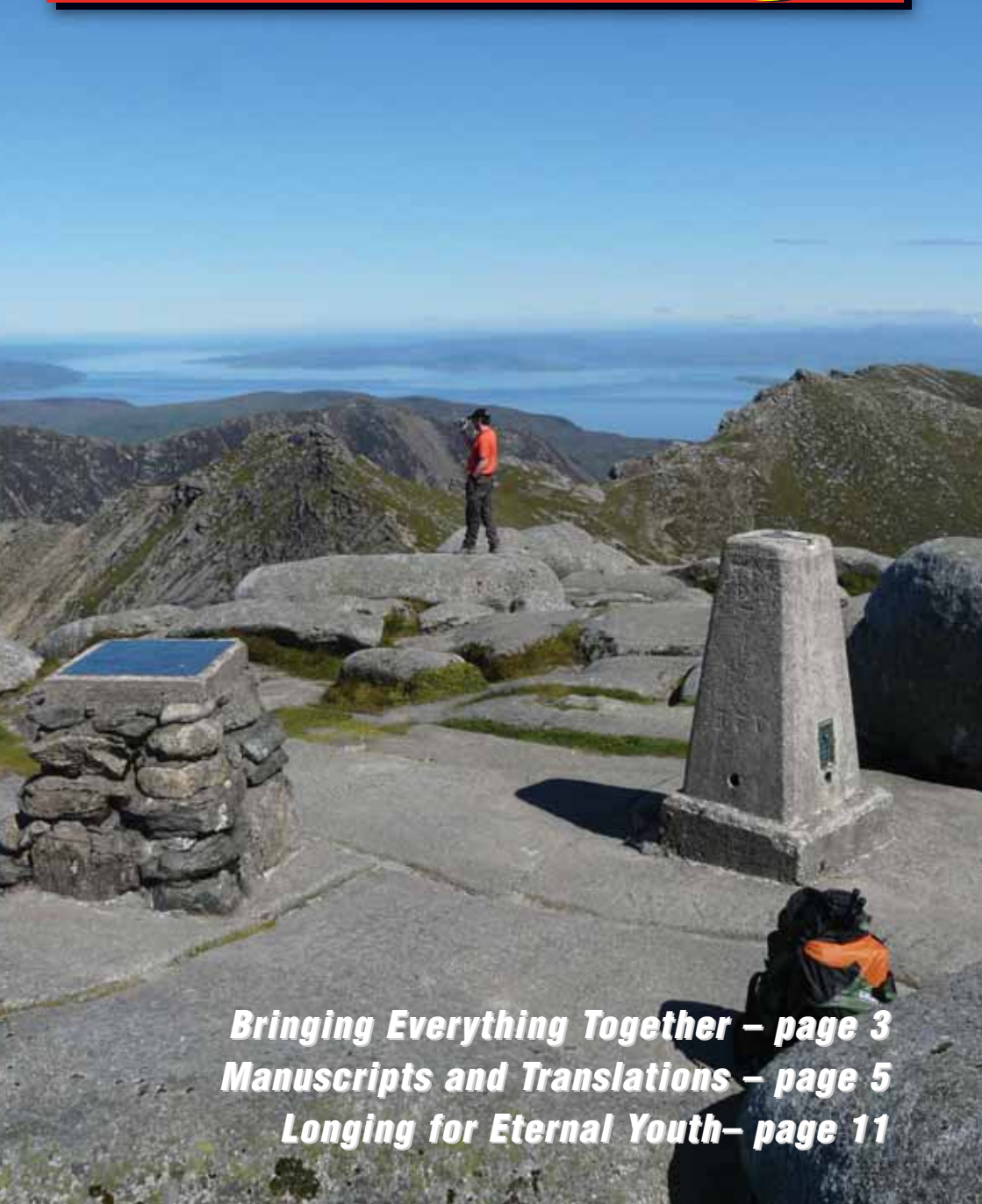


Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1529



Bringing Everything Together – page 3
Manuscripts and Translations – page 5
Longing for Eternal Youth – page 11

Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

127th Year

K11

1529



A monthly magazine published by the Christadelphians (brothers and sisters in Christ) and available throughout the world.

Its objectives are – to encourage the study of the Bible as God's inspired message to men; to call attention to the Divine offer of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ; and to warn men and women that soon Christ will return to Earth as judge and ruler of God's world-wide Kingdom.

