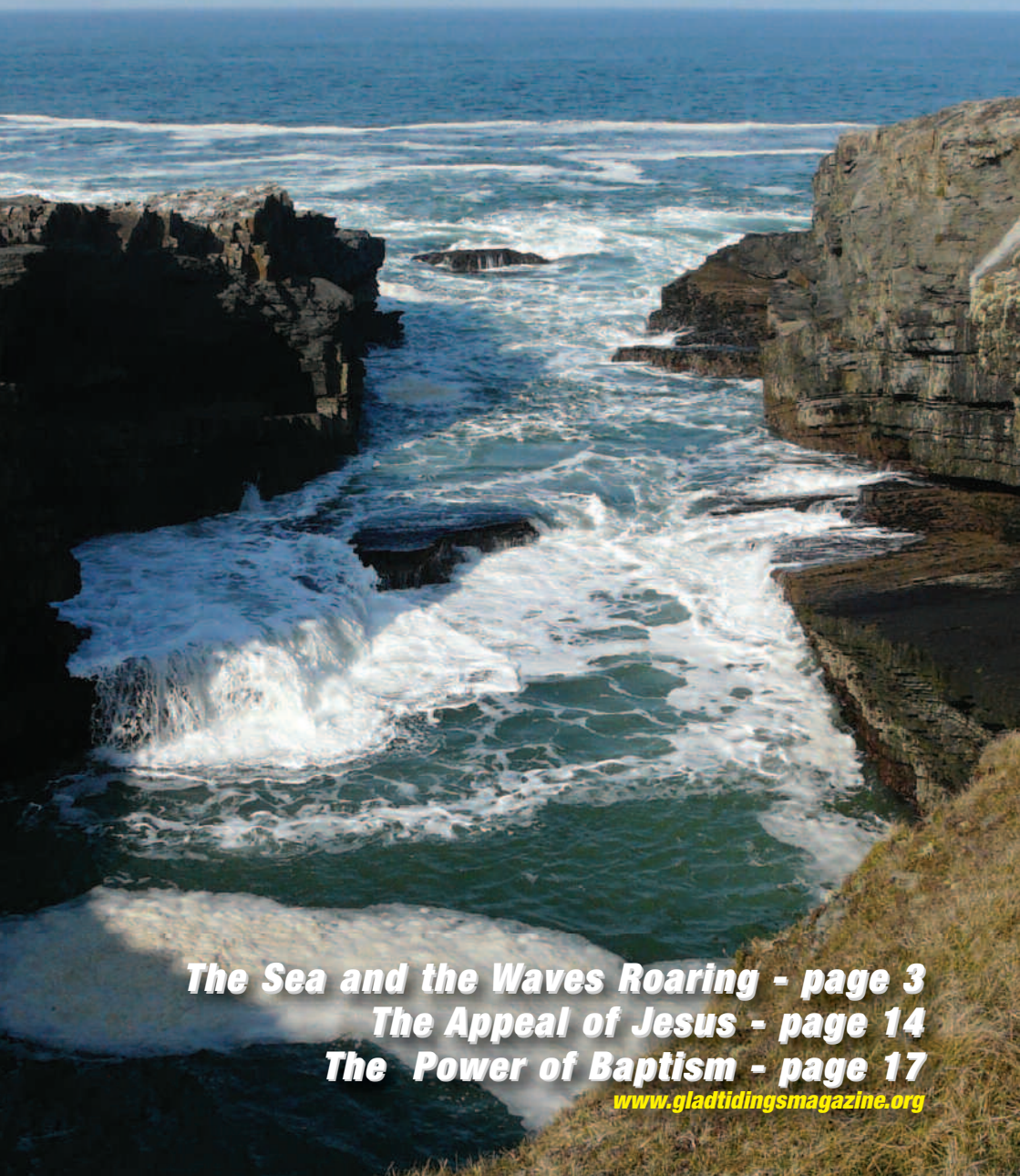


Glad Tidings

of the Kingdom of God

1581



The Sea and the Waves Roaring - page 3

The Appeal of Jesus - page 14

The Power of Baptism - page 17

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The Sea and the Waves Roaring

The world is becoming more and more concerned about climate change, and it would seem with good cause. Many parts of the globe have been experiencing more extreme weather, sometimes causing terrible devastation and tragic loss of life. Even in the United Kingdom, usually known for mild weather (if somewhat wet!) the coasts have been lashed by huge storms during recent winters, presenting some impressive pictures of roaring waves but causing damage where they hit land. This month's front page is very calm and picturesque by comparison.

