

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	5
1. THE AGE OF THE UNIVERSE	6
2. THE SIX DAYS OF CREATION	8
3. THE UNIVERSAL FLOOD	11
4. THE AGE OF ROCKS	15
5. THE FOSSIL RECORD.....	17
6. THE AGE OF TREES.....	24
7. EGYPTIAN CHRONOLOGY AND THE DATE OF THE FLOOD.....	29
8. WAS JESUS MISTAKEN?	30
9. THE DESTINY OF THE DAMNED.....	43
10. THE DESTINY OF THE SAVED.....	64
11. A NEW HEAVEN OR NEW HEAVENS?	70
EPILOGUE: THE BIBLE’S TRUE AFTER ALL – SO WHAT?.....	74
ANNEX 1. SEVEN DAYS OF EXPANDING TIME.....	79
ANNEX 2. JEWS ON EARTH AND GENTILES IN HEAVEN?.....	82
ANNEX 3. FIFTY-DAY BIBLE READING PLAN.....	84

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: The geological column, simplified	19
Figure 2: Growth ring chaining.....	26
Figure 3: Growth ring matching (1)	27
Figure 4: Growth ring matching (2)	27

INTRODUCTION

According to the Bible the universe is only about 6000 years old; human beings did not evolve but were created fully formed somewhere in the north of Iran; Jesus Christ said he would return within the lifetime of his first disciples; and apparently a merciful and loving God will consign the wicked to burn everlastingly in hell. How then can anyone believe that the Bible is true?

In particular, can anyone really believe its revelation that life as we know it will come to an end in only a few years' time with the return of Christ to planet Earth? In my book *Z: The Final Generation*, that's what I claimed the Bible tells us.

In this companion book I want to address some questions that I didn't have space to address in that earlier book. I'll start by repeating what I wrote to explain why the universe may really be only a few thousand years old after all. And then we'll look at some other outstanding questions about the truth of the Bible and its teaching about Christ's return.

If you already believe the Bible is true then this book will help you to answer some of the questions that sceptical friends might ask you about it. If you are one of those sceptical friends then I trust that by the time you finish reading you won't be quite as sceptical as you are right now.

1. THE AGE OF THE UNIVERSE

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Natural or supernatural?

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Let me begin by asking you a question. How do you know that everything was not created yesterday? You might reply that it could not have been created yesterday because you can remember things that you did the day before that. You might show me photos of yourself when you were born. Or a photo of your grandfather in a soldier's uniform proposing to your grandmother on Brighton pier at the end of the Second World War. But I asked, how do you know that *everything* was not created yesterday? Everything includes historical evidence and the memories in your mind. If *everything* was created yesterday then all the evidence would still appear to prove that the world was far, far older, yet all the evidence would be wrong. If everything was no more than a day old we simply wouldn't know it.

Naturally I am not really suggesting that everything has existed for only a day. But suppose that the Bible's account of creation is true, I mean literally true. Suppose that God did make the heavens and the earth, trees, plants, animals, fish, birds, insects and the first man and woman in six days as the Bible tells us. And suppose you could go back in a time machine to the seventh day when everything had just been made and was all sparkingly new. All sparkingly new and *real*. If you could part Adam and Eve for a minute and examine Adam you would probably assume he was about 30 years old. If you were a dentist you might be able to prove from his teeth that he must be at least 30. But you would be wrong. If you were a wood scientist you could examine one of the real trees in the Garden of Eden, take a core sample from the trunk, count the number of annual growth rings and conclude that it was perhaps 100 years old. There would be nothing wrong with your conclusion, on the assumption that the tree had grown naturally from seed. But because that assumption would be wrong your conclusion would be wrong. If you were an astronomer and there had been enough room inside the time machine for the necessary instruments, you might be able to determine the distance of some of the stars. You might find one 10,000 light years away and conclude that it must be at least 10,000 years old for there to have been time for its light to reach the Earth. But if it had been made supernaturally only three days previously then even that conclusion would be wrong. It would be wrong because you had *assumed* that the star had been made naturally rather than supernaturally.

