

# Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1453

## CHRISTADELPHIAN HALL

**THE CHRISTADELPHIANS**  
We base our faith on the Bible - The Inspired Word of God

We believe in:  
**THE ONE GOD**  
Who created and sustains all life

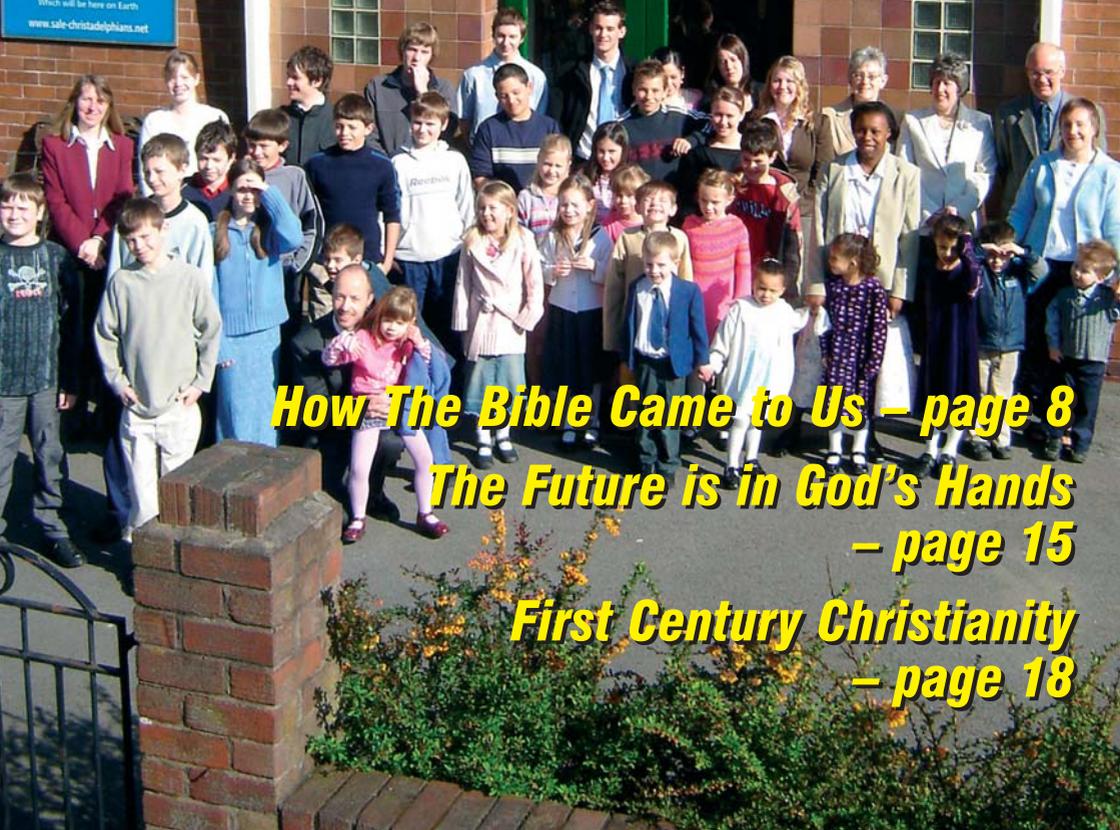
**JESUS CHRIST\***  
The son of God, our Redeemer, who came long ago and died for our sins

**ADULT BAPTISM**  
Into Christ, essential for salvation

**THE RETURN OF JESUS**  
To save the dead, judge the world and renew the faithful with everlasting life

**GOD'S KINGDOM**  
Which will be here on Earth

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***How The Bible Came to Us – page 8***

***The Future is in God's Hands  
– page 15***

***First Century Christianity  
– page 18***

# Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

121st Year

F05

1453

A monthly magazine published by the Christadelphians (Brethren in Christ) and available throughout the world. Its objectives are – to encourage study of the Bible as God's inspired message to men; to call attention to the Divine offer of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ; and to warn men and women that soon Christ will return to Earth as judge and ruler of God's world-wide Kingdom.

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*This issue is based on a Bible Exhibition prepared by the Christadelphians which is in regular use in the UK. It gives overseas readers a flavour of what the Exhibition contains*

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## Bible Versions

*The version most used in this issue is the New King James Version (NKJV) and other versions are sometimes used.*

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## Consider the Evidence

# God Has a Purpose

**Nobody is ever put on trial without some evidence that might lead to a conviction, even if the evidence is faked.**

It would be a waste of time attempting to prove something with nothing more to go on than suspicion or possibility. "Where's the evidence?" people would ask, and rightly so. Everybody deserves a fair trial.

At the same time, when there is overwhelming evidence, something should be done about it. It is equally unjust for people to ignore things that really should be taken into account.

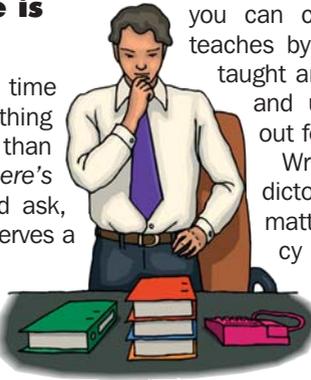
What is true in a court of law is also true of life itself. The things in which we place our trust should be well-established, especially if they are really important to us. Nobody wants a doctor who doesn't care about patients; a hospital which makes you sick; a newspaper that tells lies; or a school that teaches wrong things. But how do you know what is best for you or for your children? Where's the evidence one way or another?

