

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured **Articles**

Don't Be Left Behind! (p.3)

The Bible and Worry (p.12)

Earthquake, Wind and Fire! (p.16)

A monthly magazine written and 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 mankind; 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.

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Don't Be Left Behind!

Have you ever been that person? Out of breath, sweating, burdened with too many bags, almost collapsing in the carriage; nobody likes to miss a train! Those who travel regularly will often have seen this, hopefully with some sympathy...



Perhaps you have come across the expression 'FOMO', which stands for 'Fear of Missing Out'. It is used in especially social media and about events, and reflects the fact that no one likes being excluded or left behind. In everyday life, we usually like to be with our friends and would be disappointed if we were not included.

But when Jesus returns, that is what could happen. God has set a date when he will judge the world. After that point, our opportunity to be part of His plan to transform the world will be gone.

[God] has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the

man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising him from the dead (Acts 17:31).

Deadlines

We may ask if this can be true. Would a loving God tell men and women that they can no longer be part of His family, part of His plan for the world? The answer is 'yes'.

God is loving and patient, but He is also true to His word. He will not tolerate people who constantly refuse His offer of salvation. He wants us to be saved from sin and its consequence – death. But if we don't want that, it is obvious what will happen.

One example of this is Old Testament Israel, who were chosen by God but repeatedly disobeyed Him. After hundreds of years of rejecting His message, He had them taken into captivity. This was described with these chilling words:

The LORD God of their fathers sent warnings to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till there was no remedy (2 Chronicles 36:15–16).

Jesus quoted two examples from the Old Testament to illustrate exactly this point.

Noah tried to teach people about God (see 2 Peter 2:5) to warn them about the coming flood. They ignored him and his message, getting on with their lives, until it was too late:

*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** (Luke 17:26–27).*

Lot was Abraham's nephew, living in the very immoral city of Sodom. He too tried to live a godly life and was distressed by what he saw (see 2 Peter 2:8). Again, the people ignored the warnings:

*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** (v28–29).*

Jesus continued to say that it will be the same when he returns:

Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed (v30).

What Will Happen?

At the start of God's kingdom, Jesus will return to gather his followers, leaving the rest behind. Only those judged faithful will be granted eternal life and play a part in transforming the world to how God wants it to be.

Jesus gave this warning in the passage we have been looking at in Luke 17.

In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. Remember Lot's wife (v31–32).

The message is that we need to be ready for Jesus' return, as by then our opportunity to decide to follow him will have closed.

Lot's wife looked back at Sodom, longing to go back – and she died on the spot (see Genesis 19).

This means we need to decide now whether we want to be part of God's plan or not – when Jesus returns, it will be too late. In fact, the opportunity will also be gone when we die. To find out more, read the Bible to find out what you have to do to avoid being left behind.

We are left in no doubt: God has not forgotten His promise and He will send Jesus. The signs are that this will be soon, so let's not leave it too late.

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 (2 Peter 3:9).



Moses and Jesus

IN THE Old Testament there are many verses which take our thoughts to the Lord Jesus Christ. Some of these are direct prophecies, about his life and work. Others are more indirect 'echoes', such as the characters we are told about, the laws implemented by God, or specific events.

A good example of a Bible 'echo' is Moses, the Old Testament character who led God's people from slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land, and through whom God gave His Law. The Apostle Peter explained to the Jews of his day that Moses pointed towards Jesus in this way:

... Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said to the fathers, The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you... Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days (Acts 3:20–24).

In this speech made in Jerusalem, Peter is quoting from Deuteronomy 18:15–19 where God actually tells Moses in a prophecy that He will raise up a prophet like him. When Jesus carried out his miracles, the people who saw him realised that he was this great prophet:

Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world" (John 6:14).

Specific Roles

There are a number of roles which both Moses and Jesus carried out, which shows how Moses points forward to Jesus.

Both were mediators, which means someone who acts as an intermediary between the people and God. We read in Exodus 20:19 that the Israelites couldn't bear to hear the voice of God first hand, so Moses passed on the commandments and the Law from God to them. We have another description here:

It came to pass, when Moses entered the tabernacle, that the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the LORD talked with Moses. All the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the tabernacle door, and all the people rose and worshipped, each man in his tent door. So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend (Exodus 33:9–11).

We find a number of New Testament descriptions which reflect this role of Jesus:

For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5).