Therefore all scientific measurements and deductions that lead to a very old age for the universe should commence with the statement, "Assuming that the universe was not created supernaturally..."

However, in the Bible God consistently tells us that he did make the universe supernaturally. He made it from nothing *by his word*.

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God said, "Let there be light", and there was light. (Genesis 1.3)

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth. ...Let all the earth fear the Lord, let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him! For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood forth. (Psalm 33.6,8,9)

...the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear (literally 'are not seen'). (Hebrews 11.3)

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Understanding the supernatural

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Some people, even those who believe in a recent creation, will tell you that God would not have created the first tree with a hundred growth rings in it because growth rings would have been formed only if it had grown naturally. But this is to misunderstand what God did. He did not supernaturally create a *supernatural* tree. He supernaturally created a *natural* tree, a tree with roots that went right down into the ground and could only have taken years to develop naturally, a tree with a trunk so wide it must have taken 100 years to grow naturally, a tree with rings that could only have appeared after 100 years of growth, a fully natural tree of which every part was only four days old. It had to be identical in every way with the same kind of tree that grows today, if only to contain the genetic information necessary to produce another normal tree. I don't know much about genetics, but my guess is that it would have been difficult for a tree without growth rings to produce naturally a different kind of tree that had them.

The same argument goes for light from the stars. If God made a real, natural star 10,000 light years away from the Earth and its light did not reach out to the edges of space it would not be a natural star. But it was a natural star, and it was a natural universe that God made, complete in every way, functioning 100% naturally in every respect.

Since, in consequence, so many measurements of the cosmos appear to demonstrate that the universe is much older than the Bible tells us it is, one might ask, "Did God therefore deliberately deceive us?" No, he didn't try to deceive us. What he made appears to be so old because there was no other way he could have made it. A real fully grown man or woman will inevitably appear to be 30 years old or more; a real fully grown oak tree will inevitably appear to be 40 years old or more; and a real fully formed universe has to appear to be billions of years old or it would not be a natural universe. God didn't deliberately try to trick us. There was no other way he could have done it.

2. THE SIX DAYS OF CREATION

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Six literal days

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There's no escaping the fact that the first chapter in the Bible says that God made everything in six literal days.

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Verse 5 of Genesis chapter 1 defines its use of the word 'day'. It says, '*God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.*' 'Day' is thus defined as the period when it is light, and 'night' when it is dark. Some people suggest that each 'day' of creation stood for a long undetermined period of time. But in that case each long period of time would have included periods of darkness as well as light once the earth was rotating around the sun, so it would not have been one day as a day is defined in verse 5.

The rest of Genesis chapter 1 defines still more carefully what it meant by the word 'day'. After each day of creation it says, '*And there was evening and there was morning, one day.*' Jews still reckon that each new day begins in the evening at sunset. The writer was evidently explaining in a way that no one could misunderstand that he was talking about six literal 24-hour days.

When God later gave his people the Ten Commandments he told them to work for six days every week and to rest every seventh day because, he said, that is what he had done when he created the world. If he had really taken billions of years to create the world then he would have been lying to them.

The same Hebrew word for 'day' used in Genesis chapter 1 occurs in its singular form another 1150 times in the Old Testament. In this form it *never* means a long period of time. To pretend that it means a long period of time only in the first chapter of the Bible is sheer make-believe.

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The only reason for believing that the days in Genesis chapter 1 stood for six long periods of time is that most scientists believe the universe took far longer than six days to evolve. But as we've already seen, scientific calculations of the age of the universe are all based on the assumption that it was not created supernaturally. Therefore the only reason not to believe that the world was created in six literal days is that many people believe the world was not created in six literal days!

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A strange order of events

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Nevertheless, the order in which the first chapter of Genesis tells us that God brought things into existence is difficult to understand from any natural point of view. It tells us that there was first water. (Genesis 1.2,6) It then says that God made everything else in the following order:

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Day 1: Light.

Day 2: A 'firmament' called heaven that separated the water above and below it.

Day 3: Dry land and seas, and vegetation of all kinds: plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind.

Day 4: The sun, moon and stars.

Day 5: Sea creatures and birds.