Storm on the Sea of Galilee

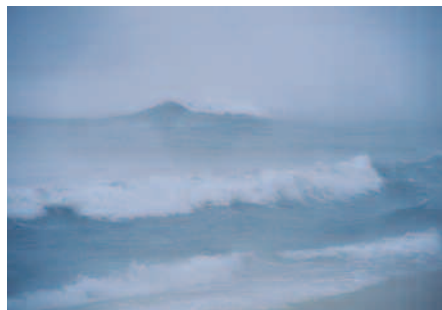
In the Gospels, we often find Jesus and his disciples in boats on the Sea of Galilee. Some of the disciples were lifelong fishermen who had grown up by the sea and had experienced it in all weathers – they were not easily frightened by storms. So how terrifying must have been the storm which petrified these hardened seamen and brought them to Jesus crying “*Master, Master, we are perishing!*” (Luke 8:24).

Jesus wasn't a fisherman, he was a carpenter; and yet he was still able to sleep in the boat despite the storm. supremely calm, we read that Jesus *arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water. And they ceased, and there was calm* (v24).

There is a certain irony in the record here, for Luke tells that NOW the disciples were afraid! They realised that

although the storm had frightened them with its destructive power, they were in the presence of a man with even greater power, although a kind master who used that power to care for them and to further God's will.

And they were afraid, and marvelled, saying to one another, “Who can this be? For he commands even the winds and water, and they obey him!” (v25).



In fact by the time we come to the record of Jesus walking on water in Matthew 14, when again he calmed a storm, they understood more: *Then those who were in the boat came and worshipped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God”* (v33).

Storms in Bible Language

His power over the forces of nature proved that Jesus was sent by God. However, it teaches another truth when we consider how the sea and waves are used in the Bible. They are used to represent the restless nations and peoples of the world. We find this in Isaiah, where the prophet writes:

The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt (Isaiah 57:20).

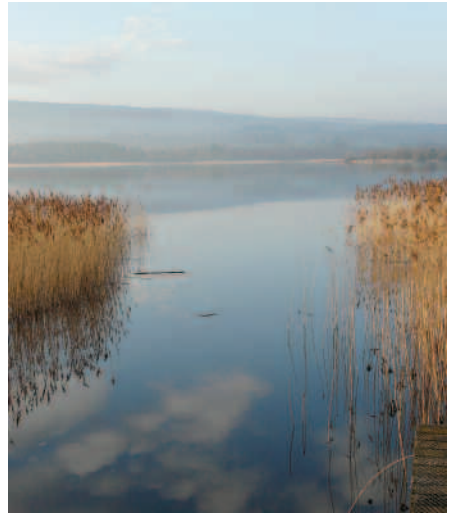
The picture is vivid when we think about nations so often in conflict, full of internal unrest, never really at peace, churning like a rough sea. Jesus picks up exactly this picture when talking to his followers about his return to the earth, for which we are still waiting. Speaking about the state of the world at that time, he says:

“And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken” (Luke 21:25–6).

This dramatic description may well be telling us to take events in the natural world as warnings that Christ’s return is near. We are certainly being shown the state of the world, nations in distress and unable to find calm in the confusion. The image of a violent, raging, restless sea is a striking illustration of today’s world. No wonder that this is reflected in individuals in panic and alarm.

The Calm of the Kingdom

This is a good point to remember the storm on Galilee. However dreadful the natural storm or the unrest in the world, the Lord Jesus has power to control it and the compassion to do so. When he returns to the earth, it will be to bring peace and rest to all who accept him, to calm the world for good in God’s kingdom.



In this issue, we look again at the book of Revelation and see how God controls human history in bringing about His kingdom; we will also consider Jerusalem as the capital of that kingdom. Looking at the name, character and appeal of Jesus, we are reminded that he can also bring peace to troubled lives if we let him, and that he has always done so. Additionally we will look at how setting the right priorities and following God’s laws will enrich our lives now and give us the hope of being in that future kingdom.

This is the good news, the gospel. If we are baptised and part of God’s family, we need not be terrified by events global or local, but can have confidence because of the words of Jesus, continuing in Luke 21:27–8:

“Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.”

Editor

Making Life Profitable

Some people think the book of Ecclesiastes is very 'negative'. Discussions about the book may start with comments such as "It's very depressing isn't it?"

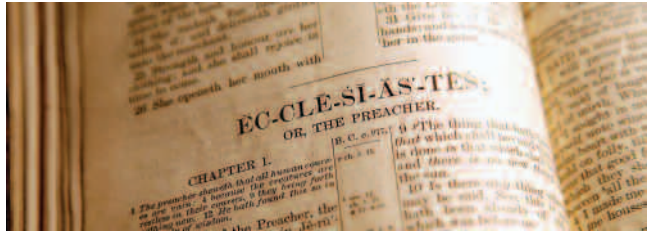
Ecclesiastes does certainly have some serious truths for us to hear, but we should not let a preference for more obviously 'upbeat' Bible passages prevent us from benefiting from the deep spiritual lessons contained within this wonderful book. To help our appreciation, we will consider just two questions:

- ❖ Who was the Preacher?
- ❖ Are our lives 'vanity'?

