

# Glad Tidings

*Of The Kingdom Of God*



## Featured **Articles**

How to Be a Saint (p. 3)








“Religion Causes Wars!” (p. 13)

The King of Israel (p. 17)

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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# How to Be a Saint

I ONCE KNEW a man who ran a second-hand bookshop. He loved books and would read anything that came into the shop. So when someone brought in a Bible he sat down to read it, even though he was an ardent atheist.

Next time he saw me he wanted a word: “Tell me about David.”

“King of Israel,” I said. “A great man. The Bible calls him a ‘man after God’s own heart’” (1 Samuel 13:14).

“Aha!” he said. “Do you know what David did to Uriah?” (He’d been reading 2 Samuel 11 and 12.) “Seduced the guy’s wife, and then had him killed to cover it up! And you say he was a great man?”



*David watching Bathsheba, Uriah’s wife*

I tried to explain how this shows that even someone as great as David can fail and commit a horrible crime, which shows that even the best of us fail at times; that David

repented, and God forgave him, and this shows God will forgive even something as horrific as David’s sin. But he wasn’t interested. “Listen mate,” he said, “if your God can like a man like that, I don’t want anything to do with your God!”

Reflecting on this afterwards I thought of the words of the prophet Nathan, whom God sent to confront David with his crime. He said, “*By this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme*” (2 Samuel 12:14). Certainly that was true at the time—the crime was evidently not as well hidden as David had hoped, and there would have been people who would have been quick to point out what had been done by this man who claimed to serve God. And here, 3,000 years later, Nathan’s words had proved true again!

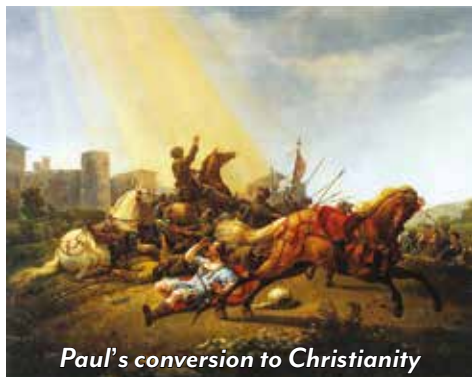
## Saint David

But David was a great man of faith, and we know he will be judged worthy to be in the Kingdom of God (Hebrews 11:32). My friend had failed to appreciate two essential things about God—first, He is absolutely good. In His eyes we are all of us ‘sinners’ (failures), even the best of us, whether we like to admit it or not. And second, He is supremely merciful. There is nothing we can do that is so bad that He will not forgive us for it.

All we have to do is accept the forgiveness He offers on His terms. These are the terms: *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16)*. Jesus Christ gave his life as a sacrifice and God raised him to life again. If we respond to Jesus’ sacrifice by giving our lives to him, we embark on a new life as a child of God. We still fail, however hard we try, but we know that God will always forgive. And we look forward to eternal, glorious, sinless life in His Kingdom (1 Thessalonians 4:15–18).

## Saint Paul

The Apostle Paul was keenly aware of his own inadequacy and his need for mercy. In his letter to Timothy he says, *“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief” (1 Timothy 1:15)*. He regarded himself as the chief of sinners—why? Because he had a finely tuned conscience which made him aware that he constantly fell short of the goodness of



*Paul's conversion to Christianity*

God. And also because he never forgot how before his conversion he had hounded and persecuted Christians.

David is sometimes referred to as ‘Saint David’, and Paul as ‘Saint Paul’. In view of the awful things they each did you may find this surprising. This is because there is a common idea that a ‘saint’ is someone who is especially virtuous. That idea is wrong.

## What Is a Saint?

The Bible has a lot to say about saints. In the Old Testament the word is usually used of the nation of Israel (for example Psalm 50:5), and in the New Testament it’s generally used of all members of Christian congregations (for example Romans 1:7). Think about that: if you’re a follower of Christ, you are a saint.

The word ‘saint’ means ‘holy one’. What does that mean? ‘Holy’ means ‘set apart’, ‘devoted to God’, ‘separate from defilement’. A saint is someone who has made the decision to devote themselves to God.

It is a serious undertaking, and it means striving for the very highest standard. This is how the Apostle Peter puts it: *“As He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy’” (1 Peter 1:15–16)*. But it is not beyond anybody’s reach.

God knows that we fail, and He is merciful. A saint is not someone who is perfect, it’s someone who is trying to be perfect. God wants you to be a saint!