### Blind Faith?

We all have to take some things on trust, at least at first. You can ask around about doctors or hospitals and hope to get good feedback but when you are suddenly taken ill such questioning becomes of secondary importance. Your experience will be the guide from there on.

You can read a newspaper and form your own judgement about its values and truthfulness, by comparing it with other versions of the same reported events. And you can check up on what a school teaches by carefully listening to what is taught and using your own intelligence and understanding to work things out for yourself.

Wrong teaching is usually contradictory in one way or another; it's a matter of spotting the inconsistency when you put everything together.



### Evidence on Display

It's like that with religion as well. Nobody is asked to believe in God without some evidence that substantiates His existence and His purpose. Put it all together and you will soon see what a compelling case there is for belief in God and for putting absolute trust in the way He is working things out for the best.

It's not a case of having blind faith. Jesus once said that if the blind lead the blind they will both fall into the ditch (Matthew 15:14). Instead we must have our eyes open if we are to see what God is doing and what it means to us (Acts 26:18).

Christadelphians have assembled a lot of information to demonstrate the case that exists for belief in God and His plan and purpose with mankind. This issue of "Glad Tidings" features some of that information which is also on display in a Bible Exhibition that travels



widely in the UK. Some of the photographs used in this issue feature that exhibition and the various articles will give a flavour of its coverage and content.

But it would hardly justify being called a “Bible” Exhibition if there was not a collection of Bibles and it is right and proper that they are the central feature of the display. For the Bible – the Word of God – is the ultimate evidence that God has a purpose.

God has revealed Himself and His purpose in a marvellous library of 66 books, written over a period of more than 1000 years by some 30 writers, in three languages, with a fascinating range of featured characters, topics, teachings and incidents. There has never been a collection of books like this one and there never will be. For it is not just a remarkable work: it is a true account that comes from God.

As our cover photograph shows, we believe in sharing this evidence with our children too, so they can make up their own minds. In a world where too many things are taken for granted we believe in giving children a chance to work things out for themselves.

## Ring of Truth

You can judge for yourself, as we look at various aspects of Bible teaching, whether or not it

seems to you to have the ring of truth. Over the years many people have set out with the objective of rubbishing the Bible and have come to believe it because it has a message which is convincing. They never intended to give its message a chance, but it won through even so.

If you are willing to weigh up the evidence the Bible presents you too should find it a compelling case, and that is likely to be helpful to you. For we live in a confusing world of changing values and uncertain aims. Things can happen with bewildering speed which can leave us very unsure about the future. It is helpful to know about something that can be trusted absolutely.

One writer, who spent a lot of time translating the New Testament into English said this – that a close study of these writings “*can, and constantly does, challenge, provoke and appeal to a man at a deeper level and with a more profound authority than any other human writing*” (J. B Phillips: “*Ring of Truth – a Translator’s Testimony*”).

## Your Challenge

The Bible itself is the ultimate test. Read it for yourself and you could find it life-changing. Just think what it would mean to you if you were fully persuaded that there is –

- sound evidence that God exists, and**
- that He has a purpose with this earth, and that**
- He is offering you a chance to join in when His plan enters its final glorious phase.**

Consider the evidence for yourself and see what a difference it could make to your life.

**Editor**



# Created for a Purpose

A question that intrigues many is “How did the world come into existence?” Yet the Bible’s account of the creation of the world – in the Book of Genesis – is often dismissed as ‘myth’ or ‘legend’. But as scientist **John Hellowell** now explains, this is a huge mistake. John is the author of several publications the most recent being “Creation or Evolution?”

## Big Bang?

It is a mistake to overlook the Bible account for two reasons. First, we need to appreciate what the Bible account of creation is telling us about the purpose of God. Second, scientific accounts inevitably undergo revision as further information accumulates.

After scientists discovered that it appeared the universe was expanding, there was a famous controversy as to whether the universe was in a ‘steady-state’ – that material was being created constantly to fill the “gaps” – or if it originated from an explosive ‘big bang’ at some point in space and time. At present, most cosmologists are convinced that there was indeed a beginning in the form of a big bang.

Like most scientific beliefs, this creates further questions – “How did it start like this and what was the condition of the universe before that? Will it go on expanding for ever? Is the universe infinite?” Vast sums of research money are spent each year in the quest for knowledge about the origin of the universe and of life on earth. For most of us, these sorts of questions are interesting but really do not impinge on our everyday lives. If we really knew the answers to these questions what difference would it make?

## Questions that Matter

The questions to which most of us would like certain answers are ‘Why are we here?’; ‘What is the purpose of life?’; ‘Where is life leading, if anywhere?’ and ‘What happens at death, if anything?’