He is also mediator of a better covenant... established on better promises (Hebrews 8:6).

Both Moses and Jesus were priests, albeit they were different types. Moses belonged naturally to the priesthood because he was born into the priestly tribe of Levi. Jesus was from the tribe of Judah, but he is also described as a priest:

But he, because he continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood... For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens (Hebrews 7:24, 26).

Parallel Lives

The circumstances of Moses' and Jesus' births are interestingly comparable as well. In both cases, the parents came to understand that their children would be extraordinary. Both were saved from death by their parents and divine intervention.

In Egypt, Pharaoh had commanded that all Israelite boys be killed at birth; Moses' parents saved him by putting him in a basket at the edge of the river. God

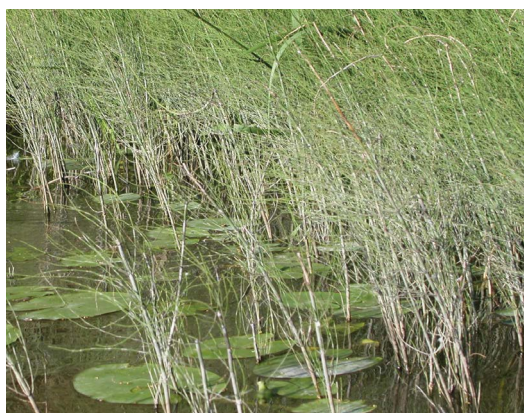
ensured that the princess found Moses and adopted him as her own (Exodus 2:1–10).

After Jesus was born, Herod killed all the young children in the area around Bethlehem. God warned Jesus' parents in a dream and so they were able to flee to Egypt until the danger to Jesus had passed (Matthew 2:13–21).

We don't know much about the first forty years of Moses' life in the palace, nor much detail of the following years he spent as a shepherd. We read little about Jesus' life before thirty. However, these time periods seem to have moulded their characters, developing the humility which would fit each to be a true servant of God – see Psalm 105:26 and Matthew 12:18. See how each man's character is described:

Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth (Numbers 12:3).

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 (Matthew 11:29).



Wanting to Help

Although Moses was raised like a prince, he never forgot who he was. His sympathies lay with his people and he wanted to deliver them from slavery.

[Moses] went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens (Exodus 2:11).

You make them rest from their labour! (5:5)

Jesus spoke in a very similar way about how he wants men and women to come to him, so that he can lift their spiritual or moral burdens:

Come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28).

Sadly, in both cases, they were initially rejected by those they came to save:

Who made you [Moses] a prince and a judge over us? (Exodus 2:14)

Let the LORD look on you and judge, because you have made us abhorrent in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us (5:21).

Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!” (17:4).

Then they took up stones to throw at him [Jesus] (John 8:59).

[The people] rose up and thrust him [Jesus] out of the city; and they led him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw him down over the cliff (Luke 4:29).

Pilate said to them, “What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” They all said to him, “Let him be crucified!” (Matthew 27:22).

Faithful Judges

When Israel was finally released from Egypt, a heavy burden of responsibility was placed on Moses’ shoulders in administering the law and interpreting it to the people. His father-in-law suggested a means whereby the burden could be

lightened, namely to choose good men to settle minor matters and leave Moses to communicate between God and the people. In the coming Kingdom of God, Jesus too will be a righteous judge:

With righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth (Isaiah 11:4).

The last similarity we’re going to consider is a character trait which Moses and Jesus have very strongly in common – their faithfulness. God said of Moses:

He is faithful in all My house (Numbers 12:7).

Jesus’ life was one long example of faithfulness. At the start of his ministry he submitted to baptism, and at the end he submitted to death on the cross. He didn’t deserve to die, but he was obedient to the purpose of God.

Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house (Hebrews 3:1–2).

The major difference between the two men is that Moses sinned, and Christ did not. Because of this sin, Moses was ultimately unable to lead the Israelites all the way into the land of promise, and Joshua had to finish the job.

Jesus Christ, however, is the greater Prophet, Priest and King. He is able to lead us to that promised kingdom, which is soon to come.

Laura Morgan

Perfection on Earth

GOD has promised a kingdom on earth where everyone will obey Him, as the angels now do in heaven (Daniel 7:13–14; Matthew 6:10). We are invited to try to obey Him now and to prepare for a place in this kingdom, over which Jesus will reign after his return to earth. However, several things have to happen before God's promise is fulfilled completely.

