messiah, because it referred to His eternal pre-existence. It is not difficult from this to see why Herod was shaken and fearful when his own priests offered this answer to the Magi.

d. Now, what's all this Foolishness about Satan?

Except for the quiet hidden legions of people who actually worship him, and the few Christians believers who know and believe the Scriptures, to the world Satan is merely a figure of speech, a synonym for evil, but surly not a real being. The Scriptures depict him clearly as a powerful, intelligent being, capable of miracles and many supernatural things. It describes him as a liar, a master deceiver, and in essence, the fountainhead of all that is evil. There is no good to be found in him. The Old Testament finds him in the Garden of Eden orchestrating the first sin (Genesis 3:1), behind the throne of Tyre (Ezekiel 28:11), provoking David to sin (1 Chronicles 21:1) and in (Isaiah 14:22) where his goals and his fate are described. He is also identified in Job 1 and in Psalms 109. From the references we learn much of what is known about him and it clearly is not allegorical. He is real!

The New Testament has much to say about him and is mostly an amplification of what is already found in the Old Testament. Between the two, it is evident that he is, in fact, the power influencing governments past and present. For reasons yet not clear to me, he is the "prince of the earth," he controls the earth. Apparently God gave it to him, perhaps before Adam; and God hasn't yet taken it back. The proof of this is not only strongly

implied in the Old Testament but also made very clear in the New Testament, especially in Matthew 4:89, by the temptation of Jesus. Here Satan shows Jesus "...all the kingdom of the world, and the glory of them, and said to him, all these things will I give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Obviously he could not give them if they were not his to give, and Jesus in no way refutes his ownership or authority to make good his offer. He thus validates Satan's claim of ownership. Given all of this Biblical evidence, it is amazing to me that so very few Jews, as well as those who consider themselves Christians, continue to disbelieve in the existence of a real live Satan. This fact surely attests to the incredible power of the great deceiver. Is it not the epitome of deception that he can so cloud men's minds so that they almost universally believe that he doesn't even exist? He is the ultimate invisible man, unknown, unseen and in effect unheard of, except by his own human and spirit disciples. What an incredible advantage this gives him in his quest to corrupt our souls! The Scriptures prove their Authorship to those willing to seek the proof. Those who believe in its Authorship must accept the presence and role of Satan. Picking and choosing from the Scriptures what one wishes to believe is exactly what Satan thrives on. Once this is begun, the entire structure on which salvation is based, crumbles, and Satan wins.

From what I've here written it is evident that this Satan issue is not in the context of this paper, for I find nothing in this issue from which to extract any unfoolishness from some seemingly foolishness of God. In fact, the real foolishness here is mankind's general refusal to believe in Satan's existence. I can't, at this time anyway, understand God's tolerance of Satan or of his devastating powers. Perhaps this antithesis which he represents, is the substance of which our alternative choices are made. If so, it would seem that Satan today has a clear advantage in terms of the number of souls he is able to collect. In the meantime, I trust the Lord and His Word, and know that what I can't understand or explain is my deficiency, not His.

e. The Crucifixion – The Rest of the Story

Virtually everyone in the civilized world has heard of Jesus and is aware of the fact that He lived a long time ago and was crucified. The highlights of this story are also known to most merely as a result of the holiday traditions that refer to the event. Those who have read the New testament whether believers or not, know about the highlights of the event, while the true believer for whom it is also an emotional as well as spiritual issue knows and feels even more. But I wonder how many of even these, really know the whole story, the whole extent of the pain and suffering which our Lord went through in order that we might be spared eternal hell. I don't know; perhaps most do know. I am too young in my faith and too inexperienced in association with other believers to know what the depth of understanding there may be regarding this matter. However, because of the momentous significance of the event and the fact that the New Testament does not tell the whole story, I feel compelled to tell the rest of the story so that all may know just how much pain and suffering our Lord endured that day for the love of His children, you and me.