Who was the Preacher?

Ecclesiastes starts with, *The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem (Ecclesiastes 1:1)*. This Preacher is not given a name; the main point is his role rather than his identity. Although we do not have the name of the Preacher, lots of information is given about him which seems to point to one conclusion – Solomon was the Preacher.

- ❖ The Preacher was the son of David (1:1)
- ❖ he was king over Israel in Jerusalem (1:12)
- ❖ he was associated with wisdom (1:16, 2:9, 12:9)
- ❖ he built houses (2:4)
- ❖ he collected silver and gold (2:8)



- ❖ he had many concubines (2:8)
- ❖ he arranged many proverbs (12:9)

These are all characteristics of Solomon, which we can look out for when we read the records of his life in 1 Kings chapters 1 to 11 and 1 Chronicles chapters 1 to 9. One especially convincing phrase is that the Preacher speaks of God giving someone riches and wealth and honour (Ecclesiastes 6:2) – the exact triplet of words which God used when He gave Solomon these blessings in 2 Chronicles 1:11–12. However, we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that the writer is presented not as Solomon, but as 'The Preacher'; the focus is on the message, not on the man.

Are Our Lives 'Vanity'?

The overriding theme of the book of Ecclesiastes is that life without God is meaningless, or 'vanity' (literally, 'grasping after wind').

The work which man does is said to have 'no profit' (1:3); there seems to be no end result to the endless cycles of nature (1:4–7); the lives and achievements of men seem to be so similar that 'there is nothing new under the sun' (1:9); people don't remember the past and they won't

remember what is to come in the future either (1:11). So human existence on planet Earth is said to be without meaning.

The Preacher says that he tested the different options there are for people in this life. He writes:

I set my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is grasping for the wind (Ecclesiastes 1:17).

He then describes how he indulged in all the pleasures there are, to experience life to the full, but found there was no profit under the sun (2:11).

His experiences are very true to life and particularly applicable to lifestyles today. Some people devote their entire lives to acquiring wisdom, reading as many books as they can and acquiring as many life experiences as possible. Many more devote their lives to a time-consuming career which in turn allows them to spend money on various pleasures.

If only they would acknowledge the sober lesson of the Preacher, that this way of life is vanity and has no lasting profit, they might eventually reach the same overwhelmingly positive conclusion as the Preacher:

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

Life with Meaning

Once we bring God into our lives, we find the true meaning of life. We may have career ambitions, we may like to build and have projects, we may spend money on things which we find enjoyable. If this was all we desired in life,

then our lives would indeed be vanity. However, when we find out about the gospel message of salvation we discover that God wants us to become members of His family. He wants us to be part of His plan and glorify Him. Let's remember this when we read Ecclesiastes; contrast the emptiness of life without God with how our lives can be – full of purpose and hope.

Let's avoid the trap into which God's people fell when they spoke against the Lord saying *"It is useless to serve God; what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance?" (Malachi 3:14).*

Rather, we can rejoice that God has called us from a life which could be meaningless to one full of purpose now and hope for the future.



The apostle Paul wrote to believers in Corinth about the wonder of the coming resurrection from the dead when Jesus returns. He gave them this encouragement, which is now passed on to us:

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Stephen Blake

Money! Money! Money!

Some years ago I heard a neighbour singing a song from back in the 1970s: “*Money Money Money...it’s a rich man’s world*”. The thought came to me: ‘What does the Bible say about money?’ The answer is ‘a lot!’

Good News for Rich and Poor

Look first at Psalm 49. The writer calls on everyone to listen to his advice, *Hear this, all peoples; Give ear all inhabitants of the world, both low and high, rich and poor together (v1-2)*. His message must be important if everyone needs to listen.

Those who trust in their wealth and boast in the multitude of their riches, none of them can by any means redeem his brother (v6-7).

Wealth may take us far in this life, but when death intervenes we take nothing with us. The restoration of our lives is beyond all human power.

It seems a dismal view, but the writer has a resounding shout of victory – *God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave (v15)*. How will He do that? Through the offer of salvation, God offers something greater than material things. He alone can destroy the power of the grave, but the Psalmist continues: *A man who is in honour, yet does not understand is like the beasts that perish (v20)*.

So the truth for us is that we should see that any wealth or possessions which we may have are a blessing from God. These can be a real benefit to others or ourselves when used wisely. However, it is God alone who can bring us out of the grave and raise us from the dead on the day of resurrection.