Remarkably, science has no answers to these key questions because scientists only investigate the ‘how?’ of everything and not the ‘why?’ For example, we may discover that part of the reason grass appears green is because chlorophyll absorbs light of other colours but not green.

That does not tell us why it is green and not blue or some other colour. And for many scientists, there is no ultimate purpose to our lives:

the universe just came into existence without any purpose and life originated simply by chance. Such a simplistic approach might have been tenable in the 19th and early 20th centuries, when an explosive increase in scientific investigation occurred, but now it is questionable.

The further we have looked upwards and outwards at our universe, or looked deeper and more closely into the structure of living things and even into the very nature of matter itself, we have found greater and greater complexity. The ‘simple’ Amoeba of Darwin’s day and the minimalist atomic model of Rutherford’s

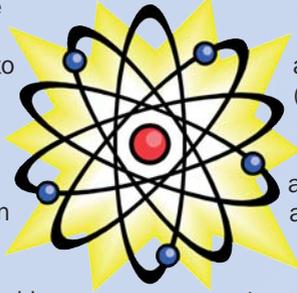


time now seem to be such naïve concepts. Einstein's theory of relativity, Bohr's quantum theory and recent research in cosmology have brought us to the point where even atheistic scientists wonder whether there is some over-ruling mind or purpose in creation. That mind is revealed to us in the Bible.

## **Bible Account of Creation**

The Bible account of creation seems to have been given to us to explain why things are the way they are, rather than to provide us with a step-by-step description of events. The majestic opening statement: *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"* (Genesis 1:1), implies active involvement by a Creator. Note the order in which these words are spoken and that 'the earth' is singular but 'the heavens' are plural. Is it too much to read into this the implication that God created a vast universe (heavens) but also centred His purpose on one planet, the earth?

The next verse gives a description of a dark chaotic earth, totally incapable of supporting life. Now the purposeful actions of God become evident, for His spirit hovers over the waters and light is introduced to dispel the darkness. Careful examination of the text reveals that many of the stages in transforming the earth are achieved not by new creative activity but by the alteration of existing states. With each intervention, another stage is reached towards a planet capable of supporting life and mankind in particular. References to creative activity are inter-



persed with the key word *"divided"*.

Light is divided from darkness (v.4) to give day and night.

The atmosphere (*"firmament"*; the Hebrew means 'expanse') is formed when the waters below are divided from the waters above, that is, the clouds (v.7).

The gathering together of the waters below the atmosphere allows land to appear and provides for earth and seas.

Dry land allows the vegetation to flourish and the atmosphere enables birds to fly while the seas teem with creatures of many kinds. The earth also supports the vast variety of animal life and the climax is the creation of mankind. All animal life is supported by vegetation and this aspect is considered in verses 29 and 30.

## **All under Control**

Time is a result of the pattern of the heavenly bodies the lights of which *"divide the day from the night"* and they are *"for signs, and seasons, and for days, and years"* (v.14). This is a profound statement for all our reckoning of time depends on the apparent motion of the sun from sunrise to sunrise (day); the phases of the moon (months) and the changing day-length (seasons) and the annual variation in the sun's maximum height in the sky.

The whole process in the first chapter of Genesis moves relentlessly from the picture of an uninhabitable earth to one which supported life, especially human life. Nor does this pattern end in the first



chapter, for in the second we have the creation of a perfect habitat for mankind – the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were not left to their own devices and expected to create their own garden. The LORD God “planted a garden...”(2:8) and established every tree “that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food...” (v.9) and the garden was irrigated naturally (v.10). This provision by God is so characteristic for He is concerned for his creation (Psalm 104:10-31; Luke 12: 6,7)



Throughout the account of creation we have a beneficent Creator who is clearly concerned with what He has brought into being. Indeed we are told that “God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good”.

The creative activity of God runs throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. At least fifty passages refer or allude to God as the Creator, because God continues to care for His creation. He made the world for a purpose.

### **The Purpose of Creation**

From a purely self-centred viewpoint we might suppose that we are the purpose of creation. However, God’s ultimate purpose is that: “...the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14)

That purpose was recognised by King David in Psalm 72, which describes the time when this becomes a reality, when he wrote:

*“And blessed be his glorious name forever! And let the whole earth be filled*

*with his glory. Amen and Amen” (Psalm 72:19).*

In the Bible, creation is presented as purposeful: it is an expression of God’s will. For example:

***“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they exist and were created” (Revelation 4:11).***

Part of God’s gracious purpose was the creation of rational beings, made in His image (Genesis 1:26, 27). Our status is explained in Psalm 8:4-6, where we are told that humanity was made “lower than the angels”, at least for the moment. Man was created in order to reflect the attributes of his Maker. He was given dominion and responsibility for creation but he has despoiled the planet and polluted the environment.

This will not continue indefinitely, for when the Lord Jesus returns in order to establish God’s Kingdom, the world will be transformed. The Old Testament prophets provide a preview of that glorious age (See Isaiah, for example, 2:4; 11:1-9; 35:1-8; 40:4,5; 65:17-25)

Purposeful creation contrasts strongly with the humanistic evolutionist’s purposeless evolution. If there is no Creator, then the universe around us and life on earth resulted from random events, which means that our existence has no meaning.