# Being Christlike

TO BE A FOLLOWER of Christ is to try to be like him. In the Apostle Paul's words, it is to put on Christ like a garment: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27). It is to take off your old way of life, and put on a new one. In another of Paul's letters he says "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts" (Romans 13:14).



The Christian is a new person, a 'new creation' (2 Corinthians 5:17), changing their ways of thinking and living to match Christ's requirements of his disciples.

## The First Step

The Christian life starts with baptism—immersion in water. This is crucial. Paul explains that baptism is a symbollic way of putting our old way of life to death and giving birth to a new way of life:

*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 (Romans 6:3–6).*

To become Christlike, at the very start, it is essential we have faith in Christ as the one who died for the forgiveness of our sins. Paul again: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

## The New Life

Time and again in his letters Paul returns to this theme of the ‘new life’. It was a fundamental part of his preaching—especially to Gentile converts who had come from a background of idol-worship with all the immorality that often involved. It was imperative he got the message across that they had to change their way of life.

This is how he puts it in his letter to the Corinthians: *“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1)*. He tried hard to achieve a Christlike mind, and he desired the same of all his fellow disciples. *“For ‘who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?’ But we have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16)*. To this end Paul gives much practical advice in his letters on how this ‘mind of Christ’ can be achieved.

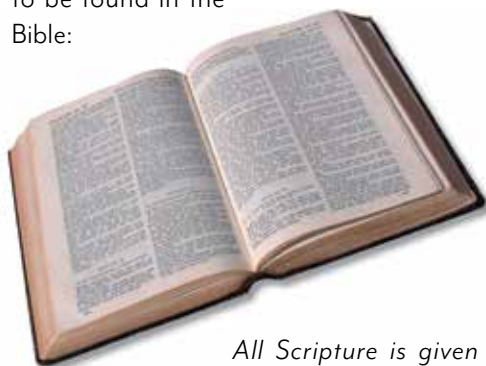


For example he urges the Colossians to set their hearts on the things of God and the things of His Kingdom which is to come:

*If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting*

*at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory (Colossians 3:1–4).*

What are ‘those things which are above’? Of course, they’re to be found in the Bible:



*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16–17).*

## The Words of Christ

Jesus Christ said *“If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15)*. One of the foremost commandments was this: *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (John 13:34)*. Christ himself always put the welfare of others before his own, and his followers should do likewise.

In what is sometimes called the ‘Sermon on the Mount’, which is recorded in Matthew



chapters 5–7, Jesus told his disciples: “For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20). This must have been a bewildering comment because the scribes and Pharisees, the religious leaders of the day, were thought to be the epitome of righteousness. Christ dismissed them as “whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness” (Matthew 23:27). In other words, they put on a good outward show of piety and righteousness but it was only skin deep: “Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness” (v. 28).

Disciples of Christ must not be like this. Their aim in life is to be like him both inwardly and outwardly. This is a challenge to all of us, because as Paul said, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Despite their weakness and their inherent tendency to sin, God offers the means of forgiveness and redemption through the saving work of His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. His followers can look to the mercy and the grace of God, their heavenly Father, “being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 3:24).

For this they praise God and are deeply thankful. Even when they fail, they can pick themselves up and ask for forgiveness, and they are cleansed by the precious blood

of Christ which he shed for them. Then they go on renewed and refreshed as they journey towards God’s Kingdom, seeking always to be more faithful and more Christlike, as he would have them be.

## Grahame A Cooper

“Whoever desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

Jesus Christ—Mark 8:34–38

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# Hosea



Hosea with his wife Gomer (from an illuminated Bible)

THIS IS A prophecy about God's love for His people Israel. Through the sad story of his own miserable marriage, Hosea shows his people how they have been like an unfaithful wife in their dealings with God.

## Israel's Failure

Hosea had to warn Israel, especially the Northern Kingdom termed 'Ephraim', that God would punish her because of her disobedience.

In this book, several symbols describe Israel's failure as God's 'wife':

- Her goodness had disappeared—like a 'morning cloud' (6:4);
- Like a 'silly dove', she had turned first to Assyria, then to Egypt, for help—instead of to God (7:11);
- She had once been like 'grapes in the wilderness', when God first took her (9:10); now she had become like a barren fig tree (9:16) (compare Mark 11:13 and Luke 21:29-31);

- She would now have to plough a lone furrow, without God (10:11).