Day 6: Land creatures and human beings.

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It is true that if God had created everything naturally, much of this would be nonsensical. Where did this water come from that he had to separate into two parts? How could there have been light before he made the sun and the other stars to provide it? How could the first day have had a morning and evening before the earth existed?

One day as I was praying a picture came into my mind. It was a picture of a painting, and the painting showed a stream flowing over a waterfall and down into a pool. God showed me that in real life the stream must have come first, for there could be no waterfall without a stream to supply it. And in real life the waterfall must have come before the pool did, for there would have been no water to fill the pool without a waterfall. But the painting was not real life, it was only a picture of real life. So the artist could have painted each part in any order he chose. He could have painted the pool first if he had chosen to. In a sense, he was creating the stream and waterfall and pool supernaturally. So the order in which he painted each part did not have to correspond to their natural order of creation. Indeed, he could have finished the picture by painting the sun, even though the rest of the scene was already in daylight.

Since God created everything supernaturally he could do it in any way and in any order he chose. Perhaps the original water was the canvas or workbench on which he operated. An artist would not consider the canvas as part of his picture, so maybe that's why God didn't include the water in his items of creation.

Nevertheless let's examine the apparent anomalies in the account of creation a little more closely. People who have had near-death experiences of heaven – totally real experiences of being in a heavenly realm while their bodies were clinically dead – such people frequently refer to the dazzling light that seems to permeate everything they look at.

Brad Barrows, for example, had been blind from birth. At the age of eight severe pneumonia stopped his heart beating for four minutes. In his spirit he was taken to a beautiful field with very tall grass and palm trees that he could see! *“There was tremendous light up there,”* he told two researchers some years later. *“It seemed to come from every direction... It seemed like everything, even the grass I had been stepping on, seemed to soak in that light.”*¹

Captain Dale Black, a commercial airline pilot, was taking off in a twin-engined Piper Navajo when it suddenly lost power and crashed into a stone monument. He found himself alive, but suspended in mid-air above his shattered body. Two angels led him to a magnificent city. *“The entire city was bathed in light, an opaque whiteness in which the light was intense but diffused... It didn't shine on things but through them. Through the grass. Through the trees. Through the walls. And through the people who were gathered there...”*²

So does it still seem so unlikely the first thing God said in his week of creation was, *“Let there be light”*? Perhaps the light was simply a manifestation of the energy that he would need to power everything else he made.

What about time? How could there have been a 24-hour day with morning and evening before a rotating earth was created? Before God began his work of physical creation he made both space and time. The phrase ‘in the beginning’ indicates that the first thing he did was to create time, for without time there could have been no beginning of anything. Therefore it was not the Earth's rotation that defined the length of a day, but it was the length of a day that defined how fast God had to make the Earth rotate in order to complete one rotation in a day.

It is true that the account of separating water above and below the earth with a ‘firmament’ or ‘expanse’ called heaven and then gathering the water underneath the firmament into seas in order to expose the dry land seems to describe an earth that is very

¹ *Mindsight: Near-Death and Out-of-Body Experiences in the Blind.* K. Ring & S. Cooper, Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, 1999.

² *Flight to Heaven.* Dale Black, Bethany House Publishers, May 2010.

different to the one we know now. But once again, a supernatural process of creation does not have to bear any direct relationship to the finished product once it is converted into the real thing. My guess is that a parallel situation would be the kind of explanation a mother might give to her four-year-old son who asks how he was made. “I grew you in my tummy” would not be the whole explanation and would not be strictly accurate, but it would be the most that a small boy could understand.

If all this still doesn't satisfy you I've provided an original and radically different explanation of God's six days of creation in Annex 1. It may be of interest to more scientifically minded readers.

In Genesis 2.7 it says, ‘...*the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.*’ God created the first man supernaturally, but only when he was complete did he become a living, natural, human being. This suggests to me that the Lord first created everything supernaturally in ways beyond our natural understanding, and then, when everything was ready, when he was satisfied that the picture he had painted so to speak was complete, he brought it all to natural life by the power of his Spirit. From that moment onwards it functioned naturally.