Picture if you can, this humble, non-descript man bound and dragged before pompous priests and magistrates. "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him" (Isaiah 53:2). His captors were Roman soldiers, a special breed, trained for dealing with condemned prisoners, but in ways which we today cannot and do not even want to imagine. This particular prisoner was especially appealing to the sadistic nature that their particular work encouraged. He was accused by "holymen" of being an enemy of their Caesar as well as a man who claimed to be God. Remember, they saw Caesar as their god. Therefore, surely this was a just subject on which to demonstrate their best technique in the art of punishment and torture. In keeping with the claim of the accused, they fashioned a crown of thorns. These weren't little pricklers found on raspberry bushes. These are long, sharp, and tough and needle-like thorns, found on the acacia bush, the thorn bush of the desert, a Hebrew symbol of sin. When smashed down on His head they tore straight through to the skull. Before this, He was beaten about the face by the temple guard. Then His face was covered and He was beaten again causing severe bruising. Sometime, as part of this ordeal, His beard was ripped off His face. Thus, He became unrecognizable. Then He

was flogged. The usual Hebrew inflected flogging consisted of no more than 39 blows on the back. The Romans used a whip containing several thongs about 24 inches long. At the end of each thong were attached bits of metal, glass, and bone. These would rip the skin off along with muscle, exposing raw bone and causing much bleeding and often death. Given the hate that seems to have prevailed among His tormentors, the flogging most likely exceeded 39 blows, for the Romans had no such limit. “I gave my back to the smiters and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting” (Isaiah 50:6). “As many were astonished at thee: his visage was so marred more than any man and his form more than the sons of man....” (Isaiah 52:14).

Dramatizations and renderings generally depict Jesus struggling to carry the cross on the way to Gethsemane. Most likely, however, it was only the crossbar or patibulum as it was called. The vertical portion was most likely already in place at this usual spot of crucifixion. Even today there can be seen rectangular holes carved in the rock into which these vertical timbers may have been set. The patibulum weighed about 75 to 100 lbs. and could have readily been carried by a healthy man. However, Jesus was no longer able to manage this as the Scriptures records.

Crucifixion was invented by Persians around 300 to 400 B.C. and perfected by the Romans as the most painful extended torture imaginable. We get our word “excruciating” from that form of torture. It was far more than simply being nailed to a cross. It was scientifically designed to cause the maximum amount of pain over the longest period of time before inevitable death. It was the wrist, which was nailed between the ulna, radius and carpal bones. Thus, no bones were broken and the wrist structure in that area was strong enough so that it would not rip apart and fail to support the body weight. The feet were spiked between the second and third metatarsal bones, again where body weight would not rip it out. The spiking was done in such a manner that the knees were bent, causing the victim to “stand with bent knees,” an impossible and painful stance for anyone to endure for more than a few moments even with his feet on the ground. In this position one could neither stand the pain of raising the body up against the spike in the feet nor letting the body sag and resting with the weight on the

wrist spikes. Yet, both were necessary intermittently in order to breathe. At best, exhaling completely was impossible. This would result in hypercarbia, while the efforts required to breathe caused severe titanic-like muscle spasms and eventual death by asphyxia. This could all last for hours or days, depending on the strength and health of the individual. "I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; I melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potherd and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For the dogs have encompassed me: the assembly of the wicked has enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." (Psalms 22: 14-18).

Note this incredibly graphic description of the agony of one dying on the cross (pierced hands and feet) and of what the soldiers are doing nearby. They are dividing of His garments and casting lots for His vesture. This vesture was an expensive seamless robe too valuable to tear apart and divide among them so they cast lots to see who would keep it. The last observation is the same as recorded in the New Testament by an eyewitness (John 19:24). However, Psalm 22 was written at least 970 years before the crucifixion and approximately 600 years before that form of punishment had been invented! Also, Isaiah wrote this detailed description of the event 690 years before Jesus was born! Read carefully Isaiah 52 and 53. It defines as eloquently and understandably as any version in the New Testament, exactly why Jesus died!

From what has been briefly summarized above, it is most evident that this event, this torture and death, was extraordinarily vicious and violent and clearly meant to extract the maximum of pain and suffering. Our dear Lord knew this and could have ended it at any moment and in any way He wanted too. Yet He suffered in silence and even begged for forgiveness of His tormentors saying that they didn't know what they were doing.

Was all this foolishness of a fool or was it the ultimate sacrifice of a loving Father willingly submitting Himself to the ultimate of pain and suffering and physical death in order to rescue His children from an even worse fate? Your heart must answer this

question. Please, I beg you to consider it carefully because your answer will decide your eternity.

Now as I have reached the end of this, my latest labor of love, this reporting of divine foolishness which our dear Lord put forth to confound the self-styled wise and knowing, there is one more aspect of this which I am compelled to report. I know that I have already touched on this, but it is too important to be only touched on. It deserves deep consideration.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God not of works lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:89). What’s this all about? Does this mean that this is a free gift from God and there is nothing I can do to earn my own salvation? Is Paul trying to tell us that faith alone can save my soul from damnation and there is nothing on this earth I can physically do to influence my fate? Is he saying that all my kindness, good works and efforts to be honest, honorable and good are of no consequence? The answers to these last questions are, yes, yes, and not exactly. Isn’t there a bit of foolishness here somewhere? It sounds like this may be a license to sin, because if my attempts to not sin don’t help buy my right to heaven, then why not sin?

