

An Investment Opportunity

Dear friends,

It is a great joy to greet you all, near and far, on behalf of Chris my fellow-Elder, myself, and all of us here, in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

The Christian life is described by our Lord and his apostles using several different illustrations. It is:

a walk: We walk by faith and not by sight. 2 Cor 5:7 AV,

a race: Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Hebrews 12:1,

a fight: Fight the good fight of the faith. 1 Tim 6:12,

a period of waiting and anticipation: You turned to God from idols ... to wait for his Son from heaven. 1 Thessalonians 1:9,10,

a marriage: You died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another. Romans 7:4

a new life (“... just as Christ was raised from the dead ... we too may live a new life” Romans 6:4, etc.

Recently we were seeing that our Saviour on several occasions also refers to this life as *an investment opportunity*. That is to say that this life on earth, with all its imperfections, yields unique opportunities for actions and choices which will turn out, in due course, to be highly profitable. The classic text is Matthew 25:14-30, in which three servants are given money (say £500, £200 and £100 each) while the master goes away on a journey. When he returns he asks about the money. The servant with £500 has invested and produced another £500. This seems to please the master beyond measure. “Well done good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness”. The second servant, who didn’t obtain such a large return, is still praised resoundingly. The third servant, on the other hand, has failed to invest the money. But he certainly hasn’t lost it, or pilfered it. He simply hands it back intact. Now the master seems vexed beyond measure: “You wicked lazy servant! ... throw that worthless servant outside into the darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”. It seems extremely hard on the poor fellow, yet the master judges his way of behaving to be perverse and blameworthy in the extreme. He simply failed to realise that the order

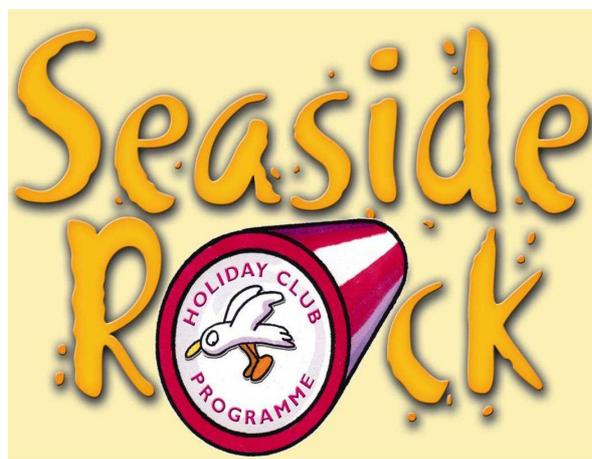
of the day was not just to preserve the blessing he had received untouched, undeveloped and intact. The order of the day was to invest this blessing, to set it to work, even to take risks in doing so. The master assumes that his servant will realise that now is the time to invest, now is the time to plant, now is the time to develop and put resources to use. In other words the master wants his servant to realise the fertility of the present.

As a church, we too have an opportunity to invest, and invest to a greater or lesser degree. We can invest our time in order to see the Kingdom of God grow and develop. In a sense that starts with our own hearts: are we prepared to spend time cultivating our appreciation of the Lord, our love for him, our knowledge of his word, our faith in him, our expectations of him, our love for his people? Also we can invest in his work. We can give our money, our time, our very selves into his service. At the present time this confronts us with a considerable challenge!

How wonderful it would be to hear the Lord say to us all “well done good and faithful servant: you were faithful with the small things, and I will put you in charge of many things ...”

Yours in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ,

Philip Wells
Elder.



Report and photos on the back page.

Creation or evolution: do we have to choose?

This question (also the title of a recent book by Denis Alexander) is one over which evangelical Christians often sharply disagree. Some ("young-earth creationists") maintain that the Bible makes it crystal clear that life, the Universe and everything have had their beginning within the past few thousand years. Others ("theistic evolutionists") are less willing to overthrow the overwhelming scientific consensus, being convinced that the Bible, when interpreted correctly, is perfectly compatible with an evolutionary origin of all that there is, over billions of years.

Sadly, with such widely separated and strongly held convictions, the church often responds with immaturity. Rival factions are formed, each with its own societies, meetings, books and magazines, which exist to strengthen the conviction of their constituents that those on the other side are not only wrong but obviously and dangerously wrong. Encounters are generally heated and unproductive, with one side viewing the other as compromisers on the verge of unbelief and the other reciprocating with embarrassment and frustration at how these simpletons are making the faith look ridiculous. In the midst of this, those of a more conciliatory disposition do their level best to avoid the issue altogether.