The Bible gives meaning to life and reveals that creation has purpose. The wonder of all this is that God invites us to have a part in His eternal purpose.

**John Hellowell**

## God's Word

# How The Bible Came to Us

**Derrick Banyard** is the author of "God's Living Word" which deals extensively with the way the Bible was first communicated by God to man and then was marvellously preserved so that we can now read it and profit from its inspired message. In this article he reviews some of the ways in which God's Word has come to us.

Long before the world had heard of 'Information Technology' the Creator was teaching mortal man and making conditional promises about his release from the sad condition that had resulted from the coming of sin and death.

Communication was first through angels (see Genesis chapter 18), or by dream or vision (Genesis 31:11). Sometimes a prophet was the messenger — for "holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21), and they spoke "in the name of the Lord" (James 5:10).

## Written Records

God's dealings with men have been faithfully recorded for us. He told Moses on one occasion: "Write this for a memorial in the book" (Exodus 17:14) and God's laws were first written on stone, both to be learned by Israel (Deuteronomy 11:18-31) and copied by their kings (Deuteronomy 17:18-20; 2 Kings 11:12). The first five books of our Bible were written by Moses, as Jesus confirmed when he acknowledged their authority, and that of the psalms and prophets (Luke 24:27,44-45).

Writing materials included soft clay tablets, the characters being impressed

by a stylus and then baked; and pieces of earthenware, parchment and papyrus were later written upon with ink. Parchment sheets were made from the skin of a sheep or a goat and stitched together to become a roll. Papyrus was made from the stems of the papyrus plant.



*Scribe copying Hebrew text*

## The Old Testament

The Old Testament developed with Israel. Written mainly in Hebrew, the first part contains five books known as the 'Law'; it reveals God's creative work, the early history

of man, God's call of Abraham, the doings of the nation descending from him, and the covenant God made with Israel. Israel's history is then recorded through their kingdom period. Meanwhile, Psalmists and Prophets contributed writings which were acknowledged to be the Word of God, sustaining the faithful by its promise of a Redeemer.

Upon their return from Babylon, in a spirit of reformation, scribes brought the writings together. Ezra, a descendant of the High Priest, is described as "a skilled scribe in the Law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given" (Ezra 7:1-6, Nehemiah 8:1-8). The Jewish Talmud

refers to the work of “the men of the great gathering,” taken to refer to those who in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah assembled the divinely inspired writings into one group. Greek became the everyday language of the dispersed Jews, estranging them from their Hebrew Scriptures, so in the third century BC about seventy Jewish scholars made a Greek translation known as the ‘Septuagint’.

## The New Testament

Coming as prophesied, Jesus’ activities and teaching were recorded by four well-informed writers, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, who included his numerous references to the teaching and authority of the Old Testament writings. The apostles spread the Gospel far and wide, as recorded in ‘Acts of the Apostles’ and some of their valuable letters have been preserved.

Together, the gospels, Acts and Epistles make up the New Testament, which concludes with a serious letter from the risen Jesus himself, as the servant of God and the world’s future King at his return. He was very concerned that people should be ready for that!

Although first written in Greek, the wider world had diverse languages so many translations of the New Testament were made. Latin versions appeared and in AD 382 Pope Damasus commissioned his secretary, Jerome, a Greek and Latin scholar, to produce an authoritative Latin New Testament, followed by the Old Testament, all later designated the ‘Vulgate’.

In AD 324 the emperor Constantine adopted Christianity as the State religion,

ordering Bibles for churches which were to be built in Constantinople. Commissioned to provide them, Eusebius of Caesarea gave much study as to which inspired books those Bibles should include. In AD 367 Athanasius of Alexandria put the New Testament books as we know them into a list, confirmed by the Council of Carthage in AD 397.

## The English Bible

The Roman occupation from AD 43-410 linked Britain with the Continent and persecutions elsewhere probably brought Christian refugees to Britain. Tertullian, in the 2nd century, recorded that there were Christians in Britain even where Roman soldiers had never been stationed. By the end of the 6th Century many monasteries existed, monks copying manuscripts for the library.

A notable copy of the Latin New Testament was made at Lindisfarne and another at Durham. Many of the clergy and most of the public could not understand Latin. At Lindisfarne a priest named Aldred wrote the Anglo-Saxon words underneath the Latin. The complete Gospels in Anglo-Saxon (The Wessex Gospels) were produced in the 10th Century and then the Norman Conquest of 1066 added to the confusion of Britain’s existing languages and dialects.

## John Wycliffe

Born in about 1320, John Wycliffe, distinguished scholar and Master of Balliol College, became Rector of Lutterworth. His understanding of Scripture led him to contest the constitution and abuses of the Church. He resolved to translate the Bible into English to enlighten the people,



*Tableau showing Aldred adding the Anglo-Saxon words to the Lindisfarne Gospels*

sending out preachers with written sheets of the New Testament translated into common English. By about 1382 he had translated the whole of the Latin Vulgate into English. Wycliffe's curate, John Purvey, revised this work by 1396 to make it more fluent and hundreds of handwritten copies were made.

Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, passed the Constitutions of Oxford in 1408, prohibiting translation or reading of a Bible in the common language without church approval. Copies of the Wycliffe Bible were sought and destroyed and some of Purvey's associates were burned at the stake. Even so, 170 copies still existed 450 years later! The Renaissance advanced learning.: Greek scholars driven out of Constantinople in 1453 took their knowledge and books to Europe, facilitating research into New Testament Greek.

The invention of printing was revolutionary. Using moveable metal type, Gutenberg made printing the Latin Vulgate his first job in 1455-6. Printing spread to produce a Greek Grammar (1476), the Pentateuch in Hebrew (1482), Hebrew Bible (1488), Greek New Testament by Erasmus (1516); and complete Bibles in German, Italian, French, Danish, Dutch, Slavonic, Bohemian and Spanish by the end of the 15th Century.

## **William Tyndale**

Educated at Oxford and Cambridge, William Tyndale became competent in Greek and Latin, going on to learn many other languages. He resolved to make the Bible available to everybody regardless of status and unavailingly sought approval for the work.

He sailed away to the Continent, never



*Statue of  
William Tyndale in  
The Embankment  
Gardens, London*

to return. Tyndale studied the Latin Vulgate, the Greek and Latin of Erasmus and the German of Luther and produced his own English version of the New Testament, printed in Germany in 1525, smuggled into England and then distributed. Some who helped and some who merely read the book were imprisoned and tortured and some were burned at the stake.

Bishop Tunstall preached against the new translation and publicly burned the books. Tyndale worked on, producing revised editions which came into England by various means, although prohibited by the Church under Henry VIII. Tyndale was arrested at Antwerp, imprisoned

at Vilvoorde and there strangled and burned in October 1536. His legacy included the English New Testament, the Old Testament to the end of 2 Chronicles and the Book of Jonah.

## **Miles Coverdale**

Through Miles Coverdale, co-worker with Tyndale in translating the Pentateuch, came the first printed complete Bible in English in 1535. In 1537 the English translation by John Rogers was published under the name of 'Thomas Matthew' because any apparent association with Tyndale would have meant burning: Yet two-thirds of it was Tyndale's work!

The **Coverdale** and **'Matthew' Bibles** were both belatedly licensed by Henry VIII.

Thomas Cromwell feared the king's reaction if he discovered that Tyndale was at the heart of the new Bibles and commissioned Coverdale to make a new translation which he thought would seem

independent. This appeared in 1539, known as **'The Great Bible'**. All clergy were ordered in advance to place it conveniently within the church, accessible to all for reading in the 11,000 parishes.

Knowledge of what the Bible taught fostered growth of the Protestant movement. Catholic reaction led to Cromwell's beheading on Tower Hill in 1540. In 1546 the Latin Vulgate became the official and only permitted Bible, the Roman Catholic Church requiring all others to be removed or made unreadable, to eliminate Tyndale's influence. In 1553 Mary Tudor became queen and all things Protestant were abolished.

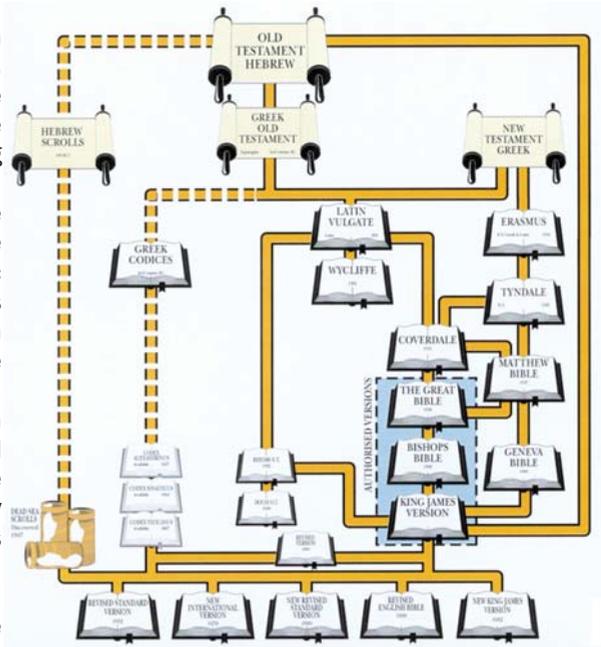
More than 300 people from all walks of life were martyred because they possessed, read or listened to the Bible. Some reformers fled to Geneva, where another English translation, the **'Geneva Bible'**, appeared in 1560.

The **'Bishops Bible'** was translated in 1568 but was unpopular and not authorised by Queen Elizabeth. Under Protestant Elizabeth, Catholics sought refuge on the Continent, where they produced a New Testament translation from the Vulgate at Rheims in 1582 and the Old Testament at Douai in 1609-10, making the **'Douai' or 'Douay Bible'**.

### King James Version

The Hampton Court Conference of 1604 resolved to translate a new complete Bible, taking into account progress made in Hebrew and Greek scholarship, one which was to be ratified by the Privy Council and King James himself.