The only way out of this snarl is to look more closely at God’s Word and see it from His perspective. While not necessarily easy to believe or even fully understand, Jesus died on that cross as the one and only means by which our sins are cleansed away. Even the Old Testament told us this. Isaiah 53:5, written about 690 years before Jesus was born, tells us, “...but he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, and with his stripes we are healed.” Then in verse 6 “...and the Lord has laid upon him the iniquity of us all.” Verse 8 reaffirms that “...he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgressions of my people was he stricken.” In Isaiah 53, verse 10 continues, “Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he has put him in grief: when thou shall make his soul an offering for sin...” And finally the Lord through Isaiah says, “...because he has poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors: and he bares

the sins of many, and made intercession of the transgressors.” (Emphases mine.) It would be difficult to find a more clear statement of purpose than this, which was written over seven centuries before the event. Of course, Jesus and His apostles reiterated and amplified this message. However, when that same message is conveyed centuries in advance of the event, it makes it more difficult for the skeptic to claim any self-serving motivation in a first person narration or in the reporting by close friends regarding the same event.

Now then, if Jesus died for our transgressions, that is for our sins, this was God’s solution to the problem, the means by which we can be cleansed, that is become free of sin. When Paul says that by faith alone we are saved, he is simply amplifying Isaiah by pointing out that God did the job, the whole job on the cross. If God did the whole job, do you believe that your participation could ever contribute in any way to improve or complete His work? Nowhere do the Scriptures say that you have any power or authority to forgive or wash away your own sins or the sins of others. God did it all on the cross; there is nothing left to do. God finishes what He starts, so this job is done, finished, just as Jesus said on the cross, “Tetelestai.” It is “finished” or otherwise translated with equal accuracy, “paid in full.” To believe that you can or must do anything is not to believe God or the Scriptures. Thus, by simply believing in Jesus, wholly embracing as truth who He is and what He did on the cross, and why He did it, your sins are forgiven and forgotten and eternal life is yours.

This all sounds so easy. There must be a gimmick here, some fine print that isn’t mentioned. Actually there is, in a way. The belief has to be real, and the faith sincere and lasting. Also as John Calvin affirmed, “...we are saved by faith alone, but faith is never alone.” This is where our good works, honesty, charity, etc. come in. They are gifts we offer to God in gratitude, not in payment for His gift of salvation. He wants us to be all and do all virtuous things, but they cannot be payments for which He becomes indebted to us. Our efforts to live a virtuous life are only evidence of our love and gratitude for our salvation, not payments for which we can feel entitled to a reward.

All of this is a prime example of the fact that God's reasoning, His logic, His wisdom are far removed from our own. Our logic leads us to believe the opposite, that when we work we earn and should get paid accordingly. If we behave ourselves and refrain from sin, do good works, somehow God owes us one, and if He is a fair God, we will get our reward, our owed payment. God doesn't think that way. A good deed doesn't cancel a sin. A sin is a mark on your soul that only He can remove, and He did it for all time and for all sins on the cross; it is done, paid in full, "Tetelestai." But now, once you believe, you must show evidence of that belief through your voluntary adherence to His laws. He knows that you're only human and will break some of them, but He also knows what is in your heart and how you feel about having done so. How you respond to these occasional failures reveals the sincerity and depth of your professed faith.

Over the past three years, I must have tried to report this message of faith and salvation at least a dozen times in different ways. I have yet to feel that my efforts are convincing to anyone but believers who already know the truth. However, the issue is too profoundly important to leave alone. Are you a gambler or do you value what you have too much to risk it? If you were a gambler, would you bet on a trillion to one odds? Surely not! Yet those are better odds than you have betting your soul against an uncertain eternity. If you play it safe, save for your retirement and hope for a few last years of good health and comfort, what are these compared to the health and comfort throughout the eternity of your final retirement? Are you willing to take the risk of not knowing where you're going until you get there? If you don't know for sure where you are going to spend eternity, and I guarantee that you will consciously spend it somewhere, isn't it time that you looked into the matter? If you do look into it, remember that the Holy Bible is the only book that contains absolute proof of its supernatural and divine Authorship, and which gives you God's solemn promise of eternal salvation. It can't get any better than that!