When Jesus Comes Back

When Jesus does come back there will be people in their graves awaiting resurrection. They will be raised from the dead. There will also be some still alive who know the Gospel. These will all stand together before his judgement seat, and the faithful among them – his true friends (John 15:14) – will be blessed with immortality (Matthew 25:34; 2 Corinthians 5:10). The others, judged unfaithful, will perish (Matthew 25:41–46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7–9).

Many who never knew the true Gospel will oppose Jesus, but he will subdue them (Daniel 2:44; Zechariah 14:1–4). People who survive this conflict will live under God's laws, ruled over by Jesus and his immortal friends (Matthew 19:28). They will have duties of worship, and they will be expertly taught the will and law of God (Isaiah 2:2–4). The earth will be transformed to a time of great plenty, prosperity and peace

(Psalm 72). These people will live to a great age but will still die (Isaiah 65:20).

The principle will be the same as it has always been. An everlasting place in the Kingdom of God exists where there is willing obedience to God's law. God will bless with immortality those who come humbly before Him, but He will not do this with those who refuse. Everyone in that period will have ample opportunity to serve God and to attain God's gift of immortality. Their judgment comes later, as we will see.

However, Paul said of Jesus: "*he must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet*" (1 Corinthians 15:25). So, Jesus will have enemies and not all will be perfect. During his reign the wonderful conditions will be such that the only temptation to revolt will come from people's minds. There is everything to be lost by rebelling against Jesus, but while there is still human nature, then rebellion will be attractive.

For example, some nations will be unwilling to go to worship and will need to be compelled (Zechariah 14:16–21). As always, only the penitent will repent. Only the teachable will learn. But all enemies must eventually be put under the feet of Jesus, before he finally hands over his completed work to the Father. At this stage, even death itself will be eradicated (1 Corinthians 15:54–55).

The Complete Fulfilment

What follows completes the purification of the earth. All the powers and effects of evil are abolished absolutely. Sin (disobedience to God) with all its consequences is removed completely. The book of Revelation is a book of symbol, but it gives a graphic picture of a second resurrection and judgement of the people who have lived in this phase of God's kingdom.

Following this is the end of all sin, temptation and death (Revelation 20:6–15). The Kingdom of God finally then enters utter perfection. There is nothing that can offend in God's kingdom. Jerusalem is no longer the name given to just one place in a wide earth: "*the city of the great king*" becomes the dwelling place of all the blessed, the name for an earth made perfect.

God is no longer a far-off being, Who sinners can only approach through priests and sacrifices. Now there are no more sinners, for "*the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them*". God's rule is no more in the slightest degree challenged, even by human unhappiness, for "*God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes*" (Revelation 21:2–4).

Those who have been 'born again', who have set their affections on heavenly rather than earthly things, who have accepted the difficulties of life which have helped shape their characters, will be made perfect in body and mind (Colossians 3:1–4).



A Hope for Us

Jesus promised that those accounted worthy to attain to that age will be "*like the angels*" (Luke 20:36). They will be immortal – with divine nature (Philippians 3:21; 2 Peter 1:4) – and so will obey God completely. Then, and only then, will Jesus hand over the kingdom to God and God will be "*all in all*" (1 Corinthians 15:24–28). The petition in the Lord's prayer will be fulfilled, and God's kingdom, power and glory will be forever (Matthew 6:13). Earth will be like heaven.

God is all-powerful, everywhere and He lives for ever. God's kingdom will have similar characteristics: nothing will be able to resist it, be outside it, or ever take its place. This is the mind-blowing hope of the Christian gospel: complete perfection on earth.

God's kingdom is at the core of the Gospel message and it is our choice right now whether we are to be part of it.

Alfred Norris

Concluded

Bible Reading

Follow this planner to read the Bible every day - and you will complete it!

JANUARY

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| 1 | Gen. 1, 2 | Psa. 1, 2 | Matt. 1, 2 |
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Worry

GOD describes Himself as a loving father and tells us that He cares deeply about the well-being of His children. Within His Word, the Bible, He has provided wise counsel to assist with problems that can compromise our spiritual well-being, such as worry, anxiety and depression.