This Authorised Version (or King James Version) was published in 1611, including a long preface, *"The Translators to the Reader"*, which shows that they not only



had the Hebrew and Greek text before them but consulted a wide range of translations in seven other languages. It is acknowledged today that William Tyndale's contribution to the Old Testament is about 76% and to the New Testament about 83%.

### Wonderful Preservation

The Bible is sometimes referred to as a miracle – a marvellous event attributed to a supernatural cause – and the Bible is most certainly that. From many original authors, and via the various means we have looked at so briefly, the Word of God has come down to us through the ages, and is entirely trustworthy.

Ecclesiastical and civil authorities have sought to destroy the Bible and those who identified with it in any way. When the Lord Jesus Christ returns it will become plain to all that *"the word of the Lord endures forever"* (1 Peter 1:25).

**Derrick Banyard**

## Biblical Archaeology

# The Past is True

*David Burges is the Editor of Science Section of "The Testimony" magazine and a regular contributor to "Glad Tidings" about archaeological matters.*

*In this article he looks at some key findings of Biblical archaeology.*

**Throughout human history, as empire has succeeded empire, each civilisation has left its imprint upon the earth – ruined buildings, discarded pottery, fallen inscriptions and abandoned burial grounds.**

The lands of the Bible, and in particular the Holy Land, are no exception. Ancient Israel and the succession of empires which dominated it – vividly represented by the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream – have each left ample evidence of their past glories, to be revealed and interpreted by the archaeologist.

Though this is taken for granted today, it must be remembered that 200 years ago things were very different. Then there was very little independent evidence for the historical existence of the nations, places and people, whose names appear in the Bible.

Sceptical scholars could claim with impunity that the stories of the Bible, especially the Old Testament, were simply myths or legends. Sadly many people today still believe this to be so. But, in fact, a large number of archaeological discoveries since then have helped to prove that, at every period, the Bible records are

set against authentic historical backgrounds. You only have to look carefully to discover a selection of items showing that the people, places and events recorded in the Bible were real!

### Reliable records

When approaching the writings in the Bible, we are entitled to ask how old the records are and whether they have been changed over the centuries. It has become fashionable among scholars to claim that the earliest books, the five books of Moses, could not possibly have been written by him, but date from many hundreds of years later. Yet many specific details of the times and customs mentioned in them have been confirmed by archaeology, and could not possibly have been known by someone writing centuries after!

For instance, the Bible makes 47 mentions of a nation called the Hittites. The patriarch Abraham purchased a tomb from a man called Ephron the Hittite (Genesis 23:10-20). Critical scholars doubted such a people ever existed, until in the 1880s, inscriptions carved on rocks in Turkey and Syria were shown to be in the Hittite language and the ruins of an ancient city – Boghaz-Koy – were found to be those of the Hittite capital. Similarly



the city Ur of the Chaldees, from which Abraham migrated to Canaan, was excavated by Leonard Woolley from 1922 to 1934 and was shown to have had an advanced civilisation at just the time the Bible record indicates.

Before 1947, the oldest known manuscript of the Old Testament, dated to no earlier than AD 935, and critics could claim that the text was unreliable after centuries of copying. Then the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls revealed portions of nearly all the Old Testament books dating to around 100 BC, over 1000 years older than what had

been available previously! Despite the passage of time, no significant changes in the Bible text were found to have occurred.

More recently, two silver amulets, small pieces of jewellery, found in a tomb near Jerusalem and dated to before 600 BC, were found to be inscribed with the High Priestly blessing (Numbers 6:22-27), written exactly as it is in modern manuscripts. This is well before the date when some critics claim the Book of Numbers was even written!

## The Rosetta Stone

A key role in the Bible story is played by the land of Egypt. But much of its ancient history and culture remained a mystery until the decipherment of its language, written in hieroglyphics. In 1798 one of Napoleon's officers discovered a black, 4 foot high inscription at Rosetta, on the bank of the Nile. Originally erected in 196 BC to extol the triumphs of King Ptolemy V Epiphanes, it is inscribed in three parallel scripts: Egyptian demotic and hieroglyphic scripts, and Greek. This

allowed the young French scholar Champollion to show that hieroglyphics were not mysterious symbols but a readable language and consequently the thousands

of inscriptions in Egypt could be deciphered, opening up ancient Egypt's history.

In a similar way the languages of ancient Assyria, Babylon and Persia, the empires that dominated the nation of Israel in Old Testament times, were deciphered by an Englishman, Sir Henry Rawlinson. For centuries travellers passing the 4,000 foot Iranian mountain, known as the Rock of Behistun, had wondered at the strange figures carved into the rock,

300 feet above their heads. The great wall behind them had been chiselled flat and covered with thousands of tiny arrowheads. It was recognised that these were a form of writing and were given the name cuneiform (from the Latin meaning 'wedge-shaped'). Rawlinson showed that the inscriptions honoured the great Persian king Darius I Hystaspes, who served as God's instrument for returning the Jews from exile to Jerusalem (Ezra Chapter 6). That inscription allowed another three languages to be deciphered – Old Persian, Babylonian and Elamite – enabling further civilisations to be explored and greater understanding obtained.