Israel, instead of trusting in God, had tried to depend on alliances with other nations: "*Ephraim has mixed himself among the peoples... aliens have devoured his strength... they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria... they did not cry out to Me with their heart*" (7:8-14).

## Israel's Restoration

Hosea was eventually reconciled with his wife, and this is presented as a picture of God's future reconciliation with His people:

*For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim. Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days (3:4-5).*

## Norman Owen

*By kind permission of 'The Christadelphian'*

### Some interesting links with other parts of the Bible

- ◆ Hosea 1:11—see Ezekiel 34:23, 24.
- ◆ Hosea 11:1—see Matthew 2:15.
- ◆ Hosea 13:14—see 1 Corinthians 15:54, 55.



# Jesus in the Book of Acts

*This is the tenth and final article in a series in which we examine this fascinating Bible book. You can catch up with the previous articles at [www.gladtidingsmagazine.org](http://www.gladtidingsmagazine.org).*

JESUS IS THE central figure of Christianity, and he appears throughout the whole of the Bible, both in the Old Testament (as the promised Messiah) and of course in the New Testament which revolves around his life and teaching. The Acts of the Apostles is the account of the activities of the church after Jesus rose from death and ascended to heaven. In Acts Jesus is spoken of by the apostles, and he also speaks to them on occasion. The teaching of the apostles about Jesus is strikingly different from the teaching of many modern churches.

The picture of Jesus in the apostles' speeches is very consistent, from the speech of Peter at Pentecost (Acts 2) to the defences of Paul to high Roman officials in the later chapters.

## Biography of Jesus

The most detailed account of Jesus' ministry appears in Acts 10, when Peter explains about Jesus to Cornelius, who is a Roman centurion in Caesarea. These are some of the points that he makes.

- *"That word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism*

*which John preached"* (v. 37). This is something of a mistranslation: it should read something like *"You have heard reports of what happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee."* Peter refers to Cornelius' prior knowledge of Jesus. Cornelius was an officer in the Roman army and would receive intelligence reports of what was happening in the Roman province of Judea—but much less about what happened in Galilee, which was not a Roman province.

- *"Jesus... went about doing good and healing all..."* (v. 38). This tells us of the actions of Jesus, who for around three years taught and healed in Judea and in Galilee. Cornelius would have known something about this.
- *"And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem"* (v. 39). The apostles are able to claim that they were eyewitnesses of Jesus' actions. This is a constant theme in the New Testament: the reports of Jesus are eyewitness reports.
- *"...Whom they killed by hanging on a tree"* (v. 39). The account of Jesus' actions reaches its climax when Jesus was crucified.

- *“Him God raised up on the third day, and showed him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with him after he arose from the dead” (v. 40–41).*

Here Peter gives a summary of the activities of Jesus which is very similar to that in the Gospels; it is also consistent with what we know of Jesus from the Letters in the New Testament.

All the speeches in Acts contain a similar picture of Jesus. In Acts 2:22 we read that Jesus was *“a man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves also know”*. This confirms the picture of Jesus as not only a teacher, but also a worker of miracles.

## Jesus The Man

This verse also describes who Jesus is: Peter calls him *“a man attested by God”*. This is a clear statement that Jesus is not God, contrary to the teaching of many churches today. And it is consistent with the picture of Jesus given throughout the speeches of Acts. For example in Peter’s speech to Cornelius in Acts 10 there are several statements which are incompatible with the idea that Jesus is God:

- *“God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power...” (v. 38).* As Jesus is anointed with power by God, he cannot be God.
- *“God was with him” (v. 38).* If God was with Jesus, then Jesus was not God.

- *“Him God raised up on the third day” (v. 40).* As God raised Jesus from the dead, Jesus cannot be God.

- *“...It is he who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead” (v. 42).* As God ordained Jesus to be judge, Jesus cannot be God.

The picture of Jesus is of someone sent by God rather than God Himself. Acts describes Jesus as the Son of God (Acts 7:56; 9:20; 13:33). It also describes him as the Son of David (Acts 2:29, 30; 13:23).

These two points are picked up by Paul in his Letter to the Romans and linked to the resurrection of Jesus:

- *“...concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:3–4).* This tells us that Jesus is fully descended from David in a physical way. The point is made even more forcefully in Acts 2:

- *Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne... (v. 30).*

This passage describes Jesus as being descended from King David in the most physical way possible. Descent from David is not simply a legal nicety; Jesus is really and physically a descendent of David the

KEY

- Cities
- Cities mentioned in the Gospels
- Herod's fortress



Map of Israel in the time of the New Testament.

king. This emphasises the fact that Jesus could not have existed before David.