The Right Attitude

Agur, the enigmatic writer in Proverbs chapter 30, has wise words when he says, *Give me neither poverty nor riches (v8)*. He preferred moderation over extremes. Earlier in Proverbs, Solomon gives good advice on where we should place our confidence and how we should live: *He who trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like foliage (11:28)*. If only we could get the balance right in our lives, trusting in God like the righteous, and so flourishing. Solomon continues his thoughts later in Proverbs noting with some irony that, *Riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away like an eagle to heaven (Proverbs 23:5)*.

Now we listen to the Saviour as the master teacher. In Luke 12, Jesus speaks of a farmer who had done so well that he decided to build bigger barns to fill with his new crop. He said to himself:

“You have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry” (v19).

There was no recognition that God had blessed his crop with fine weather, and given him life and vigour to carry on his work. In verse 20 Jesus continues to tell us that God said to the man:

“Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?”

The man’s riches were powerless in the face of his mortality. His wealth is assumed to have come innocently, but it couldn’t save his life. As Jesus concluded in verse 21:

“So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”



In contrast the apostle Paul was careful to remember the poor when on his missionary journeys; indeed the Lord Jesus also said that the poor would always be with us. Nowhere in the gospel are we told that we can pray for riches, although they may be given to us.



Real Riches

Something far finer is offered to us – a life in the coming Kingdom of God: *Everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid (Micah 4:4).*

It will be a sublime time of peace such as we have never seen before, because everyone will follow God’s ways. *For the needy shall not always be forgotten; the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever (Psalm 9:18).*

To the oppressed of the world the psalmist continues our theme and says: *For he will deliver the needy when he cries, the poor also, and him who has no helper (Psalm 72:12).*

The only way to be able to be part of that wonderful time is to follow the command of the Lord Jesus, when he said, *“He who believes and is baptised shall be saved” (Mark 16:16).* No wonder the apostle Peter commented *“Therefore, to you who believe, he is precious” (1 Peter 2:7).* No riches on earth can give us what the Lord offers with his gracious invitation. Do not hesitate, for time is flying and Christ WILL come again.

Ken Clark

More About the Revelation

In the last issue, our first section on the fascinating Book of Revelation began to explain how the book is structured and what it is about. We looked at the opening verses of the book and saw that the writer, the Apostle John, was being shown *things which must shortly take place (1:1)* and traced the unfolding plan of God through the first seven chapters and to about 312AD. In this article we take the next step as history unfolds and the Roman Empire comes under attack from external forces.

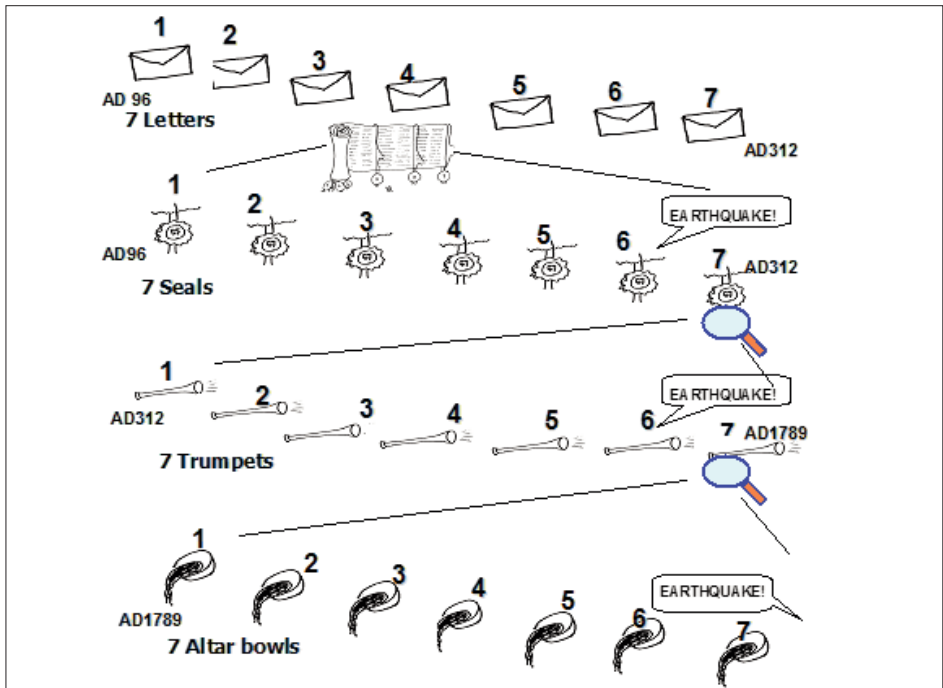
Western Rome Destroyed

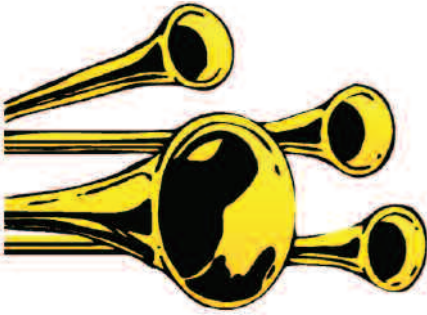
In the first section of the historical vision, seven seals were each broken

and dramatic events followed in the vision seen by the apostle John. During that period, a storm of winds had been held back from devastating the earth:

After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree (Revelation 7:1).

These winds represented barbarian invasions that were going to sweep the Empire and snuff out the political power of Rome in the West. Now, seven trumpets will sound one after the other, heralding the next stages in history as these barbarians attack:





- ❖ As the first trumpet sounds, hail and fire (as seen in the plagues God brought on Egypt through Moses) strike one third of the earth as the Goths sweep into Italy (Revelation 8:7).
- ❖ With the second trumpet, a burning mountain falls into the sea – the navy of the Vandals sinks the Romans from the Mediterranean (8:8–9).
- ❖ The third trumpet sees a meteor strike the region of rivers and streams, as Attila and the Huns crashed into the Alpine region (8:10–11).
- ❖ The fourth darkens the sun, moon and stars, which corresponds to Odoacer king of the Goths removing the last Emperor in the city of Rome, and crowning himself as king (8:12).

The Empire had three divisions in this period, and the Western third had now ceased to exist.

Eastern Rome Suffers

The Eastern side of the Empire, ruled from Constantinople, was not to escape the judgement of God. And so

the fifth and sixth trumpets continued to sound.

- ❖ The fifth trumpet blared, and a swarm of locusts emerged like smoke from a pit (this image links with Abraham's cliff-edge view of the destruction of Sodom in Genesis 19:28) and covered the face of the earth. The star that led them was Mohammed, and his followers were to overpower the Mediterranean region for three hundred years (Revelation 9:1–12).
- ❖ Trumpet six sees a huge force of cavalry race across the earth, as the Turks in turn subdue the Eastern Empire. In May 1453 they take Constantinople, and the Roman Empire comes to an end (9:13–21).

The sixth trumpet continues to reverberate for some time. Revelation chapter 10 has a vision that was kept sealed up, but in chapter 11, John sees two 'witnesses' speak out *'in sackcloth'* against the evils of their time.

These men are linked with Moses, who turned the rivers of Egypt to blood, and Elijah, who caused it not to rain. These two great prophets from the Old Testament each had to stand up and witness for God to evil, godless rulers in their own day.

By the time these witnesses were in action, the Christian church itself had become corrupt, and those who protested risked their lives. The witnesses continued to preach for 1260 years (in Bible chronology a day stands for a year) but were eventually extinguished. This period would take us to the darkness that fell upon

Europe at the time of the historic Massacre of St Bartholomew in 1572AD.

This in turn was only relieved by another great earthquake (Revelation 11:13), in which once more John sees a drastic change of rulership. This lines up with the French Revolution in AD 1789, which restored freedom of speech, overthrowing the total control of the church and kings over men's lives, first in France and then spreading to the rest of the world.

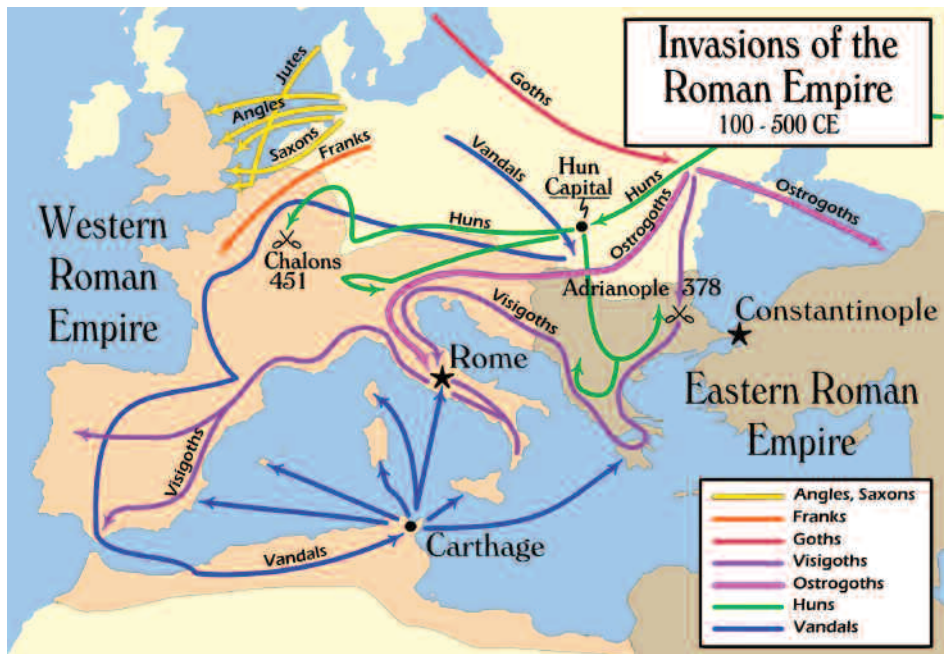
In Revelation 11:15 we eventually come to the Seventh (and final) Trumpet:

Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever".

The kingdom of God is announced because all of the prophecy in Revelation and the history it describes, is God's plan leading to that kingdom.

However, this does not mean that the end has come and God's plan is complete, for there is more history to follow. The kingdom will not actually be established until the last saint (believer set aside for God) has been called by Him. In fact men and women from all over the world are still responding to the Gospel and being baptised today. At this point in the Revelation, the narrative of the drama goes back in time, like a novel, to look at what has been happening on the religious front while all these political changes have come and gone.

David M Pearce
To be continued



Jerusalem - the Capital of God's Kingdom

Jesus said to his disciples, *"I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King"* (Matthew 5:34–5). What did he mean by this?

Old Testament Jerusalem

If we go back to Genesis and read the story of Abraham, we find the great promises that God made to him. God promised that Abraham would have many descendants; that he would possess the land we call 'Israel'; and that one of his descendants would bring blessing to all mankind. This is a short summary of what God said to Abraham in Genesis 12:1–3; 15:4–7 and 22:15–18; it is well worth reading these verses. Genesis chapter 22 tells us that Abraham had such faith that he was even willing to sacrifice his son Isaac to God, although at the last moment God's angel stopped him. This happened on Mount Moriah, which is the place where Jerusalem was built many years later.

A thousand years later King David and then his son Solomon lived and reigned over a kingdom where the laws were God's laws, so that for a time it was actually described as 'the Kingdom of the Lord' (see 1 Chronicles 28:5). Jerusalem was the capital of this kingdom. 400 years later, the city was destroyed by the Babylonians because most of the Jews disobeyed

God's laws, but God spoke through the Old Testament prophets and reassured everyone that in time to come David's kingdom would be restored. Here are some promises God made in Amos 9:11–15:

"On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name," says the Lord who does this thing...

"I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them," says the Lord your God.

Jesus, the Great King

Before Jesus was born, the angel promised his mother that *"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 1:32–3).

Isaiah chapter 2 shows us that the kingdom ruled from Jerusalem will be worldwide:

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths."

For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. O house of Jacob, come and let us walk In the light of the LORD." (Isaiah 2:2-5).

The prophet Micah prophesied at the same time as Isaiah and gives a very similar promise. Please also take a look at Micah chapter 4, which is a parallel to Isaiah 2. Micah adds the lovely picture of everyone sitting under their vine and fig tree, and no-one making them afraid.

Fulfilment in Our Time

These promises are beginning to be fulfilled in our own time. The Jews have suffered terribly for nearly two thousand years, and many still do. Even today very few of them accept Jesus as their Messiah, but God has allowed them to rebuild a state in the land of Israel. They still have many painful experiences ahead, including invasion



and defeat: see for instance Ezekiel 38:1-15 and Zechariah 14:1-2. However, we can be sure that all of God's promises will be fulfilled, and that Jesus will be established as king in Jerusalem.

It is true that most nations will not hand their power to Jesus willingly. It will take the terrible events summed up in the Bible word 'Armageddon' (see Revelation 16:16) to persuade them. Eventually the announcement will be made that *"The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" (Revelation 11:15).*

In that wonderful time, we are told clearly that Jerusalem will be established as the capital not just of Israel, but of the world:

Then everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles (Zechariah 14:16).

The fulfilment of God's long-term plan for the earth is within sight!

John Woodall

The Appeal of Jesus

It is easy to become anxious about the problems of the modern world. We can however take great comfort from the fact that the power of Jesus Christ, who called men and women nearly 2000 years ago, is still effective today.

The preaching of the gospel by Jesus' followers in the first century led to a revolution in how people thought and lived. What was the reason for such mighty changes? The explanation is contained in the gospel records about his work and mission, where we find that the message of Jesus, which was then carried further afield by his followers, the apostles, met a very real human need.

Men and women have the same needs today and the message of Jesus can satisfy them now as in the first century. There are the same questions on essential things today as there were so long ago; for men and women do not change. What was there about Jesus that drew men and women to him when he moved about among them?