## Discoveries in Israel

As well as shedding light on the great empires of Bible times, archaeology has done much to illuminate and confirm the Bible record of Israel and its land. A large number of the cities and villages mentioned in Scripture have been positively identified and very often their locations assist our understanding, partic-



*The Rosetta Stone – key to some ancient languages*

ularly of the battles and sieges recorded there.

For instance, extensive excavations at the site of Hazor in northern Galilee, have confirmed its role in the Bible story. Once the most important of the Canaanite city states, it was conquered by Joshua, according to the Bible, as part of the Israelite Conquest (Joshua 11:1-14). Many critics have denied that the conquest even took place, yet archaeologists have shown that Canaanite Hazor was destroyed with an intense fire, exactly as the record states: *"But as for the cities that stood on their mounds, Israel burnt none of them, except Hazor only, which Joshua burned"* (v.13).

Some Bible characters have been identified by their seals, or seal impressions, which have survived even though the documents they were attached to have perished. The seal of Shema, a servant of Jereboam II was found at Megiddo, while in Jerusalem a collapsed document room was excavated containing 51 seal impressions, among them one of Gemariah, son of Shaphan (mentioned in Jeremiah 36:10-12). Even more exciting have been the recent publication of seals in private collections, belonging to two of the kings of Judah, Ahaz and Hezekiah, and to Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe.

Many of the inscriptions of the great Assyrian and Babylonian kings confirm the history of the Israelite kingdoms. In the British Museum there is even a picture of King Jehu of Israel, on the famous black obelisk of the Assyrian King Shalmanezar III, offering tribute to his overlord. How regrettable it is that large numbers of people still believe that the Old Testament

has no basis in history at all!

## **Jesus and his Apostles**

Archaeological support for the New Testament period is no less rich. The birth of Christianity is set against an authentic background of the current Greek and Roman cultures, providing ample testimony to the accuracy of the Bible record. The accounts of the activities of Jesus and his apostles are certainly not "once upon a time" stories! So the dates of the Roman emperors and governors and the Jewish leaders, all carefully recorded by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles, fit into a dependable picture of the historical period.

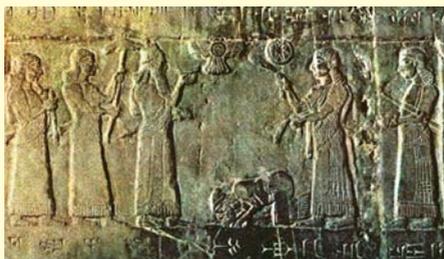
For example an inscription unearthed at Caesarea mentions both the emperor Tiberius and the notorious Roman

governor Pontius Pilate, while in Jerusalem the funeral ossuary of the Jewish High Priest Caiaphas was discovered in a 1st Century tomb. Thus archaeology has confirmed the names of the two chief characters in the crucifixion of Jesus!

## **'The stones cry out'**

When the Pharisees demanded that Jesus silence the joyous acclaim of his disciples, accompanying him into Jerusalem on 'Palm Sunday', he replied: *"I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out"* (Luke 19:40). How wonderful it is that, in an age when the Bible is widely ignored, by the providence of God the evidence of the stones continues to testify to its truth and reliability as the guide to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

**David Burges**



*King Jehu of Israel paying tribute to the Assyrian King Shalmanezar III*

## Bible Prophecy

# The Future is in God's Hands

**A mighty Emperor once had a really bad night and awoke in a very bad mood. He wanted to know the significance of a dream that perplexed him and which he said he could not remember, so he summoned his wise men.**

They were to tell him what he had dreamed and then explain what it all meant, but they couldn't. Who could?

One man could and did: he was the prophet Daniel. Deported to Babylon as a captive, he and his friends had also been educated in Babylon and, more importantly, had retained their faith in God. So after earnest prayer, Daniel had come into King Nebuchadnezzar's presence to announce that God could tell the future and, to prove it, he proceeded to remind the King of what he had dreamed and then to explain its vital significance.

### Future Forecast

You can read the account of that dramatic encounter in Chapter 2 of the Book of Daniel, in the Old Testament, and see for yourself what was foretold about the emergence of four world empires. For the

dream had been about a multi-metalled monster which had reared up and which was then destroyed by a stone which fell from a mountain, crushed the monster and then grew in its place until it was like a mountain itself. The prophecy is quite explicit and three of those four empires are identified by name in Daniel's prophecy:

***"You, O king (Nebuchadnezzar, ruler of Babylon), are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom,***

***power, strength, and glory; and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all - you are this head of gold" (Daniel 2:37,38);***

***"But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth" (2:39 and see 8:20 "the kings of Media and Persia"); to be followed by "the kingdom of Greece" (8:21). The fourth kingdom to arise would be the iron kingdom of Rome, described in Daniel's prophecy merely as "ships from Cyprus" (11:30).***



*A display about Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its interpretation in the Bible Exhibition*

## Coming Kingdom

The stone that was to destroy all these earthly kingdoms and then replace them was to be from heaven – provided without human aid or assistance. When the Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth from heaven, to rule as King, his dominion will be every bit as real and powerful as were those four unrivalled world empires, but his rulership will be forever:

***“In the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold - the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure” (2:44,45)***

*The Stone  
THE KINGDOM OF GOD  
WILL BE ESTABLISHED  
HERE ON EARTH*



given a most detailed prediction about the time that must pass before the city was rebuilt and Messiah the Prince would be “cut off, but not for himself”. After that

Jerusalem and God’s Temple were to be destroyed once again (Daniel 9:26). This prophecy – known as Daniel’s Seventy Weeks Prophecy – was fulfilled to the letter, both in the execution of the Lord Jesus (Israel’s Messiah) and the subsequent destruction of Jerusalem by Roman military might.

Once again we have the benefit of looking back and seeing exactly how these events came about, precisely as predicted.

## 20th Century Fulfilment

At the time when Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem and threatening its overthrow a prophet within the walls of that city was predicting much more than its mere collapse and the deportation of its citizens to Babylon.

The prophet Jeremiah foresaw a later global dispersion of the Jewish people, seeing the preliminary exile in Babylon as a beginning of a much greater anguish to be experienced some 600 years after his time, when the Romans would again take the city.

Jeremiah both predicted the worldwide dispersion

## History’s Witness

We are now in the privileged position of being able to look back at these developments and see them to be completely accurate. There were only four times when an Empire ruled with unchallenged might and influence – Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome – after which there were many nations which seized control of parts of the world for a while, but never with the same unrivalled power. Nebuchadnezzar saw the iron legs of the image give way to feet of iron and clay – and foresaw a mixture of



*Jewish dispersion – just as predicted*



of the nation and their eventual regathering. As it turned out, the dispersion came about in AD 70 (the occasion that Daniel also described in 9:26) and it lasted nearly 2000 years.

For all that time the Jewish people were wanderers and pilgrims, a people without a land or obvious national identity. Wherever they went they were unwelcome, their reputation going before them. Often they were persecuted and pillaged, sometimes they must have feared for their very existence as a people. But the prophetic word still stood for, as Jeremiah had said in BC 600:

***“Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, ‘He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock.’ For the LORD has redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of one stronger than he. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion” (Jeremiah 31:10-12).***

Through the centuries the Jewish people must have wondered at the likelihood of that coming about, for they were more often like sheep without a shepherd,

being savaged by wolves. Then, at the end of the 19th century, it began to happen and in the 20th century the Jewish nation was reborn.

### **Modern Miracle**

When – in 1967 – Jews recaptured Jerusalem and occupied it as theirs for the first time since their fateful last stand against the Romans in AD 70, they had returned to the *“height of Zion”*, the prophet’s way of describing one of the hills on which Jerusalem stands. Again the prophetic Word of God was being fulfilled to the letter so that another generation – ours – could witness the marvellous way in which God has the future in His hands.

All these things are coming true, just as the Bible predicted, so that we can reach the same conclusion that King Nebuchadnezzar came to more than 2500 years ago. God does not just tell us about the future to satisfy our curiosity or to impress us with His foresight. He wants us to prepare for what is coming – and coming soon:

***“In order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men (Daniel 4:17).***

## Bible Teaching

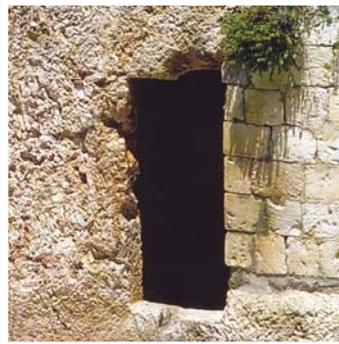
# First Century Christianity

**The Kingdom of God is a key theme in first century Christianity. Jesus spoke about it constantly and many of his parables began with the words “The kingdom of God is like...”**

The last question Jesus was asked by the apostles before his departure to heaven concerned this very topic and that after Jesus had spent nearly six weeks teaching them more about “*the things pertaining to the kingdom of God*” (Acts 1:3).

Just what that teaching comprised can be seen from the nature of the question the disciples asked, as they were walking along the road to Bethany. “*Lord*”, they asked, “*Will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?*” (Acts 1:6). Evidently Jesus had been explaining to them that the Old Testament Scriptures not only foretold his death and resurrection (see 1 Corinthians 15:3,4) but also his impending return to earth to rule as King, when the Kingdom of God is restored to Israel.

The answer Jesus gave makes that quite clear: he did not rebuke them for their misunderstanding but explained that the timing of his coming and of his kingdom was a matter for God alone (Acts 1:7) and that meanwhile they had a job to do preaching the gospel.



## Hope of Israel

That ancient hope – that Jerusalem will be the throne of the Lord, and God’s people Israel will return to divine favour – is a vital part of the gospel of salvation (see Acts 26:7;28:20 and Romans chapter 11). The return of a King to Jerusalem is a key event in making this world an eternal dwelling place for those who are to be saved by God from utter destruction.

Now that pagan and mythical ideas have wrongly been mixed into the Christianity many people believe, a lot of confusion exists about the true Christian hope. People believe wrongly in the immortality of human existence and in a future inheritance in heaven, making the actual promises of God of little significance. But that was not so with Jesus.

- ