

THE DECEPTION

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*In the Lord I take refuge;
how can you say to my soul,
“Flee like a bird to your mountain,
for behold, the wicked bend the bow;
they have fitted their arrow to the string
to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart;
if the foundations are destroyed,
what can the righteous do?”*

Psalms 11:1-3 (ESV)

PROLOGUE

“VERY GOOD,” proclaimed God, the creator of the heavens and the earth.

The six days of creation had come to a triumphant closure as God sat upon His throne and admired His creative work. On the newly formed earth below Him, a large continent teemed with the various kinds of animals He had created, each with its own unique characteristics. A vast blue ocean surrounded the land full of beautiful plants bearing fruit for all living things to eat. In the middle of the massive continent sat the Garden of Eden, a perfectly created paradise furnished with everything needed to sustain life. A mighty river flowed out from Eden, and from there it divided into four smaller rivers that meandered throughout the virgin landscape. God’s greatest creation, Man and Woman, explored the garden, gazing at the beauty of the creation and living in peace with each other and the animals. As He rested in Heaven, God smiled at His work while a chorus of angels sang praises to their king. God’s rest was soon interrupted by a nearby muttering voice.

“He thinks He is so great,” said Lucifer, one of God’s most beautiful angels.

Hearing Lucifer’s comment, an angel named Othaniel turned to him and asked, “What do you mean? Of course God is great! It’s His very essence.”

“I could do it. I could make everything God made, but it would be much better. He wants all of the world to worship

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Him and admire His creative power, but wait until you see what I can do,” Lucifer boasted in a louder voice. Other angels heard him speaking and they formed a small crowd around him.

“If you did everything God has done and made it even better, I would serve you,” said one of the angels in the crowd.

“I would do the same,” said another.

“If you become greater than God, then I will serve you instead,” said yet another angel.

Lucifer smiled as more angels gathered around and expressed their admiration and potential servitude to him. “You see God’s throne? I will remove God from His throne and then I will be the one who sits there.”

“Do it, Lucifer! Show us your power!” an angel shouted.

“I will go beyond the throne! I will rule over the earth and the entire universe! I will be like the Most High God, and everyone will worship me!” proclaimed Lucifer as the growing number of angels cheered him on.

One third of Heaven’s angels had now gathered around Lucifer as he continued making his prideful remarks. They were encouraging him and even calling him “god.” The other angels in heaven—those who had overheard the dangerous talk coming from Lucifer—backed away from the crowd, knowing that their King would not tolerate such pride and arrogance.

Having overheard all of Lucifer’s proclamations and seeing the crowd of angels gather around him, God boiled with anger. The light emitting from His glory grew dim as dark, ominous clouds formed. Thunder shook and lightning struck as God got off His throne and approached the rebellious angel. Those who had been rallying around Lucifer stood behind him and shielded themselves from God. They shuddered in fear knowing they had done wrong, but having placed so much trust in the angel Lucifer, they had a glimmer of hope that he would save them from God’s wrath. Lucifer stood firm and defiantly stared at his creator.

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“I created you as one of the most beautiful angels,” God declared in a booming voice. “I adorned you with the most precious of stones and gave you a position of authority, but you have let yourself become drunk with pride.”

“All of the angels in Heaven once worshipped you,” Lucifer said, staring intently at God. “But look; now I have this multitude prepared to serve me. Elevate my position to be equal to you. Give me a throne next to you so that I may also rule over your creation! I can be as powerful as you are and do everything you do! Can’t you see how beautiful and great I am? Now make me greater!”

The angels behind Lucifer started to praise him for his beauty and power. They had now placed all of their trust in him, causing his ego to overflow.

“Because of your utter defiance, you have lost your place here,” God said as he raised his hand. The angels who had not gathered around Lucifer shielded their faces with their wings to hide themselves from the coming wrath of God. With a thunderous rumble sounding from all around, a bright, thick lightning bolt shot out from God’s hand. It encircled Lucifer and the angels with him and in a flash, the rebellious group was shot down to the earth in a violent bolt of lightning, forever losing their eternal residency in Heaven.