The fact of the resurrection of Jesus is also important in understanding the relationship between Jesus and God. Acts tells us quite plainly that God raised Jesus from the dead (Acts 2:24, 32; 3:15, 26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30, 33-34, 37; 17:31). This tells us two things about Jesus:

1. Jesus died.
2. He was raised to life by someone else, namely God.

Neither of these facts is compatible with the idea that Jesus is God. God is the living God. If God dies then His creation is in great trouble. And the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead emphasises the fact that he is not God.

Again this point is repeated in the letters: *“If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved”* (Romans 10:9). Here we find not only that Jesus was raised from the dead by God, but that we must believe this as a condition of our salvation.

## Jesus' Destiny

The speeches in Acts do not only tell us what Jesus has done; they tell us about what he will do in the future.

*Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He 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 17:30-31).

This passage describes Jesus as the person who will act for God on the Day of Judgement. This also is a consistent picture throughout Acts (Acts 1:6-7; 1:11; 2:34-35; 3:20-21; 10:42).

The picture of Jesus in the Acts of the Apostles is completely consistent with that in the Gospels, in the Letters and in the rest of the Bible. It is a picture of Jesus who is the Son of God (Acts 8:37, 9:20; 13:33) but not God. Jesus is described as a man approved by God who taught, healed and performed miracles in Judea and Galilee and was then executed by the authorities in Jerusalem. But God raised him from the dead; the apostles, among others, were witnesses to this fact. Finally, God exalted Jesus and raised him to heaven with the promise that he will one day return to judge the living and the dead.

This picture of the Lord Jesus Christ is the one that the apostles taught wherever they went. It is what they considered that a new Christian should understand and believe about Christ. This understanding is what they have passed on to us in the modern world, so that we too might become believers.

**John Thorpe**

# “Religion Causes Wars!”

“Christianity preaches ‘Love your enemies’—but what about the crusades, inquisitions, persecutions and wars that have been conducted in its name? When you think of all the violence that religion is responsible for, is it any wonder that people turn away from it?”

WHAT CAUSES war and conflict? There are many factors, including economic, ethnic, territorial, political, sociological and religious. To simply blame religion and leave it at that is far too simplistic and crude; it is not real analysis and it is not a real answer.

To illustrate this, let’s consider two alternatives. Wars sometimes result from differences of political opinion—so should we say ‘politics causes wars’? Does that mean human beings should therefore abandon politics because politics is ‘bad’? Again, wars often result from economics—they are fought over resources such as land, oil, water and so on. So should we say ‘economics causes wars’? If no one would make this claim (and they surely wouldn’t), then is it fair to say ‘religion causes wars’?

## Christianity Explains the Problem

The common factor in wars is that they involve human beings—there is something in human beings (whether religious or not, and from whatever part of the political spectrum they may come) which erupts from time to time in violent conflict. What is this aggression that can drive us, this

lust for power, this territorial greed, this longing for conquest? It is here, in fact, that Christianity gets at the heart of the problem in its understanding of human nature. Christianity explains what is wrong with human nature, and if this explanation is correct then it is no surprise that human history has been in part a history of conflict. It began in the very first family, when Cain murdered his brother Abel (Genesis 4:8) and it has ravaged the human race ever since.



*The murder of Abel*

Atheism and humanism provide no such explanation as to why human history should be like this. In this sense, then, Christianity has the explanation for all war, one which is arguably more credible and powerful than that provided by any other worldview.

## Religion is Just an Excuse

Nevertheless, it has to be admitted that there are many wars which have been explicitly conducted in the name of religion, or where religious differences are one of the factors causing underlying tension. Surely religion is to blame for these and is therefore evil? The question therefore remains: is it true that religion in general or Christianity in particular is indeed 'responsible for so many of the wars and conflicts in the world'?

It is interesting to look at the data here. There is a standard work on the history of war called *The Encyclopaedia of Wars*.<sup>1</sup> It is a huge work of three volumes which analyses and categorises 1763 conflicts between 8000BC and 2003AD. It finds that less than 7% of the wars it considers can be classified as primarily religious conflicts, and many of those 7% actually have more to do with politics and secular motivations than they do with religion.