Glad Tidings Distributors

for orders and payments

United Kingdom – Cilla Palmer, "Highlands",
78 Mildenhall Road, Fordham, Ely, Cambs,
England CB7 5NR
Tel: (01638)723959 (24 hrs & Fax)
cilla@gladtidings.fsnet.co.uk

Australia – Jon Fry, 28 Meadowgate Drive, Chirside
Park, 3116 Victoria, Australia
gladtidingsaustralia@gmail.com

Canada – Vivian Thorp, 5377 Birdcage Walk,
Burlington, Ontario, Canada, L7L 3K5
vivianthorpe@bell.net

New Zealand – Neil Todd, 14 Morpeth Place, Blockhouse
Bay, Auckland 7, New Zealand

South Africa – A. J. Oosthuizen, P.O.Box 50357,
Musgrave Road, Durban 4062, South Africa
antoost@mweb.co.za

U.S.A. – Pat Hemingray, 3079 Kilburn West,
Rochester Hills, USA, MI 48306

Other Countries – Andrew Johnson, 22 Hazel Drive,
Hollywood, Birmingham, England, B47 5RJ
andrew@gladtidings.me.uk

Editor: Owen Tecwyn Morgan, 26 The Crescent,
Hampton-in-Arden, Solihull, England, B92 0BP
glad.tidings@virgin.net

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Bible Versions

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Bringing Everything Together

If you have ever climbed a mountain and have been glad to drop your haversack and rest for a while, spare a thought for the people who carried up the sand and cement necessary to construct the triangulation pillars, or trig points, that you sometimes find at the top.

These pillars are about 4 feet (1,23 metres) tall and were used for the placement of theodolites – instruments to accurately measure angles, which are used for map making. There are about 6,500 of these pillars across the mainland and islands of the UK which were constructed in the 1930s. They have now been superseded by aerial photography and laser measurements.

Cross-Checking

Land surveying using theodolites relied upon the accurate measurements of angles and distances and, providing there was a clear sight between three trig points, you could calculate different heights above sea level, as well as precise locations. This gave a geometrical basis from which the positions of roads and other features could be established. By cross-checking the details from each of the points, any inaccuracies could be identified and resolved.

The idea of cross-checking to identify inaccuracies is something that applies much more widely than just in geometry. In a court of law, for example, witnesses are cross-examined to check their statements and



that is an ancient practice. For the law of God stated that:

Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses; he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness (Deuteronomy 17:6).

It is the way that things interrelate that gives us confidence in the reliability of something that has been stated, or which can cause us to doubt.

Key Promises

The things that God has promised are never stated just once. They are repeated and confirmed, to leave us in no doubt about what He intends. So when God promised Abraham that his descendants would bring a blessing to mankind, that promised blessing was confirmed in a most remarkable way. Here is the original promise:

I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing ... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:2–3).

That statement was made when Abraham was leaving the city where he had lived to set off with God into the unknown. It was the beginning of a spiritual adventure for him and his family during which God made promise after promise to this faithful man. When Abraham was over 100 years old, he was asked to climb Mount

Moriah with his son Isaac, there to sacrifice his son. It was a huge challenge for this aged man, and for his younger son, because all the promises about his descendants depended upon Isaac having children, and thus continuing Abraham's family line. But Abraham obeyed without question, confident that God would keep His word and, if necessary, that He would raise Isaac from the dead (see Genesis 22:5 and Hebrews 11:17-19).

Abraham's faith was such that he did not need to be tested to the end, so the angel stayed the old man's hand and spared the lad. Then the original promise was repeated and reaffirmed in a most remarkable way:

The Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son – blessing I will bless you ... and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice" (Genesis 22:15–18).

Cross-Check

Notice that the angel did not just confirm the promise. To make it infallible, God himself confirmed it with an oath – He swore by Himself that the blessing would indeed come through Abraham's seed. The New Testament picks this confirmation up in two ways. First the writer to the Hebrews comments:

When God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." And

so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise ... Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us (Hebrews 6:13–18).

Confirmed in Christ

By the promise itself and by the oath that He swore, God confirmed the certainty of the promise. The second explanation of this remarkable promise comes in the Letter to the Galatians, where the apostle explains that the descendant of Abraham who was promised was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God:

Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ (Galatians 3:16).

Paul's explanation is that Abraham was promised no less a descendant than the Lord Jesus Christ who, being born of Mary, was Abraham's seed, as the New Testament confirms in its opening verse by telling us that it is "*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham (Matthew 1:1).*"

We can have total confidence in the promises of God, centred in the Lord Jesus. Read the Bible and you can check for yourself that all these things are accurate and wonderful. They offer a blessing unlike any other – the forgiveness of sin and the hope of a new life with the Lord Jesus.

Editor

Manuscripts and Translations

Changes in Language

The language of the King James Bible has endured for 400 years. Much has been written about the contribution this Bible version has made to a golden age of English literature. Many phrases and some new words which are still in common use today have come into the English language directly from the King James Bible. Why might this be the case?

There is no evidence that the translators of the King James Bible set out to achieve literary distinction and personal fame through leaving indelible marks of their undoubted scholarship and learning upon the pages of Scripture. They had no licence to interpret or paraphrase the manuscripts.

The objective of the translators was to find the most accurate English words that best rendered the meaning of the words in the manuscripts available to them. The preservation of the sense and meaning of the manuscripts was paramount. Their faithfulness to this task in producing a literal translation of the manuscripts has meant that the glory of the Word of God has triumphed, limited only by the words of the translators.

“Thee” or “You”

When the King James Bible was first published there were some complaints that some of the language was archaic and used words that were already falling into disuse from everyday speech. Yet despite this the King

James Bible has endured for four centuries.

It is sometimes said that the English of the King James Bible should be used in prayer because it is more reverent to address God using “thee”, “thy” and “thou”. If it is our personal preference, this is fine and is to be respected. However, this is not the reason it was translated this way.

These singular pronouns are used widely throughout the Bible. In the underlying Hebrew and Greek, no special form of the personal pronoun is reserved for use in relation to God. The same pronouns (Greek *σέ* meaning “thee” or “thou”) are used to address both God and men. For example, Acts 4:24, “*Lord thou art God*” and Matthew 26:25 Jesus addressed Judas, “*thou hast said*”.

Singular and Plural

In the Old Testament there are examples where God uses these pronouns when addressing Adam, Eve and the serpent (Genesis 3:9-14). The situation today is complicated because we have lost the distinction between singular and plural nouns and use “you”, “your” and “yours” for both. Also, today these words are used formally and informally. Inevitably, over the years language changes. For example in the 17th century the word ‘*let*’ meant, ‘*to hinder*’; today, it has come to mean the opposite.

King David and the Lord Jesus Christ recognised that accuracy and understanding of the Word of God are of vital

importance for us to please God. David was inspired by God to write words that the Lord Jesus was to understand and fulfil.

“My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words. Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it” (Psalm 119:139-140)

(Jesus) “...said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up” (John 2:16-17)

Old Testament Manuscripts

Where did the manuscripts come from that were used by the King James translators? The manuscripts used by the King James translators are dated about the tenth century AD and they had access to about seven manuscripts. The ancient Hebrew texts consist entirely of consonants. Therefore, it was the pronunciation of words that enabled the meaning to be understood. The pronunciation of Hebrew words over many centuries was finally recorded in the Middle Ages by the addition of vowel signs and accent markings on the consonants.

These markings together with marginal notes were compiled between the sixth and tenth centuries AD by Jewish scholars known as Masoretes (a word that means ‘handed down’). This marked text became known as the Masoretic Text and was known for the care and accuracy with which it was prepared and copied. It is this Hebrew text that has been accepted to be the most authoritative.



Some of the caves where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found

The Dead Sea Scrolls

An astonishing chance discovery was made in 1947 when an Arab teenager threw a stone into the mouth of a cave and was puzzled by the sound he heard of breaking pottery. This was how the Qumran Scrolls, more popularly known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, were found in caves overlooking the dried up river bed of the Wadi Qumran. The Qumran find has yielded scrolls of all the Books of the Old Testament except for the Book of Esther.

The Qumran Scrolls are 1,000 years older than the manuscripts from which the King James Bible Old Testament was translated. They date from between 150-68 BC and confirm that the message has remained consistent. The Dead Sea Scrolls confirm for us that the 1611 translators working with manuscripts only 600 years old were using accurate documents. The Word of God is unchanging and has been preserved for us.

New Testament Manuscripts

The Greek text that was used for the translation of the New Testament of the King James Bible is sometimes known as the “Textus Receptus” or the “Received Text”. In the 16th century, Erasmus put together a text based on the small number of Byzantine manu-

scripts that were available to him.

However, today there are over 5,000 manuscripts of all or part of the New Testament. Between 80% and 90% of these manuscripts are in agreement and support the Greek text which was used by the translators of the King James Bible. There are at

least four reasons why we can have confidence in the authority of the Greek text used by the translators of the King James Bible.

- ① Subsequent discoveries show a consistency in a large number of similar texts.

Sources and Texts for the New Testament

AD 33 – 100		
Originals and copies used by the 1st century Ecclesias in Palestine, Antioch, Asia & beyond.		
Byzantine Text	AD 100 – 312	Alexandrian Text
Traditional or Majority of Texts now represent 90% of all the New Testament manuscripts.	Greatest corruption of text took place in this period. (Acts 20:28-32)	Corrupters of texts: Origen mingled Greek philosophy, Gnosticism, & Ethics with the Bible text (AD185-254). And others.
AD 312 – 1453		
	Majority copies text used by Greek Orthodox Church to this present day.	Constantine ordered 50 copies of Eusebius-Origen Bible. Jerome’s Latin Vulgate AD 404 based largely on Origen’s text.
AD 1453 – 1831		
The Traditional texts after the Reformation were known as ‘Textus Receptus’ from 1633 The New Testament of these Bibles drew on these texts: Erasmus Grk.NT 1516 Tyndale NT 1525 Coverdales NT 1535 Matthews NT 1537 Great Bible NT 1539 Geneva Bible NT 1557 Bishops Bible NT 1568 Beza Gk. NT 1598 King James (AV) 1611	Majority copies text used by Churches of Reformation.	Corrupted or incomplete texts: Codex Vaticanus found in Vatican Library 1450s -origin unknown, thought to be 4th Century. Codex Sinaiticus found in a monastery, 1859 supposed to be written c.AD 320. And others.

- ② The manuscripts found come from many places spread around the Mediterranean world.
- ③ Ancient foreign language Bible versions were based on the same kind of text as used by the King James Bible translators.

For example, the Syrian speaking Christians had their own version of the Bible about 150 AD, known as the Syriac ‘Pershitta’ (meaning, the correct or simple). It was at Antioch in Syria that believers were first called Christians (Acts 11:26). Early Latin Bible translations were well established before 250 AD when Rome began to send missionaries to the West. These Bibles were translated about 157AD and also represent what later became known as the Received Text.

- ④ There is uniformity in the manuscripts found over many centuries and across a wide geographical area, involving many copyists.

We may therefore have confidence that the original message of God’s Word has been preserved by the large number of witnesses we now have.

Text Families

By contrast, many modern Bible versions since the Revised Version of 1881 are based on fewer, older manuscripts from a more localised area. The better known of these manuscripts are the Alexandrinus, Siniaticus and Vaticanus. All are written on vellum, the first two are in the British Museum and the latter in Rome.

There are essentially two families of texts from which our Bible may have been translated (see the chart on page 7). The King James Bible is supported by the Received Text, which represents only a small number of the Byzantine

manuscripts that were discovered later. The New King James Bible is also based on the Received Text and also on the generally similar Majority Text.

Under Attack

The Apostle Paul warned the first century believers that there would be corruption of the Truth of the Gospel message and this reduced him to tears.

“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears” (Acts 20:28-31).

The Biblical record was assailed from both within the Christian community and from external influences. The 2nd century Alexandrian scholar and philosopher, Origen, is reported to have said,

“The Scriptures are of little use to those who understand them as they are written”.

He treated the Word of God as if it was mainly allegory. We must listen to the warnings of the Apostle Paul and be open and honest in our reading and understanding of the Gospel message.

Peter Moore

Next: Bibles and Bible Study

Mary and Elizabeth

Prayer is not the only theme that Luke picks out in his gospel account. More than any of the other gospel accounts, he writes about the women who played an important part in the unfolding drama.

Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, are just two of these.

Prayerful Women

Both Elizabeth and Mary were prayerful women, conscious of their need to remember the grace with which God had treated them. So Elizabeth greeted Mary, who had gone to visit her relative, with the words:

“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb” (Luke 1:42).

“Blessed” is not an easy word nowadays, which is perhaps why some modern versions translate it as “Happy”. But it really means “to speak well of, to praise or celebrate with praises”. Elizabeth clearly recognised that Mary was not only her relation, but also that she had been chosen by the Lord God to be the mother of His son, so she was recognising the blessing that had been conferred upon Mary.

At that time every mother in Israel had been hoping that their son would be the Messiah, and Elizabeth recognised this, for she said:

Why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice



John the Baptist was Elizabeth's son

of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy (Luke 1:43-44).

Elizabeth's prayer

The reason why Mary had visited Elizabeth was probably because Mary, having received such amazing news from the angel, needed someone in whom to confide. The record says that “she went with haste”; but Elizabeth saw the visit from a different perspective. She understood that she had the tremendous honour of a visit from the mother of the Lord Jesus. Her joy seems to have communicated itself to her own unborn child – who would later become known as John the Baptist – for, she said, “the babe leaped in my womb for joy.”

There is an enigmatic conclusion to her praises:

“Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord” (Luke 1:45).

Elizabeth's own husband, the priest Zachariah, had been unable to believe that a son was to be born to his wife,

for they were both past the age for child-bearing. He had been struck dumb as a consequence of his unbelief. But Mary, when told by the angel Gabriel that she was to bear the Messiah, had believed at once, only asking how the conception was to take place. Notice here a Bible-long principle, that those who believe that God's words will be fulfilled are blessed. The time will also come when those who refuse to believe will be dumb-struck by the things that happen as Bible prophecy is fulfilled.

Mary's prayer

Mary's response was another magnificent prayer or song of thanksgiving. It begins with words that are now well known:

And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour... (Luke 1:46-47).

The whole prayer shows how well-versed in the Jewish Bible Mary was – our Old Testament. There are clear links with what she says with the song of Hannah (1 Samuel 2:1-10) and also with several of the psalms and prophets, as well as the historical books of the Old Testament. It becomes obvious that Mary was exactly the sort of woman who would be right as the mother of the infant Jesus. She would know all about bringing up children "in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

Mary's Humility

Mary reflects in this prayer that she has been seen in her low estate. Although she was in the kingly line of David she nevertheless had no grand thoughts of her position. She also knew that in future she would be called

"blessed" and reminds us again of the mercy of God to those who love Him.

This is a prayer from which we can all learn. Mary knew that mighty men had been deposed by the power of God and that hungry men and women had been fed by Him. She knew all about God's dealing with Israel, His people, in the past, and His mercy to Abraham, that faithful man chosen to be the founder of the race. The prophet Micah concluded his short prophecy with the words:

You will give truth to Jacob and mercy to Abraham, which You have sworn to our fathers from days of old (Micah 7:20).

Mary must have had all this in mind when her prayer poured forth. Both these women, bound up by their common family and in the purpose of God teach us a little more about prayer. They used Scripture to express their thoughts, and had learned to use their Bible to find ways of speaking appropriately to the Lord God. This evidently helped them, and their example can help us to express our prayers, as we too seek to become part of God's gracious purpose.

Mark Sheppard

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www.gladtidingsmagazine.org



Longing For Eternal Youth

Every week I went to see my aged friend, until one day he said, "The doctor has given me six weeks to live."

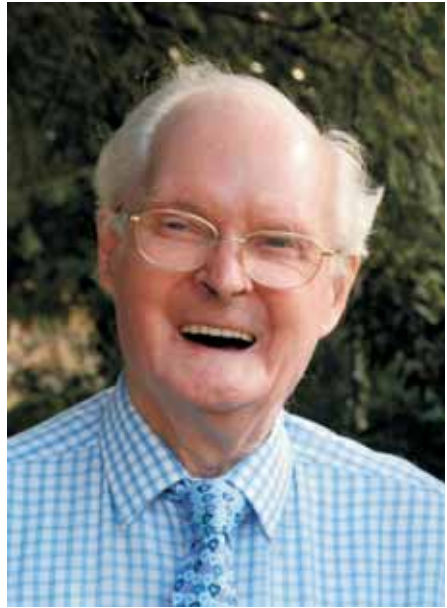
He was quite calm, and hoped that the day would be soon, as he was in pain. We talked about the wonderful hope the Bible had given us. On my last visit he said, "I am longing to see the Kingdom." That night he passed away peacefully, and we felt that his wish would soon be granted, for the signs of the times pointed to great events yet to take place.

The Funeral

The cemetery chapel was packed, a testimonial to a real Christian gentleman. We opened the service with the hymn:

**Rejoicing in hope and the joy of salvation,
Father we thank Thee the morning draws near.
Shadows of dread brood above every nation,
Dark is the night, but the vision is clear.**

That was fitting praise for such a moment. The preacher, a lifelong friend, spoke of the wonderful work our brother had accomplished from America to Australia, and many places in between. He had travelled so far to speak of the coming age, when peace would reign supreme, and nations live in harmony. Where would that kingdom be? There was no doubt about the location, as he had often emphasised. For we explain that whenever we say the Lord's simple prayer, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth".



Wonderful Hope

We were reminded of the solemn promise the angels had made when the disciples were left gazing up at the ascending Christ:

"Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

My friend had longed for the glad day when the Lord Jesus will return as King of Kings, to reign from Jerusalem. That city is to become the joy of all the earth, as promised by God:

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in His

holy mountain. Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great King (Psalm 48:1–2).

When Jesus returns in the power of God and with the holy angels he will reign supreme:

He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end (Luke 1:32–33).

New Society

The result will be so different to the conditions that now exist on earth.

- ❖ Men and women will live without fear

For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, and her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people; the voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, nor the voice of crying. No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; for the child shall die one hundred years old, but the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed (Isaiah 65:17–20).

- ❖ Famine will be no more (Psalm 72:16), and
- ❖ Children will play without fear (Isaiah 11:8,9).

These wonderful promises are loved by all who respect the truth of the Bible. We ended the service with the well-known hymn, “Abide with me,”

and went outside to lay our brother to rest.

The Graveside

At the graveside there were a few family tears, which was natural when such a godly man had fallen asleep. He had left many memories, all of which were based on the God-given hope of eternal life at the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus. As his coffin was reverently lowered into the ground we realised that in the eyes of the LORD it was a place to be noted for that moment to come when the great trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised from their sleep.

God never forgets His loved ones and He always keeps His Promises. So we can be sure of the outcome at the Coming of Jesus:

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed — in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Corinthians 15:51–54).

We had lain to rest a man who was longing for eternal youth and that longing was well-founded in the promises of God. That offer still stands for all those who share the desire to be with the people of God throughout the ages of eternity.

Ken Clark

What Happens if you Ignore God?

In the first part of this study, Trevor Pritchard looked at Old Testament examples of people who had turned their backs on God and suffered fatal consequences. He then explained that God is at work to encourage us to come to Him for the salvation He offers. Now he examines whether this is a New Testament message as well.

Old Testament Truth?

We saw that God judged people who were wilfully ignorant of Him and His law at the time of Noah and that He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for their persistent immorality. He gave His law to Israel, but it was made clear over and over again that whilst obedience would bring abundant blessing, persistent disobedience would be disastrous for the nation, and so it proved to be.

There was always the opportunity for repentance and forgiveness, but there were few takers and only a remnant of the nation proved responsive. Most preferred to follow their own religious inclinations and to ignore what God had actually revealed about His gracious purpose.

“Ah, but ...”, I hear you say, “doesn’t the New Testament tell a different story?” Let me assure you that the message of Jesus to his contemporaries was no different. Think of the way they treated him and consider what he warned would happen if they persisted to ignore his message and denied his authority. Having predicted that he would suffer many things and be rejected by the nation, Jesus said:

“... as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they

*married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. **Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed**” (Luke 17:26–30).*

Prophetic Fulfilment

This prophecy of Jesus had its primary fulfilment in AD 70 when the city of Jerusalem was utterly destroyed by Roman legions under the Roman general Titus. Again, although there was an opportunity for some to escape – if they heeded Jesus’ warning and took advantage of it – very few people took any notice. And they suffered the dire consequences of their ignorance (see Luke 21: 20-22). By and large, Jesus’ contemporaries had also turned their backs upon God. They kept up a charade of religious observance but, as Jesus said, they were only play-acting:

He answered and said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me’” (Mark 7:6).

We can also read of the situation, at much the same time, in the capital city of the Roman Empire. Human nature was unchanged from the days of Noah and Lot. Both Gentiles and Jews had turned their backs upon God and given themselves up to idols and a thoroughly corrupt and devious way of living. They derived their pleasures from barbarism. Think of Roman arenas like the Coliseum (built 75-80 AD), where men and women were killed in the most inhuman ways, just for entertainment. Think too of the political and social intrigue in which men and women were murdered if they stood in the way of some evil man's ambition.

World astray from God

The social situation was just as the apostle Paul said and what he observed has been repeated over and over again throughout the intervening centuries as people have:

... changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man – and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonour their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. (Romans 1:23–25).

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, **God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting (Romans 1:28).**

They became:

Undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that



The ruins of the Coliseum in Rome where some terrible things were done, just to entertain the crowds

*those who practise such things are deserving of death, **not only do the same but also approve of those who practise them** (Romans 1:31–32).*

The greatest sign in our day that the harvest of God's judgement is near at hand is given by another Old Testament prophet:

*'Therefore do not fear, O My servant Jacob,' says the Lord, 'Nor be dismayed, O Israel; For behold, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet, and no one shall make him afraid. **For I am with you,' says the Lord, 'to save you; though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet I will not make a complete end of you. But I will correct you in justice, and will not let you go altogether unpunished'** (Jeremiah 30:10–11).*

Watch Israel

Yes, we watch what happens in Israel with an eagle eye because Jesus himself said that after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, the Jewish people, as Moses had foretold, would be scattered throughout the world (see Luke 21:24-27). But that scattering

would not last for ever! The prophetic prediction was that the scattered Jewish people would be regathered and returned to their ancient homeland.

Such a dispersion and regathering has never happened before to any nation, but it happened to God's chosen nation, just as the prophets said. In 1948 the nation of Israel was formally established once again, and ever since the nations around them have been antagonistic, and sometimes aggressive. Israel has had to fight to survive and the instability in the Middle East at present leads many to think that another military campaign might eventually result, designed to overthrow Israel and share out their land between their neighbours.

Action Plan

What are we to make of these things and what do we need to do to become part of God's gracious purpose with the earth? Mankind is still sinful despite its apparent technological and cultural sophistication, or maybe because of it. Nowadays in some quarters it is deeply unfashionable to believe in God and to follow His counsel. But those who recognise that there is a Designer who created our evidently designed universe, and who want to know what His underlying purpose was, and is, should be encouraged by this quotation:

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat;

both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? (2 Peter 3:9–12).

As happened in the times of Noah, Abraham, Lot and indeed of Jesus himself, there is now – and always has been – a way of escape which a loving and merciful God has prepared for those who would walk with Him. We would all do well to take note of the warnings of Scripture. God will judge the world when His Son returns from heaven and He will judge righteously.

Perhaps you don't like to think of God in these terms but prefer to think of Him as completely loving and totally merciful, whether people take any notice of Him or not. But it isn't like that at all. If you are in any doubt about that then just read these words, and take appropriate action:

To you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power, when he comes, in that Day, to be glorified in his saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed (2 Thessalonians 1:7–10).

Trevor A Pritchard

The Kings of Israel

The Books of Samuel record the beginning of the kingdom of God over Israel, for the people wanted a king and so King Saul was appointed. He proved to be a big disappointment because he lacked spiritual perception, but his replacement – King David – was a man in constant contact with the Almighty.

1 & 2 Kings

The two books that follow are historical documents. They are official records from the reigns of the kings, interspersed with comments from God himself as to how He viewed their lives. They begin with King David's death and the handover of the kingdom to his son Solomon, and they end five hundred years later with the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, in 586BC.

It was God Himself who chose the successor to David – one of the sons of Bathsheba. Solomon was probably only in his twenties when he was crowned, but he soon had the kingdom firmly under control. Invited by the Lord to choose any gift, he asked for wisdom to rule God's people, and thereafter became legendary for his proverbs and justice. He had inherited great wealth and added to it by a series of trading ventures, as well as receiving much tribute from nations that were then subject to Israel.

Jerusalem Temple

Much of this wealth was devoted to building the Temple on Mount Moriah, a project employing 150,000 workmen and lasting eight years.



Solomon bought cedar wood and hired engineers from Hiram king of Tyre, north of Israel. They levelled off the top of the hill with a giant stone platform, on which the white limestone sanctuary and its surrounding courts stood high above the city.

The design, handed on from David, was similar to the Tabernacle made by Moses, but was twice the size. The Day of Dedication was turned into a national assembly. White robed priests solemnly carried the ark into the Most Holy Place, sacrifices were offered on the new bronze altar, and the young king made a long speech, asking God to bless the house they had built for Him. In response a fiery cloud filled the temple, indicating the presence of the Lord.

Magnificence

Solomon built himself a magnificent palace, south of the Temple in the City of David. He made a trade agreement with Hiram of Tyre, who had expertise in shipping, to bring spices and gold from the East into the Mediterranean basin. Later he was visited by the Queen of Sheba who brought him rich gifts and probably joined the alliance with Hiram to bypass the ancient monopoly of Egypt.

Sadly Solomon's wisdom did not keep him from making mistakes. He married 700 wives (on average, a wedding every three weeks of his forty year reign). Many of them were foreign princesses (some no doubt were political alliances), and they persuaded him to worship their gods. The power and wealth and peace bequeathed to him by his father began to dissolve. And after his death, the united kingdom of Israel broke up.

Divided Kingdom

A young leader from the tribe of Ephraim challenged Rehoboam, Solomon's son and successor. When Rehoboam refused to listen to a delegation asking for lower taxes, Jeroboam led a rebellion that split the kingdom in two. Rehoboam retained control of the south (Judah and Benjamin), but Jeroboam became king of the ten other tribes. Realizing his new subjects might continue to go south to worship in the Temple, he set up a rival attraction – two golden calves, one in the north and one in the ancient holy place of Bethel, saying:

"It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!" (1 Kings 12:28).

The outcome was that the ten tribes from that time onward were cut off from the worship of the Lord. As a result, their moral standards slid rapidly downwards. Like a refrain, each new king is dismissed with the comment *"he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord"*. In consequence, the history of the ten-tribe kingdom is of almost unremitting bloodshed and war. Jeroboam's son was murdered after two years on the throne. His successor, Baasha, lasted 24 years, but his

son was assassinated after two years, and the killer lasted two months before he too was replaced by Omri, who made a new capital at Samaria.

From Bad to Worse

Omri's son, Ahab, has the dubious accolade of doing more evil than all who were before him, because he married Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Sidon. This forceful lady persuaded Ahab's subjects to worship Baal, a return to idolatry unheard of since the time of the judges.

Jezebel systematically eliminated all the prophets of the Lord that were left in Ahab's kingdom, and replaced them with 700 paid-up prophets of her own. Things looked grim for would-be worshippers of the Lord. However, this last section of 1 Kings, from chapter 17 onwards, introduces an exciting contest between the evil queen and Elijah, the sole survivor of God's prophets.

Baal was supposed to control the weather. Elijah threw down the gauntlet. He would prove that the God of Israel was the only true God. At his request God sent a three-year drought, and then, after a great showdown on Mount Carmel, sent rain again. Although Elijah's expected revolution did not happen, he was amazed to discover there were 7000 amongst the ten tribes who were still faithful to the Lord. Encouraged, he appointed Elisha as his young assistant, and re-established the 'schools of the prophets', first established by Samuel, where brave young men were trained to teach people about God.

Ten Tribe Israel

It is worth noting that these books – 1 and 2 Kings – are primarily concerned with the fortunes of the ten-tribe

kingdom, loosely styled 'Israel' although they also include some notes about the parallel kings in the southern kingdom of Judah, to keep the story in context.

The Second book of Kings continues the saga, with Elisha taking over from Elijah after the aged prophet was caught away in a whirlwind. The Lord sent an amazing outpouring of miracles in this period, similar to those worked by Jesus and the apostles in the First Century, and for the same reason – to prove that Elijah and Elisha had been sent by Him.

A leper was healed, a hundred men were fed from a few loaves, and two mothers were given back their sons from the dead. For the faithful few, persecuted and fearful, it was good to know that God was with them and these miracles served to witness to the one true God, encouraging a faithful few to abandon the false religion that had been established by Jeroboam. There is a continuing refrain throughout these books in which Jeroboam – the founder of the ten-tribe nation is labelled as: *“Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin”* (2 Kings 3:3).

Israel in Decline

The evil introduced by Ahab and his wife was finally ended by Jehu, who wiped out their whole dynasty plus his son in law, the king of Judah. But down in the southern kingdom Ahab's daughter immediately seized the throne, killing her grandchildren to eliminate rivals, and continued the worship of Baal until she, too, was removed by a brave coup-d'état.

Jehu's great-grandson Jeroboam II had a long reign of 41 years in the time of the prophet Jonah, for God in his mercy:

...saw that the affliction of Israel was very bitter; and whether bond or free, there was no helper for Israel. And the Lord did not say that He would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven; but He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash (2 Kings 14:26–27).

From this point the ten-tribe kingdom went steadily downhill. In 722 BC the Assyrians, a growing world power, invaded from the north and ransacked the land, deporting the whole population to the East. The judgment of God had fallen.

The king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria. God had been constant in His appeal to the nation:

Nevertheless they would not hear... they left all the commandments of the Lord their God ... Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone (2 Kings 17:14-18).

Judah Survives

The tribe of Judah also trembled under the marching feet of the Assyrian army, but their great king Hezekiah held them faithful to God, and Jerusalem escaped for the time being. A century later the Babylonians defeated the Assyrians, and King Nebuchadnezzar took over Judah as a tribute-paying vassal state. By this time the spiritual state of Judah had slipped to that of the ten tribes. Captivity followed, and in 586 BC Jerusalem with its beautiful temple was destroyed by fire. For the time being, the Kingdom of God, over which David had reigned, had come to an end.

David M Pearce

“All that glitters is not gold!”

This age-old saying is just as true today. There is a metal called iron pyrites which glistens in the sunlight, but it is not the real thing. It is known as “fool’s gold” and it is not of the same value as real gold.



The saying has come to apply to anything that looks nice but is not really as valuable or as worthwhile as it might appear at first glance. People are so skilled at making things look attractive nowadays that we can be easily fooled by something that looks good although the materials used may be cheap and inferior. Such goods look lovely for a short time, but they don’t last. And many other things are just copies – counterfeits or imitations.

Will it last?

This is just as true in the spiritual world as in the material world. Many avenues of thinking and ways of living seem attractive to us, but the enjoyment of them is limited and temporary. Anticipation is often better than realisation and the pleasure derived can be short-lived.

What we would all like is a quality of life which will last. Our pleasures in this life are so short-lived. Youth is soon over and physical strength wanes.

From the book of Genesis we learn that not everything that appeals to our sensual nature is good for us. Eve took of the forbidden fruit and she and Adam suffered the consequences of disobeying God’s commandment. It was by that act of disobedience that

sin, suffering and death came into the world (Romans 5:12).

Gold Standard

God’s Word is the real measure of what is valuable and what is not. For only God’s sound advice

will bring us the happiness we desire – peace of mind now and life for ever in God’s coming Kingdom. Many of the writers of the Bible were inspired to express this truth. Job compared wisdom to gold:

Where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? ... Neither gold nor crystal can equal it, nor can it be exchanged for jewelry of fine gold (Job 28:12–17).

King David valued God’s judgements as more desirable than gold:

The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold (Psalm 19:9–10).

The writer of the Proverbs took wisdom as his theme too, when he said:

Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding; for her proceeds are better than the profits of silver and her gain than fine gold (Proverbs 3:13–14).

Do you want to discover this gold for yourself? Then open your Bible prayerfully and find in it the real gold.

Marion Buckler

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B28 8SZ, UK requests@cbm.org.uk

The Americas

CBMA, 19111 Kinsie Street,
Northridge, California, USA, 91324
ksommerville@unitedagencies.com

Caribbean

CBMC, Box 55541, Unit 119,
15280, 101 Avenue, Surrey, BC,
Canada, V3R 0J7
philsnobelen@shaw.ca

India

T Galbraith, GPO Box 159,
Hyderabad, 5000001, India

Australia, South and East Asia

ACBM, PO Box 42, Wallacia, NSW
2745, Australia
coelmada@ozemail.com.au

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