However, if our struggles with these issues become severe enough to significantly affect our *mental* well-being (or ‘mental health’), it is important for us to recognise that the Bible probably won’t contain everything we need to get us out of trouble. This is because the Bible only claims to contain everything we need for our *spiritual* well-being – not everything we need for all other aspects of our existence.

If our mental health needs attention, the helpful teaching contained in the Bible can be used together with (not instead of) the help available to us in the modern world. This may include prescribed medication and/or psychological therapy. If we are trying to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, we must remember that this support does not take away our need for spiritual development and the Bible’s divine instruction.

The Problem of Worry

We are all familiar with worry, it is a natural human response to certain circumstances which arise in our lives. Whether it be about our health (physical, mental or spiritual); our family or friends; finances; the state of the world; the future; or whatever it may be, we all worry from time to time. Worry is such an important topic that Jesus referred to it frequently in his ministry. For example, he said:

Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?... Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing?... Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’... For your heavenly



*Father knows that you need all these things...
Therefore do not worry about tomorrow...
(Matthew 6:25–34).*

This section of the Lord's teaching is all about worrying – specifically worrying about food, drink and clothing. These are elsewhere described in the Bible as being “*the things which are needed for the body*” (James 2:16).

If anything is worth worrying about, surely it will be what is absolutely necessary to keep us alive? However, in relation to these fundamentals, Jesus gave the direct instruction ‘do not worry’ no fewer than three times in the verses quoted above. If worrying about food, drink and clothing is instructed against then surely this indicates to us that worrying is never good for our well-being?

This can be quite a sobering realisation, given the topics we are liable to worry about which are infinitely less important than these. But as worrying comes so naturally to us, how exactly are we to follow Jesus' instruction: ‘do not worry’?

Dealing with Worry

I am sure many of us would have liked it if Jesus provided step-by-step instructions regarding how to stop worrying. We may even find ourselves saying words to the effect of “I know Jesus said not to worry but he didn't say how!”

It is true that Jesus did not provide an all-encompassing formula to help us to stop worrying. What he did provide

is something far more profound and spiritually satisfying.

Recorded in Matthew 6, Jesus posed five questions concerning the act of worrying:

1. *Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?* (v25)
2. *Are you not of more value than [the birds]?* (v26)
3. *Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?* (v27)
4. *Why do you worry about clothing?* (v28)
5. *Will He not much more clothe you?* (v30)

Perspective

The first question invites Jesus' listeners to put things into perspective. It can be very helpful for us to remember that life is about so much more than whatever it is we are worrying about.

The life Jesus preached was ultimately about knowing God and being part of His eternal plan. This is more important even than those fundamental ‘things which are needed for the body’, and therefore certainly more important than anything else we may worry about.

God's Care

Questions (2), (4) and (5) direct our attention to God's creation, preceded respectively with:

Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them... (v26),



Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven... (v28–30).

Jesus was teaching that God values His children even more than other aspects of His creation such as birds, flowers and grass. If He values animals and plants by giving them everything they need to survive, we have every reason to believe that God will provide for us too. We can remind ourselves of this when we take the time to observe God's creation.

Why Worry?

The third question invites us to consider what we actually gain from worrying. When we do this, we will realise we don't actually gain anything from worrying. In most cases it would be pretty pointless to have our height increased or our life extended by one hour, but we can't even manage this by worrying!

Why all the questions? Effective teaching comes in different forms. Jesus, being the perfect teacher, made use of lots of different teaching techniques in his ministry.

By posing questions, he invited his listeners to evaluate the beliefs and opinions they already held, in this case about worrying, and to arrive at new conclusions. This technique has been used for centuries and is usually far more effective than just telling people what to do.

When we are struggling with worry, we can ask ourselves, 'What am I gaining from worrying? Can I make any real difference to my life by worrying?' By reminding ourselves that we gain nothing from worrying, it becomes much easier to stop.

The Antidote

Finally, Jesus taught two very effective ways to counteract worry. Firstly, to focus on the things of God, His kingdom, His plan and His character. Let this replace all those fruitless worries and become our positive energy.

Secondly, focus on one day at a time. This is very good for our spiritual well-being as every single day we will come up against unspiritual thoughts and situations. Do not be overwhelmed by worrying about what we will come up against tomorrow, next week, or next year.

Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble (v33–34).

Stephen Blake

Ruth

THIS is the record of the Moabitess who turned to Israel's God and became an ancestor of Jesus Christ!