Even some of the most frequently cited examples of religious war such as the Crusades—the series of wars waged in the

Middle Ages by Christian churches against Muslims in the Middle East—are far less clear-cut than they appear. For instance



*Crusaders in Jerusalem*

the book *Silk Roads—A New History of the World*<sup>2</sup> suggests that during the period of the Crusades religion was often merely a pretext for what was really a campaign for political power, economic gain and personal aggrandisement. It is far too simplistic to categorise the Crusades as 'religious wars', even though religious labelling was very prominent as the leaders sought to bring God on to their side to justify their territorial ambition. The foot-soldiers may indeed have been told that they were fighting a religious war, but those who controlled them seem to have had additional or in some cases very different motivations.

<sup>1</sup> edited by Charles Phillips and Alan Axelrod, publisher: Facts On File Inc.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Frankopan, publisher: Bloomsbury Publishing



## Atheism and Religious Extremism

It is a grave concern to those who advocate the ‘religion causes intolerance and war’ view that some of the most devastating atrocities committed against human beings have been those carried out by atheist regimes. We need only think of Stalin’s 20 million victims in Communist Russia or Mao’s 40 million victims in Communist China, or even the scientific and evolutionary arguments that were



*Bodies of starved peasants by the roadside, Kharkiv, USSR, 1933*

(mis)used by nominally-Christian Adolf Hitler to justify the genocide he conducted in Nazi Germany and its territories. These are terrible enough, but this list is far longer. Indeed, when the journalist and erstwhile communist Peter Hitchens converted to Christianity it was largely because he was so appalled by the atrocities committed in the name of atheism.<sup>3</sup> The theologian Alister McGrath comments perceptively:

<sup>3</sup> described in Peter Hitchens, *The Rage Against God*, publisher: Continuum

“The 20<sup>th</sup> Century gave rise to one of the greatest and most distressing paradoxes of human history: that the greatest intolerances and violence of that century were practised by those who believed that religion caused intolerance and violence.”<sup>4</sup>

A very different study was carried out by the scholar Robert Pape who analysed every instance of suicide bombing that he could find since 1980. There is a preconception that suicide bombings are



*Jews arriving at Auschwitz to be terminated, German occupied Poland, 1944*

carried out by religious extremists, and the assumption therefore is that religion carried to its logical conclusion must be evil. Pape found, however, that there was little evidence that religion has been a key driver of suicide bombings and that there is little connection with the religious underpinnings of Islamic fundamentalism. Instead he found that political aims were the key motivation. Suicide bombers are

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God*, publisher: Penguin Books

more likely to be unempowered people who believe their territory to be occupied or who are oppressed and feel that this drastic and horrifying act is their only way to make their cause heard.<sup>5</sup>

## Benefits of Religion

The argument against religion on the grounds that it causes violence and war is also unfairly one-sided. While attacking religion for all the violence it allegedly spawns, this approach usually disregards all the good that has been done all down the centuries in the name of religion—and in the name of Christianity in particular.



*Many of the world's principal aid agencies are based on a faith ethos*

We cannot truly evaluate the role Christianity and religion have played in society without considering the positives as well as the negatives—the welfare that has been provided with no expectation of anything in return, the education that has been given, the hospitals that have been

<sup>5</sup> see also Alister McGrath, *Why God won't go away*, publisher: SPCK Publishing

set up. If we are going to make sweeping claims about religion in society we have an obligation to be even-handed with the evidence.

Like many atheist claims, the argument that religion causes wars simply does not hold water. It sounds superficially powerful, but once it is unpacked and examined there is little of substance to build a case. It is a claim which is too vague to be meaningful, and unsupported by evidence.

**Mark Vincent**

“ You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ”

*Jesus Christ—Matthew 5:43–45*

**Questions? Comments?**  
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# The King of Israel

THE DESTINY OF Jesus Christ was made clear to his mother Mary before he was born. The angel Gabriel appeared to her with a startling message:

*“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call his name Jesus. 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 1:30–33).*



King David was Mary’s ancestor, who reigned over Israel a thousand years previously. God had made promises to David which are recorded in 1 Chronicles 17 and 2 Samuel 7, and centred on a special descendant:

*“When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your*

*seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom” (2 Samuel 7:12).*

Gabriel’s message to Mary was that she was to be the one to bear the Son of David. Jesus was the Son of David because Mary was David’s descendant, and he was also the “Son of the Highest” because there was no man involved in his conception—he was the Son of God.