It was under this same question that some 60 or 70 people crammed into a small church building in Brighton on Saturday 15 May 2010, to try something more constructive, as Calvary Evangelical Church hosted a debate on the subject of creation and evolution. What took place was a robust yet measured and respectful discussion between two brothers in Christ, with the audience heeding the encouragement of the chair for the evening, Prof. Richard Vincent, to approach this enormous subject with grace and great humility.

First to present his case, after the toss of a coin, was young-earth creationist Dr. Stephen Lloyd, formerly a researcher in materials science at Cambridge University, and now a pastor at Hope Church in Gravesend and a part-time speaker and writer for Biblical Creation Ministries. Rather than focusing on the "days" of Genesis 1, as might have been expected, the crux of his 20-minute opening presentation was that the biblical narrative and the evolutionary narrative are fundamentally incompatible. The biblical narrative tells the story of a good creation, spoiled by sin and restored by the work of Christ. This can be expressed as a history of physical death: human physical death entered the world as a consequence of sin, and this explains why Jesus, in solving the problem of sin, had to undergo human physical death. In contrast, the evolutionary narrative sees physical death, including human

physical death, as part of the original created order, and not as a consequence of sin. Attempts to combine the evolutionary and biblical narratives therefore make it far from obvious how Christ's physical death has any connection with the problem of sin. Instead, the primary purpose of Christ's physical death and resurrection seems to be to usher in a new created order of which physical death will not be a part.

Presenting the other side of the argument was theistic evolutionist Dr. Ard Louis, a Reader in Theoretical Physics from the University of Oxford who has strong links with organisations such as Christians in Science, The Faraday Institute, The BioLogos Foundation, and The Templeton Foundation. The first part of his presentation was on the issue of biblical interpretation. We must be very careful to distinguish what the Bible actually teaches from what we read into the Bible because of our cultural assumptions. Science, though not dictating how we should interpret the Bible, can help us to recognize when we have misunderstood Scripture. For example, many used to be convinced that the Bible taught geocentrism. Then, when science showed us that the Earth is not the centre of the Solar System, these people looked more carefully at the biblical text and concluded that those passages should have been interpreted differently. This process can be applied to the creation accounts in Genesis. There are various clues in the passages that they are not supposed to be interpreted journalistically (as books such as Luke's Gospel should be). For example, the sun and moon are created on Day 4, after the creation of light on Day 1, and Genesis 1 displays a careful literary structure.

The second part of the presentation was about science. There are many Christians involved in science, who see no conflict between their Christian faith and their beliefs in the great antiquity of the earth. Moreover, there is strong evidence for this antiquity, such as that derived from ice cores. And we should not be afraid of ideas of deep space and time, which can be welcomed as displaying the grandeur of the glory of God.

Following these opening statements, the speakers each had ten minutes to respond, after which audience members were invited to place written questions in a box, which formed the basis for around 30 minutes of discussion, led by the chair. Various matters were covered, such as biblical interpretation, the "days" of Genesis, evidence for prehistoric man and genomics.

Two further issues deserve some reflection.

The first is the importance of the question itself. Louis made the point that from his perspective the "how" of creation is of secondary importance: the main teaching

of Genesis is clear and doesn't depend on how God created. Having said that, the debate does have some importance, because many Christian students struggle with reconciling their faith with their beliefs about science. In contrast, for Lloyd the "how" of creation is itself of great importance, being, as he sees it, very closely connected with the core elements of the gospel message. This makes the debate difficult, as one side sees the issue as important for understanding the gospel while the other side sees it as relatively unimportant.

The second issue is the way "ordinary" Christians respond to hearing experts disagree about the Bible. How are they supposed to have confidence in the Bible if those who study it seriously can reach such different conclusions? This is not easy to deal with. But it is important for "ordinary" Christians to be equipped to interpret the Bible for themselves, so they can have confidence in what they believe and why they believe it, instead of relying on "experts" to interpret the Bible on their behalf.

My own reflections on the two positions are that Lloyd presented some strong arguments on how we understand the cross of Jesus that were not adequately addressed, while Louis clearly had the upper hand scientifically, in that creationist models of earth history are very under-developed and go against the overwhelming consensus of Christians (and others) with expertise in these areas. But, in summary, the debate for me exemplified the kind of serious but respectful dialogue that is utterly vital if the church at large is to make progress towards unity and maturity in this area.

A recording of the debate is available from our website, www.calvary-brighton.org.uk.

Anthony Smith

Church Secretary

Since the last newsletter probably the biggest area of change in the church's life has been in ministry to children. The parents and toddlers group has continued on Wednesday mornings, as has the Thursday under-5's group. We had a holiday club, Seaside Rock, from 18-20 August, which was greatly enjoyed by the 5-10 children who attended, and this has led to a family coming regularly on Sunday mornings. Combined with another family coming regularly as a result of the under-5's group, and a Danish family spending a few months in Brighton learning English, we now regularly have a dozen or so children with us on a Sunday morning. This is both an answer to prayer and a stimulus for more prayer, as we seek to minister to these children through the Sunday Club. Meanwhile, church members are playing their part in adding to the number of children

among us: Lis Muddle and her husband Dave were blessed with a baby boy, Thomas, on 23rd October, and Rachel and Mark Rayfield are looking forward to the arrival of a baby in February.

On an international front, we continue to have links with the worldwide church, which has been a feature of our church for decades. The ends of the earth seem to visit Brighton, and we enjoy welcoming them on Saturdays to the Calvary International Café and to the regular gatherings Sundays and Wednesdays. We have appreciated visits from our overseas contacts: Michael Steedman (Forlì, Italy), Priya Handy (Trincomalee, Sri Lanka) and Bob and Debbie Mahoney (for a time based in Santa Cruz, Spain). And we were delighted to add an African flavour to the church, with the addition of Ethiopian-born Arsema Amare and Ugandan Ian Lutaaya to our membership on 12th September.

Meanwhile, outreach and community engagement have continued, with a *Glad You Asked* course running on Thursday evenings in the summer months, and a *Christianity Explored* course running during the day on Thursdays in the autumn. We had a *Civic Sunday* morning service on 7th November: one of the local councillors told us what a councillor does, and we focused on praying for our leaders in society. And on Saturday 20th November we had a very successful musical evening, with an impressive number of participants, and with a good number of non-Christian friends present. A collection was taken to support flood relief work in Pakistan.

Finally, on a personal note, on 28th August I got engaged!

Anthony Smith

Sunday Club

The last news update came out 18 months ago and the club has grown since then; so it is with gratitude to the Lord that we can write of up to nine more children who have been coming to join Chloe and Jonny in the lessons of late. This is an answer to much prayer. The decision was recently taken to combine some of the crèche youngsters in Sunday Club and the lower age threshold has been brought down to two to three years. This is a temporary measure to make room for infants new to the crèche room and to augment the staffing with the crèche workers assisting the Sunday Club teachers. We will soon be reviewing how it has been working. One question is the use of the *TNT - On the Way* teaching material we have selected for the younger children. This may not expand the knowledge of the two eldest as much as might be desired.

There has been the addition of three brothers; Jay, Mark

and Sam. It is great to see Jay again after he came for a short time a few years ago. He and Chloe know each other from that time and are keen to remain in the club at the top end of the age range. Jay supports Sam, his youngest brother, and has done the same for his brother Mark who has started coming in the last few weeks. Chloe is also helping Eben to settle into the routine, having moved up from the crèche after the summer holidays. We have also been joined by two sisters, Choi

and Meggi who have been in the crèche with Eben from time to time. Their mum has come along to translate into Chinese for them when needed. During September, a Danish family with 3 children; Sine, Jonas and Espin have come amongst us, along with Mum or Dad to translate for them. There is a lovely international feel to the lessons, as when we have had songs in Danish and tasted some Chinese snacks. Please continue to pray for the club and the way ahead, as the Lord leads.

Roger Kinros

Seaside Rock Holiday Club 2010

This summer Calvary Church organised its first holiday club in many years, running for three days from 18th to 20th August. The church was transformed into a Galilean seaside resort as we explored the journey that Peter made from being a fisherman to a fisher of men as he became a follower of Jesus. The three mornings were packed with activities including games, crafts, songs and quizzes as we explored the key theme each day told by our very own Peter through video clips (thanks Alex Wells!) Our week ended with a re-enactment of the lakeside breakfast that Jesus shared with his disciples after his resurrection. We shared our own fish prayers on the fire and ate our freshly baked bread.



The Seaside Rock team were encouraged as God answered prayers in many ways with new children attending our club each day and most significantly our prayer for another family to join our church on a regular basis being answered. We thank God for the opportunity and privilege to share the Gospel message with these children as well as the encouragements that working together as a team brought. A special thank you to Maria, Katy, Brenda, Angel, Min and Eline for your enthusiasm, time and energy!



Looking ahead... Next year we hope to have two guest children's workers from the Carey Family Conference to support the running of the holiday club in August and we continue to pray for God's guidance and provision for the future children's work in our church.

Rachel Rayfield



Calvary Evangelical Church

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To find out more about us, check out

www.calvary-brighton.org.uk