Local Fame

The records that we have of the life of Jesus are almost entirely devoted to the 3½ years of his public work, with emphasis on the closing days which led to his crucifixion. Most of his ministry was spent in journeying from place to place preaching and healing. Both his message and his miracles created tremendous enthusiasm; the whole province of Galilee rang with excited talk about the new preacher. Crowds followed him from place to place, pressing around the houses where he



Galilee at dusk

stayed, and sometimes leaving him little time for rest or food. Numbers were once so great that he got into a boat and used it as a platform from which to address the crowds on the shore. The *"fame of him spread everywhere"*, and Mark describes how the whole country was moved:

And a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard how many things he was doing, came to him" (Mark 3:7-8).

What is the reason for this widespread interest in Jesus? Without doubt his miracles played a great part. So many were healed throughout the land and we can understand how eagerly those who were sick or whose loved ones were suffering would seek him out. The miracles had even greater significance however; they proved Jesus' claims that God was with him and also illustrated that his work was to bring healing to men and women in an even deeper sense – to heal their minds and hearts and save them from sin.

Personal Appeal

Besides his great deeds, there was a great attractiveness in the man himself. He showed a spirit of kindness and helpfulness to all; he was moved with compassion for the crowd. He cared for men and women and they were drawn to him. He was not like the Rabbis of his day, aloof and unapproachable: women would bring their children to him and he blessed them; in his presence sinners felt their sinfulness and sought to reform; those in sorrow sought him for solace and help.

They marvelled, says Luke, *at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth (Luke 4:22). Grace is poured upon your lips*, wrote the Psalmist (Psalm 45:2); and the grace and appeal of Jesus has been an abiding and sweetening thing in human life. As we read his words we can feel their charm.

Foretold in the Old Testament

One Sabbath in the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus was handed the Old Testament scroll. He read words written some 700 years previously by the prophet Isaiah which truly described him and his mission:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has



sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18–19).

There were, and still are, many poor, broken-hearted, bruised, captive, blind and deaf. Yet there are many more who are blind to life's full meaning, than there are who need help to cross the road. More are deaf to divine instruction than cannot hear human voices. More are captive in the slavery of sin and of death than are captives due to war or oppression. Jesus declared he had a healing work to do; that he is the physician to men. But the need for his help must be felt. The patient must recognise that he or she needs a cure.

"Come to Me"

Those who were self-righteous and self-sufficient found fault with him because he cared for the ordinary men and women and cheered them with his message. With a delicate but searching irony Jesus said,

"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Mark 2:17).

Sin is like sickness, and in healing physical illnesses and disabilities Jesus showed that he was sent to be a healer of the deeper affliction - of sin. He never minced his words in his teaching concerning sin and righteousness; he spoke plainly yet with appeal. He rejoiced that while men who are wise and intelligent in their own opinion did not respond to his call, yet

those with sincere and honest hearts and childlike trust heard him gladly.

“Come to me”, he said, “all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30).

He invites men and women to come to him, to learn from him. In doing so, we enable him to share our burdens, and to give comfort to hearts and shoulders that carry the load of life’s cares.

The same spirit breathes through many of his sayings; he spoke of himself as the Shepherd seeking out the lost, and as the sower casting the good news of God’s kingdom into

men’s hearts. When his friends were in peril he told them, *“Be not afraid”*; and in the most difficult of circumstances for himself and his followers he could say, *“Be of good cheer”*. His attitude to men and women might be summed up in the words:

When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd (Matthew 9:36).

That compassion is there still today, for all who will come to him.

John Carter

*From ‘The Call Of Christ: His Offer Of
Life Beyond The Grave’*

“Learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart”

The wondrous son of God was born to be King of the earth
Yet never lived in a palace nor had a kingly birth.
He never dressed in costly robes, jewels or gold at all
Nor dined with the rich and famous in castles or sparkling halls.

He walked among the poor and lame, had nowhere to lay his head,
He had no great possessions, it was a poor man’s life he led.
God promised His only son the highest honour of all
Yet by divine design, he was born in a lowly stall.

We see just how God works in His wondrous ways.
To the simple and lowly in heart He will look with praise.
The proud have no place in the things of God, it isn’t how to be,
The Son of God was lowly in heart — he wants the same of you and me.

Peggy Rawson

The Power of Baptism

All of us stand in awe at the miracle of life. Consider the miracle of a living human being: from the union of two cells, without consciousness, resulting first in a laughing baby, then in an innocent child beholding the world in wonder. The child matures, is educated, becomes independent, develops a character, good or bad. He or she experiences the triumphs, the joys and the sorrows of life.

Yes, life is a miracle. But in the ultimate sense, life is a tragedy, in the sense that it is imperfect, and the wisdom and perspective of old age is marred by disease, pain, suffering, and ultimately death. These are depressing thoughts until we recognize that God who created life is capable of creating a truly miraculous, perfect, unending life.

New Life

Paul explains in Galatians 3:26–29:

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Baptism is connected directly to the principle of resurrection and to a new life. Paul explains in Romans:

Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we

were buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of his death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of his resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin (Romans 6:3–7).

Jesus Christ was born, lived, died and was raised to a new and perfect life, all seen by eyewitnesses. God has promised that He will do this for us. But He makes some simple conditions: we must have faith that He will do what He has promised, and we must be baptised. Baptism is a humbling act; by it we acknowledge we are powerless to help ourselves, that we need God to help us.

There is a deeper symbolism here. We become related to Christ. We become the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For by being baptized into Christ, we have put on Christ. Thus by baptism we symbolically 'die' with Christ, and on coming out of the water we are 'raised' with him, becoming a 'new creation'. Baptism is a foretelling in symbol of what will happen to baptized believers: raised again to everlasting life when Jesus returns.

Leroy Canoles Jr

*from: www.thepreachersays.com
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What's in a Name?

Stephen was a precious child with a special name. He was named after Dr Stephens who had helped to save his life at birth. Stephen's parents doted on him and were offended if anyone shortened his name, which became a problem as he grew up and his friends called him 'Steve'. Their sensitivity caused a few chuckles! Names can be really important. By comparison, it has become so common nowadays to use the name of Jesus when emotions are raised, that many people no longer realise that they are doing it. However, it is a very serious matter and one of which we need to be aware.

Bible Names

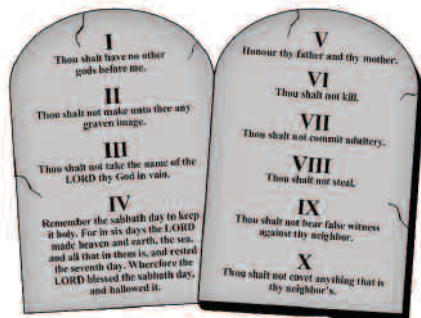
Stephen was named after a doctor. In the Bible many names have special meanings. For example, God changed the name of Abram, meaning 'exalted father', to Abraham, meaning 'father of a multitude' (Genesis 17:5). He also changed the name of Jacob, meaning 'supplanter' or 'usurper', to the name Israel, meaning 'prince with God' (Genesis 32:28).

The Name of God

Even more importantly, in the Hebrew Bible God is referred to by several different names and they all reflect His character and purpose with us. An important example is when Moses asked to see God's glory. God said that He would make all His goodness pass before Moses and proclaim the name of the LORD (Hebrew: 'Yahweh') before him (Exodus 33:18-19). God then passed before Moses and proclaimed:

"The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation" (Exodus 34:6-7).

So the Jews were commanded to revere the name of God, and the third of the ten commandments is *"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain"* (Exodus 20:7).



Consequently many of the psalms talk about the glory of God's name, and of men giving glory to His holy name, for example: *"Give unto the LORD, O you mighty ones, Give unto the LORD glory and strength. Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name; Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness"* (Psalm 29:1-2). See also Psalms 34:3, 111:9 and 148:13.

People call on the name of the Lord (Psalm 99:6), they trust in it (Psalm

9:10), it is associated with forgiveness (Psalm 25:11; 54:1) and God does wonderful things because of His name (Psalm 23:3; 31:3; 79:9).

“But I acted for My Name’s sake, that it should not be profaned among the Gentiles...” (Ezekiel 20:9; and also Ezekiel 20:14, 22, 44; 36:22).

Jesus’ Name is Very Special

Jesus’ name was chosen by God as announced to Mary by the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:31, 2:21). The name Jesus means ‘Saviour’ and this was explained to his step-father Joseph. *“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).* Just as God’s name is special, so is the name of Jesus.

Believing in the name of Jesus allows human beings to become ‘children of God’ (John 1:12), in fact we are condemned if we do not believe in his name. Jesus said *“He who believes in him is not condemned, but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18).*

We can have eternal life if we do believe in Jesus’ name: *“...that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31).*

People who are converted are described as believing in Jesus’ name (John 2:23) and are baptised into the name of Jesus (Acts 19:5). It is the only name under heaven by which we can be saved (Acts 4:12). The apostles were able to do miracles using the name of Jesus (Acts 3:16), and asked prayers in his name (John 14:13–14).

Preaching the gospel was described as bearing Jesus’ name (Acts 9:15) and Paul suffered for the sake of Jesus’ name (Acts 9:16) while others risked their lives for it (Acts 15:26).

Our Responsibility

Without doubt the names of God and Jesus are holy and most certainly not to be banded around or used as swear words. Jesus asked *“Father glorify Your name” (John 12:28).* The name ‘Jesus’ declares the supreme mercy of God in offering us salvation. It is awful that in these days of ‘political correctness’ society is so careful about how people are described but pays little or no regard to the holy names of God and Jesus. We do well to take heed, because the inspired apostle Paul wrote:

Therefore God also has highly exalted him and given him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9–11).

Anna Hart

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