The ‘house of Jacob’ which Gabriel mentioned is another name for the nation of Israel—Jacob was the ancestor of the nation, whose name God changed to Israel (Genesis 32:28). So Jesus was born to be King in Israel, reigning from Jerusalem.

## The Forerunner

The angel Gabriel also appeared to the priest Zacharias, who was married to Mary’s cousin Elizabeth, to tell him that they too would have a son (Luke 1:13). Their son was John the Baptist, who was to be the forerunner of Mary’s son Jesus Christ. When John was born Zacharias broke into a song of praise to God:

*Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who have been since the world began (Luke 1:67–70).*

These words of God which Zacharias spoke affirm the continuity of God's purpose—the promises made to David will be fulfilled in his descendant, and they are centred on the house of Israel.

Jesus came to the house of Israel to show them what God wanted them to do, but for the most part they did not believe and they rejected him. John the Baptist had warned them of the consequences:

*Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones" (Luke 3:7–8).*

Abraham was the grandfather of Jacob, he was the ancestor of Israel (and the Arabs). John warned them not to trust in their ancestry, that was not enough.

## Rejected By His People

Sadly, most of his own people were disobedient and did not accept Jesus as their saviour. Their rulers had him put to death. To this day most Jews still do not accept that Jesus is their Messiah. But they are still God's people. The Apostle Paul demonstrates how their failure was instrumental in opening up the promises which once applied to them only, so that now everyone can benefit:

*I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to*

*provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles (Romans 11:11).*

Christians have not replaced the Jews in God's purpose. Paul goes on to paint a picture of the nation of Israel as an olive tree. The worthless branches (unfaithful Jews) were broken off, and branches from a wild olive tree (faithful Gentiles) grafted on to the tree (verses 17–24). He continues:

*For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and he will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins." (Romans 11:11, 25–27).*

When Jesus returns many Jews will repent and believe in him (Zechariah 12:9–10). He will establish the Kingdom of God with its capital in Jerusalem, and reign over the world at peace (Isaiah 2:1–4). It will be a time of blessing for the whole earth and all its peoples.

This was all foreseen by the old man Simeon, who came across the baby Jesus in the Temple in Jerusalem and praised God:

*For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel (Luke 2:30–32).*

**Stephen Blake**



The small numbers indicate that a word is used more than once in the quotation. For example, MY<sup>3</sup> means the word 'MY' occurs three times.

- BELOVED<sup>2</sup>
- CALLED
- COME
- GOD
- LIVING
- MY<sup>3</sup>
- NOT<sup>3</sup>
- PASS
- PEOPLE<sup>3</sup>
- PLACE
- SAID
- SHALL<sup>2</sup>
- SONS
- THEM<sup>2</sup>
- THERE
- THEY
- WAS<sup>2</sup>
- WERE
- WHERE
- WHO<sup>2</sup>
- WILL

IN HIS LETTER to the Romans the Apostle Paul discusses the failure of Israel when they rejected God's Son, and asks the question: "I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles" (Romans 11:11).

He quotes the prophet Hosea to illustrate his point. Use the letters in the grid below to find the words in the list to the left. The words will complete Paul's quotation.

K	G	E	C	A	L	P	T	D	C	B	G
T	B	O	K	W	Q	E	G	E	X	O	K
H	M	W	H	O	B	O	W	V	D	B	V
E	J	P	S	S	A	P	E	O	T	O	L
Y	F	L	L	A	C	L	R	L	R	Z	D
E	I	T	H	E	R	E	E	E	R	V	L
F	S	T	O	C	H	J	H	B	T	I	S
V	P	H	H	A	I	P	T	H	V	S	O
V	C	W	A	L	N	O	E	I	N	Y	S
S	A	I	D	L	N	M	N	O	L	O	A
M	M	L	C	E	L	G	S	P	Q	U	W
H	Y	L	U	D	X	L	E	R	E	H	W

“ I \_\_\_\_\_ CALL \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ , AND HER \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_  
 ” AND IT \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ TO \_\_\_\_\_ IN THE \_\_\_\_\_ IT  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ TO \_\_\_\_\_ “ \_\_\_\_\_ ARE \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ , ”  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ BE \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ OF THE \_\_\_\_\_ . ”

Romans 9:25-26

(The Wordsearch uses the New King James version of the Bible. If you're using another version some words may not be quite the same.)

Anna Hart

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