Time of the Judges

The events in this lovely little book, only four chapters long, took place in the time of the Judges (see Ruth 1:1); it forms a link between the days when *"there was no king in Israel"* (*Judges 21:25*) and the time of king David, who sat on the throne of the LORD in Jerusalem.

The story starts in Moab: Naomi and her husband Elimelech had moved there, seeking relief from the famine in Judea. Elimelech died in Moab and their two sons also died, leaving Naomi with her daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth. Orpah chose to stay in Moab, but – when the famine was over – Ruth accompanied Naomi back to Judea.

Ruth the Moabitess learned from Naomi about the God of Israel, in Whom she came to trust (Ruth 2:12). In Bethlehem, Naomi's home town, a close relation, Boaz, showed kindness to them both.

Eventually he married Ruth and the happy result was the birth of a son, Obed, who was the grandfather of king David. Some 1,000 years later, Mary the mother of Jesus was born of this family line.

God's Harvest

Ruth came to Bethlehem (the 'house of bread'!) at the time of barley harvest. At first she was allowed to glean corn dropped in the field which belonged to Boaz. Later she was invited to share the meals he provided for his servants.

God is preparing a people for His coming kingdom, where believers from all down the ages will eat and drink with Jesus, the first-fruits of that final harvest! (Luke 22:30; 1 Corinthians 15:23).

Norman Owen

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Some interesting links with other parts of the Bible

Ruth 1:6 – see Exodus 4:31 and Luke 1:68.

Ruth 2:12 – see Psalm 17:8 and Matthew 23:37.

Ruth 4:17–22 – see Matthew 1:3–6 and Luke 1:30–32; 3:31–33.



Earthquake, Wind and Fire!

ELIJAH must have been elated. The Lord God had been vindicated, the prophets of Baal defeated, and the rain had returned. It was a moment to savour, and would have been, had it not been for Queen Jezebel. Ahab had inevitably told her all that had happened, and how all her prophets had been executed. Not surprisingly she was incensed, and dangerous! She sent Elijah a message, which was simple and direct. It was an undisguised death threat:

So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time (1 Kings 19:2).

Feeling Defeated

Elijah was devastated. He might have thought that whatever Jezebel could threaten, the Lord God would protect him. After all, He already had done so for over three years whilst Ahab had searched desperately for him. He was mentally exhausted, and he was certainly not thinking as rationally as he might.

He simply fled for his life, travelling into the kingdom of Judah and to Beersheba, which was in the far south of the land. There he left his servant, and then he travelled on into the wilderness for another day. There his energy ran out, and he sat down

under a juniper (or broom) tree and prayed to God to let him die.

It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers! (v4).

Presumably this referred back to how the people of Israel disobeyed God and rejected His messengers ever since their Exodus journey. Otherwise Elijah would not be having to contend with this wicked woman who was married to Israel's king.

Exhausted by all his journeys, Elijah lay down under the tree and slept.



God's Care in Action

He was awakened by an angel touching him. *“Arise and eat.”* There, just by his head was a cake, possibly like a small loaf of bread, freshly baked, and a jar of water. He did as he was told, ate the food, and drank the water, then lay down again to sleep. Later the angel returned with a similar command. *“Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you.”* There was another meal like the first one.



Fortified by those two meals, Elijah travelled forty days and nights towards Horeb, described as the mountain of God. It was there that God had given Moses the tablets of stone on which the Ten Commandments had been inscribed. Moses had later reminded the people of Israel of some of the things which had happened there:

Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire (Deuteronomy 4:15).

For this reason, in the minds of the people of Israel, Horeb would forever be associated with demonstrations of God's will and power.

Did Elijah feel that he too might see another manifestation of the power of God? Perhaps he believed that there would be another convincing reminder that the God he served was the God who could consume a sacrifice with fire as He had done on Carmel?

The prophet went onwards relentlessly until he reached Horeb. We are not even sure whether he had been told to go there or had simply decided this for himself. When he arrived, he found a cave for shelter and spent the night there.



God's Power in Action

The next morning, the word of God spoke to him. *“What are you doing here, Elijah?”* (v9). Is there a hint of reproof there? Is it implied that really the Lord God had sent him back to the land of Israel, and that

God still had work for him to do there? It was the trigger for all of Elijah's pent-up emotion to come tumbling out.

I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life (v10).

This shows how lonely he felt, despite, with God's help, having begun to remedy some of those problems. But he was not alone: Obadiah had told him about the prophets hidden in two caves. It was only that one evil woman who sought his life, although she was powerful.

Like Elijah, we all can allow our perspectives to become warped, to get things out of balance, to forget part of the story.

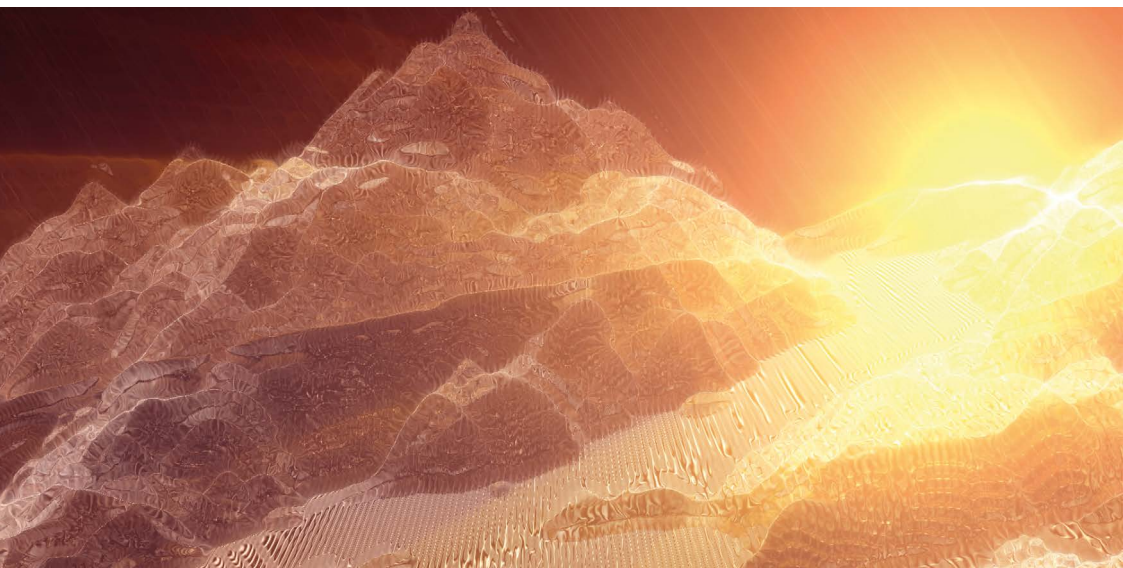
The Lord God knew this and He was going to make Elijah see more clearly once more. It was time to go out of the cave, stand on

the mountain before the Lord, and watch and listen.

Behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice (v11-12).

Three tremendous demonstrations of the power of God, of his awe-inspiring strength, but the God who had made a covenant with Israel was in none of those.

Then came a fourth example. The translators seem to have difficulty putting the original Hebrew into English. A literal translation would be "a voice still small", which others have rendered as "the sound of a soft breath", or "the sound of a low whisper". It must have been the sort of soft sound



which you could so easily miss if you did not listen carefully. Elijah recognized that this was the voice of God speaking to him.

Back to the Mission!

So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, “*What are you doing here, Elijah?*” (v13).

Once more Elijah repeated his complaint. This time, he was given three tasks: to anoint Hazael as king over Syria; Jehu, son of Nimshi, as king of Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat to be prophet in place of Elijah himself. He would not actually finish his work for God just yet, but the burden would now be shared.

The Lord God reminded him that there were 7000 still in Israel who had not bowed to Baal. He was not on his own.

Elijah began his return, making first for Abel Meholah, the home of Elisha’s parents. The exact location of this place is now unknown, but Elijah had no problem finding Elisha, who was busy ploughing. There were twelve yoke of oxen, which maybe is an indicator that Elisha’s family was wealthy. Elisha himself was working with the twelfth pair.

Elijah simply threw his mantle on to him, the meaning being clear: that Elisha was to take over when Elijah’s time came to give up. Elisha pleaded to be allowed to go and kiss his parents, for which he received a rather dismissive reply. However, Elisha



demonstrated his commitment to God’s work when he killed the two oxen and boiled their meat, using the yokes and other equipment as fuel. The meat was distributed to the people of the town and Elisha left home to become Elijah’s servant. Elijah knew he was no longer on his own.

Mark Sheppard



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