The angels along with their new found leader landed on the earth in a state of shock and confusion.

“What do we do now, master?” Othaniel asked Lucifer.

Lucifer looked up into the sky. Part of him wished he could go back to live in Heaven, but he knew that would never be allowed again. Lucifer had made a grave mistake and would never regain his favor with God. Looking around at the bewildered multitude that had fallen with him, he replied, “We don’t need the King anymore. I am your new king, and this is our new home here on Earth.”

“Will we never go back to Heaven?” an angel asked.

“Who would ever want to go back to that place and be around God? He thinks He is so great for making the universe,

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the earth, the animals, the plants...but we will show Him. Follow me! We will get back at God by destroying His most favorite creation—humans!”

“But,” Othaniel interrupted. “How will we destroy them? Humans are made in God’s image.”

Lucifer laughed. “It’s simple. We will deceive them through hollow philosophies and unfulfilling religions. Humans will want to worship God because of His creation, but we will spread throughout the world and deceive them through lies and half-truths. We will convince them that they were not God’s special creation but instead an accidental formation from the earth. Then, when they are convinced that the lies are true, they will stop worshipping God and serve me! Come, we must destroy the very foundation of God!”

After proclaiming his plan of action, Lucifer led the angels into the world, making their first stop at the Garden of Eden, the earthly paradise.

CHAPTER ONE

“CREATION OR EVOLUTION? It really doesn’t matter,” read the bold and colorful text on the large projection screen at the front of the church. The digital revolution allowed for news and announcements to be displayed in graphic images thereby catering to the majority of people who had grown to learn things through visual aids rather than hearing or reading. Pastor Bill Watson took advantage of modern technology to announce each morning’s sermon topic as well as to accentuate the highlights during his sermons.

Using the new high-definition cameras, Bill’s image was cast onto all three projection screens as he approached the stage and started to discuss the announcements. Each word and graphic flashed upon the screens in an array of colors. His friendly voice coming through the surround sound in the auditorium was the universal cue, at least at The Experience Church, for everyone to find their seats and prepare for the morning worship service.

“Remember,” Bill reminded as he began to make the final announcement, “this week we will start construction on the new multi-purpose building. I know you will all be very impressed with it, especially our youth. Everything about it will be hi-tech—digital surround sound, wireless networking, two projection screens on each wall, three new high-definition cameras, stage lights—I look forward to seeing how many people this new addition will bring in to our church. We are

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destined to have exponential growth!” Several in the congregation applauded.

“Are there any other announcements?” he asked, a common phrase repeated each week to signify that the worship service was about to start.

“I’ve got one!” Kate shouted excitedly as she stood up.

“What are you doing! I told you not to say anything!” Jeff snapped in a hushed voice.

Kate looked down toward Jeff and gave him a playfully devious smile, similar to the one she gave him when she threw a surprise thirtieth birthday party for him at his favorite restaurant. Jeff never liked to be surprised. Usually, he could foil his wife’s attempts before her plans came to fruition. This, however, was one of those surprises he didn’t catch in time.

“Well, don’t keep us hanging,” Bill said with a laugh. “What’s the good news, Mrs. Duncan?”

By now every head in the church turned around to face Kate. Jeff’s heart pounded in his chest as his face reddened. Always a humble person, he never wanted to draw attention to himself, especially if it pertained to his accomplishments. Sure, he had had many successes in life thanks to his strong determination and encouraging mother, but he wanted to avoid letting others know about them. He never wanted to feel superior to others. Jeff had met many people who were wealthier and more educated than him, and they all had a ‘high and mighty’ arrogance about them that was none too appealing. He made every effort to shy away from getting attention, but now, with every eye looking in his direction, this would be the day that the entire congregation would know Jeff Duncan.

“We got the good news on Friday that my Dr. Jeff was hired full-time as a biology professor at Grogan University!” Kate announced, looking back down at her husband as she beamed a proud smile.

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Now even more embarrassed, Jeff didn't know what to do. Everyone turned their attention away from Kate and focused their eyes on him. They erupted in applause, and some of those sitting nearby said "congratulations" to him among various other accolades. *Everyone is looking at me. Do they want me to give a speech or something?* Jeff put his Bible on the empty seat next to him and stood up. He waved his hand and gave an awkward smile while trying to hide the embarrassment from being singled out among a group of over five hundred people in attendance this morning. Pastor Bill smiled at Jeff as he also applauded for him. His clap reverberated through the speakers, making the sound even louder. *Of all days, why did we have to sit in the very middle of the sanctuary in full view of everyone?* The congregation's applause gradually died down as everyone turned back around to focus their attention on the pastor.

After Jeff and Kate sat down, she wrapped both arms around him and squeezed. He forced a smile so that it wouldn't look like he harbored any anger toward her. Deep down he wasn't mad, but she did embarrass him.

"I specifically asked you on the way to church this morning not to say anything about my new job," Jeff whispered to Kate as she continued hugging him.

"I'm proud of you, honey! This is a great accomplishment," Kate replied as she let loose her grip. She remembered he had told her not to say anything, but sometimes Kate couldn't contain herself. "You've been without work since you graduated last spring. Those student loans aren't going to pay themselves off, you know." She patted him on the leg. Jeff's beet red face started to regain its usual color. "The church has been praying for you to get a job, and now you have one. It's only fair to let them know the good news and that their prayers have been answered."

"I guess you're right, but I'm the most humble person I know," Jeff said tongue-in-cheek. His way of letting Kate know he wasn't mad at her had always been to make a sly joke, but she didn't catch the pun this time.

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“I’d like to welcome everyone to The Experience Church,” Pastor Bill said. “Feel free to worship however you see fit. This is a church of freedom and individuality. Follow your spirit wherever it leads you as you experience God!”

The twelve-member praise band entered stage left and picked up their instruments. Stage lights lit up and flashed a sequence of colors as the guitarist started to strum with an upbeat tempo. Bill exited the stage to join his wife on the front row. In one swift movement, everyone in the congregation stood up in preparation for the worship service. A loud bass line pounded through the speakers adorning the wall, and the drummer beat the kick drum to match up with the fast tempo of the guitarist. Jeff didn’t mind the music, but this part of the service often lasted for an hour or longer. The worship service had the atmosphere of a rock concert as the music played at an almost deafening decibel and the stages lights flashed about. No one else seemed to mind it though, but usually after the half-hour mark Jeff would start glancing at his watch and hoping that by chance the worship service would be abbreviated and they could start learning about God. To his dismay, the music always played on, and Jeff’s mind would wander away into a world of daydreams.

Jeff had grown up in a rather conservative and formal church where people stood and sat down in unison. Loud rock music was unheard of in his former church that only had an organ and upright piano. The Experience had no similarities to the traditional church paradigm. During these long worship services, the congregation danced about as they sang the various praise songs. There was no order or structure, and this allowed the congregation to have a broad sense of freedom. A select group dubbed as the “spiritually evolved” had their own seating section near the front. Many wanted to have their coveted spiritual experiences that these elitists displayed. It was a proud title to be known as one of the “evolved,” but just like social cliques, it took much time and effort for the “others” to be accepted into that group.

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This special group had free range during the worship service and were often seen “praise jogging” laps around the auditorium during the songs. Jeff could not figure out how they could focus on the music and lyrics as they ran around the room trying to avoid collisions with others. On occasion a few of them would do acrobatics in the aisles as a form of worship. These weekly spectacles were unique and oftentimes distracting, but Jeff did not feel it was his place to tell people how to worship. *Are they worshipping God or themselves?* He sometimes made a game to see how many close-call collisions occurred among these free-spirits.

The band played on, performing several more songs at an upbeat tempo and then slowing down to a moderate speed. Jeff eagerly awaited the slower songs because he knew the worship service would soon be ending and he could sit down and rest his legs. The congregation appeared to be enjoying the long worship service, though. Many had gone to the front of the room near the stage and danced wildly, hoping to fit in and be accepted by the elite. They jumped about, swayed their arms high into the air, and occasionally, but accidentally, hit people next to them. *This is just one fist fight short of a mosh pit.* Jeff stood with his hands clasped together as he silently mouthed the words displayed on the large projection screens. It was difficult to stay focused as his ever active mind continued to daydream.

When Jeff was growing up, he and his mother, Evelyn, had attended a small, non-denominational church called Everlasting Glory. This was one of those churches that basically had the same members—no one ever left the church except people like Jeff, who had to leave so he could pursue his college degree out of state. Most everyone who did leave for college or military service always found themselves back in their regular pew when they returned home. Membership rarely increased unless someone had a baby.

The congregation at Everlasting Glory watched Jeff grow from a young boy to a tall, handsome man, and they were all in attendance when Jeff and Kate held their wedding at the

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church three years ago. That was one of the few times Kate had been in a church as she had no religious background. Her parents didn't like church because they thought churches were full of hypocrites, and they didn't want young Kate exposed to people who were two-faced. Jeff's mother had told him that he should "find a good Christian girl" to marry. Kate was a good person even if she wasn't a Christian when they finally tied the knot. He didn't want to displease his mother, but sometimes love has a way of causing us to forget our roots.

After they married, Jeff wanted Kate by his side every Sunday at Everlasting Glory so she could learn about God. His desire was for his wife to join him one day in Heaven, and it was important for her to understand her need for a savior. Jeff himself knew most of the basics of the faith although he had many questions still unanswered.

The whole church setting was an uneasy experience for Kate. Her parents played a large role in causing her to form many misconceptions about church and its sharply dressed "pew fillers." Jeff knew about these things when they were dating, and he had hoped he would be able to change her negative perspectives. During their honeymoon phase, when the two young lovers were floating on the fluffy clouds of romantic bliss, Kate went to church with Jeff without any hesitation. She was glued to his side and eagerly excited to do anything with him. Kate sat and listened to the sermons, and she tried to sing the old hymns. However, as the honeymoon phase began to fade away, Jeff could sense that his bride no longer had the enthusiasm to come to church with him anymore. Kate had the skill of putting on a pleasant face when around other people at the church, but Jeff was quick to pick up on her charade. Something had changed. Her church attendance began to dwindle to the point that Sunday mornings became an argument between Jeff's asking Kate why she wasn't getting ready for church and Kate's giving ambiguous answers in reply.

As the slow music began, Jeff's mind wandered back to the argument he had had with Kate a few months after their

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wedding that finally led them away from Everlasting Glory and ultimately to The Experience:

“Why can’t you give me a good reason for not going? You need to understand the Bible. It’s important to me and it’s important for your salvation,” Jeff had told Kate one Sunday morning when she insisted on staying home.

“I don’t even know what you mean, Jeff!” Kate angrily replied. “What is salvation? What does ‘being saved’ mean? Saved from what? Who or what is God? Jeff, I’ve been going to that church with you and listening to those monotone sermons for weeks, and I have no idea what the preacher is talking about! He doesn’t even speak on my level. He uses all of those fifty-dollar words, and everyone seems to understand them, but I have no clue what he means. I have no religious background and feel completely left out from the crowd. None of it makes sense!”

They had never argued when dating, but Jeff and Kate had learned that marriage brought about many challenges, especially when there were disagreements over important issues. This was the first argument between the young couple after their wedding, and Kate had made a good point. She won that round. Kate didn’t understand any of the things the preacher said, and after Jeff’s failed attempt to give an answer to the questions she had, he came to the sudden realization that he didn’t know much about his faith either. He just knew how to regurgitate what he had been told from the pulpit, Sunday School, and youth group all those years growing up, but he had never really taken the time to understand the foundational truths of what he had been taught. There were many theological concepts he did not understand although he did follow the simple “old-time religion” of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

After their argument that morning, they agreed to look for a more modern church where Kate would not only fit in with the crowd, but she (and Jeff) would have a fresh start at understanding their faith. They decided to skip church that morning and start looking that week for different churches to

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attend in their home city of Grayson, Tennessee. Jeff and Kate had breakfast that morning at their favorite mom-and-pop restaurant. As they waited in the lobby for an open table, a flyer on the nearby bulletin board caught Jeff's attention. It read:

“Are you bored of the same old church service? Are you tired of having to find the best suit or dress to wear each Sunday? Are you ready to put aside the old hymns and organs and praise God with modern music and a live band? Then come as you are to The Experience!”

Jeff showed the flyer to his wife, and to his surprise she agreed to give the church a try. On the following Sunday, they visited The Experience. Many people greeted them with genuine sincerity when they entered through the doors, and immediately Jeff and Kate felt as though they had come to the right place. The dress was casual—Jeff and Kate both felt awkward for wearing their Sunday best while everyone else wore jeans and sandals. The upbeat music performed by the band and the colorful sermon given by Pastor Bill that day gave more confirmation that they found the perfect church to meet their needs. Finally, it would no longer be a Sunday morning struggle for Jeff to get Kate to come to church with him.

The band finally stopped playing. Jeff glanced at his watch to see that forty-five minutes had passed. *That was quite a day dream.* The band members exited the stage and joined their families in the congregation. Those who were dancing in the aisles and near the stage turned back to their seats, and the stage lights transformed to a mixture of blue, red, and yellow lights. A spot light shined down at center stage.

Pastor Bill approached his lectern. “Open your Bibles with me to the first chapter of Genesis,” he requested. “I want to talk to you this morning about the ongoing conflict between evolution and creation. It's causing some unnecessary separation in the church, so I'm going to show you this

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morning that there is a way we can make a compromise and put this problem behind us!”

“Amen!” shouted a man near the front. A few others shouted “amen” or “preach it” as though each person wanted to get their moment of attention. Everlasting Glory never had the “amen” type of congregation, but The Experience had a plethora of them. Sometimes Jeff would hear a person call out for no reason at all.

Bill Watson took over as senior pastor after Larry Watson, his father and the former senior pastor, was forced into retirement. Larry had been diagnosed with cancer of the esophagus. His health dwindled away, and just a few weeks after his untimely diagnosis, he lost his voice and could only whisper. Larry started the church over thirty years ago, back when a suit and tie were required. Larry never liked the idea of people dressing fancy just to come to church. He could never find a Biblical explanation for it, and he knew that many of those lost souls that he encountered during the week were not even able to afford nice clothes, much less food for their families.

Larry wanted his church to be different—something that would attract the rejects of society. Even Jesus spent time with the crooked tax collectors. Jesus also advocated for the poor and taught the early Christians to take care of them. Jesus’ earthly ministry is what led Larry to give his church the name “The Experience.” He wanted people to experience God’s love first hand, and to also have a community of believers who joined together because of their faith, not because of their social status. He believed that church needed to be exciting in order to get people motivated to put Christ’s teachings into practice. Larry opened up a daily lunch program at the church for the needy in the community. He also started a used clothing store where old clothes were donated and sold for a dime each. The church’s community service programs and the modern style of worship and preaching are what sealed the deal for Jeff and Kate to know they were in the right place.

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Although Larry had a passion for the destitute, his view on Biblical doctrine and theology was often brought into question. He had attended a very liberal seminary and earned a Masters of Divinity degree. Larry believed that having a liberal view of Christianity would bring more people to the Lord instead of a conservative “fundamentalist” view that could scare people away. Larry understood that the gospel message in and of itself offered hope, but it also confronted people about sin in their lives. Instead of offending people and making them uncomfortable each week, Larry presented the gospel in a way that made people feel good about who they were as children of God. There was some doctrinal truth in Larry’s sermons, but for those who were new to the faith, they could not discern truth from heresy.

Some of his teachings were antithetical to the essential doctrines of the faith. Larry taught that repentance was not necessary for a person to enter into Heaven. He never preached on Hell, and he taught that all people on earth would eventually go to Heaven. He believed the Bible to be more metaphorical than literal, and the majority of the Old Testament was unreliable history. Although he preached from the Bible, he never held it in high regard and viewed much of it as erroneous and mistranslated.

Other pastors in the city of Grayson had confronted Larry about his liberal beliefs, some of which teetered on the brink of heresy, but Larry always had an answer to defend his theology. His answers were so quick and clever that those opposing him were unable to provide a reasonable response. He often appealed to the phrase, “that’s just your interpretation” when other pastors confronted him about his questionable theology. These pastors were concerned that Larry’s liberal view on sin and essential doctrines would create false converts. In the end, those who had been confronting Larry started losing members from their own congregation as they were drawn to The Experience through Larry’s multiple methods of outreach.

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Larry always wanted Bill to be a pastor and have a love for the Lord, and Bill excelled at following in his father's footsteps. Larry taught Bill everything he had learned in seminary. While most young children were playing sports or socializing with friends, Bill sat in his father's lap as he learned the Bible through his father's theology. Bill excelled in his understanding, and after attending seminary himself, he developed new ideas about God that even surprised Larry. After his diagnosis of cancer, Larry decided that Bill would be the perfect person to take his place. Bill, a forty-year-old spitting image of his seventy-year-old father, had always been active in the church, and everyone in the congregation already knew Bill would be the successor.

After his father's illness, which some of the other pastors had said was a judgment from God because Larry did not preach the truth, Bill took over the church. Continuing with the teachings he received from his father, Bill taught from a liberal understanding of scripture, and he also took the church to a new level of spirituality. He opened the church up to the long, experiential worship services that Jeff had now come to dread. Jeff's former pastor at Everlasting Glory always used Scripture when preaching his sermons, but Bill's preaching was based more on feelings and emotion rather than God's word. The topics were centered on elevating man, and just like his father Larry, Bill wanted to make people feel good about themselves. Doing so kept the attendance up and the offering plate full.

Bill's sermons typically lasted about fifteen minutes. The congregation had become accustomed to the short sermons, and it was guaranteed that if he went past his usual time limit, people started glancing down at their watches like ducks bobbing for food under the water's surface. The church had become more focused on the worship and having spiritual experiences instead of the sermons which, over time, had become so watered down that it was difficult to determine if Bill was preaching from the Bible or the latest self-help book. Bill could keep everyone's full attention, especially since he

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followed the “feel-good” theology of his father and satisfied the emotions of his congregation.

Bill continued with his morning sermon. “Now, you all know the story of creation. The Bible tells us that God created the earth, the animals, the plants, and the people all during the time span of one week. That’s what the Bible tells us, at least, but this was written at a time when people were not as educated in science as they are today. The author of Genesis was more concerned with taking care of the sheep in his field than understanding where the sheep came from.

“There are some fundamentalists who take the creation account as literal history, but I think it’s time we put these old, medieval teachings behind us and open up our minds to reality. Science says that life itself did not start in just one week, so why does the church keep hanging on to this old dogma? Doesn’t that make us look like fools? My fellow Christians, I plead with you to listen to logic and reason. These scientists, just like Jeff, have more degrees than a thermometer. They study this stuff for a living, and I think the church should listen to what these scientists are saying.

“These fundamentalists claim that God made everything in six literal days, that the earth is only some 10,000 years old, and that evolution is completely false. Well, I have some questions for them: What about the dinosaurs? Haven’t their fossils been dated to be millions of years old? What about the geologists who say the earth is billions of years old? There has to be a logical explanation to this! And thankfully, scientists have figured it out for us. While the Bible leaves us with many questions unanswered, science has come in and given us all the answers we need. Science says the universe came into existence from the Big Bang. Evolution shows that all life came from a common ancestor, and we humans descended from a common primate ancestor. Is there any problem with God using evolution to create everything? Maybe He did use evolution, or maybe life just happened on its own, and God intervened when man finally

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evolved. I can believe that and believe in Jesus at the same time. Who will join me?”

Bill casually walked off the stage as he began his closing statements. “Mere men wrote the Bible thousands of years ago. It’s been translated over and over throughout the centuries, and we simply cannot know if everything it says is true. Some scholars say that Moses wrote Genesis, but he wasn’t even born until centuries after the supposed creation week. How can we know Moses was correct? Where did he get his information? Most likely he adapted the creation story from pagan myths. See, all of the different nations back in Old Testament times had their various gods, and those nations had their own stories about creation. Moses probably didn’t know how it all came to be, but by simply gathering bits and pieces of stories from the surrounding cultures and then throwing the Hebrew God into the picture, he was able to form a version the Israelites could easily understand. I can conclude, and I know you’ll agree with me, that the story of creation is just that—a story. But just like the parables Jesus told, there is a lesson we can learn from the story. And that message is loud and clear—God is powerful and in control of our lives, regardless of His involvement in life’s origins. We have to trust in Him and live a life that is pleasing to Him. Put your faith and trust in God. He watches us and protects us. And God has given each of us a brain, so it’s time we begin to use it! Let’s listen to the scientists and respect the work they do. Evolution in no way affects the message of the gospel. So let’s put our myths and childhood beliefs aside and focus on following the Spirit of the Lord!”

After his closing statement, many people stood up and shouted “Amen!” Others clapped to show their approval. Kate joined in on the clapping, but Jeff sat perplexed as he tried to connect the sermon to the “God is powerful and in control” summarization. Others seemed to make the connection, but Jeff was left scratching his head. He had always been taught that the story of creation was an actual

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historical event. He had never studied the topic in depth but simply trusted what his Sunday School teachers told him.

Jeff studied extensively about evolution in school. He went to a secular university where evolution was always supported and never questioned. The other theories on origins, like intelligent design and Biblical creationism, were never opened to unbiased discussion. After several semesters of hearing the evidence for evolution, Jeff became convinced that the account of creation he was taught as a child was just a myth or moral story. But still, he had never heard a preacher refer to it as such. He had grown to respect Pastor Bill, and he usually agreed with the sermons he had heard from him ever since they started coming to this church over two years ago, but today was the first time he had ever heard any pastor cast doubt upon the reliability of the Bible. *If the pastor says it, then it must be true.*

The praise band came back to the stage and played a couple of closing songs. Afterwards, Jeff and Kate stood up to leave. Kate enjoyed socializing after church and was never in a hurry to go home like she had been at Everlasting Glory. She walked around the auditorium to meet her friends and acquaintances. Jeff, on the other hand, was more than ready to leave. He went to the lobby and waited by one of the church's coffee shops while his social butterfly made her rounds.

Greg Hudson, one of Jeff's few acquaintances, found Jeff alone and waiting impatiently. "Congratulations, Jeff! I didn't know you were a doctor," Greg said as he stretched out his hand.

"I'm not a doctor-doctor," Jeff explained with a sly smile. "I have a doctoral degree, which basically means I have been in school for the majority of my life and am now in debt until I retire."

Greg laughed. "Oh, I see. I barely finished high school myself. I couldn't imagine going to college. So, are you excited about your new job?"

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“Yes, I am,” Jeff said humbly. “I always wanted to be a teacher, and science has fascinated me ever since I was a child. This is just the type of career I wanted, and now I finally have my chance to do it.”

“Today’s sermon applied a lot to science,” Greg commented. “Pastor Bill made some really good points. It’s about time we hear a sermon that deals with the real questions we have. I’ve always wondered if evolution was true, and now I know for sure. Well, good luck in your new job!” Greg patted him on the back and then went outside as Kate came up behind Jeff and tried to scare him with a bear hug. He could never be scared easily, but he faked a shudder as though she caught him off guard.

“Are you ready to go?” Kate asked.

“Yes, it’s time for our Sunday visit with you-know-who,” Jeff replied with a smirk.

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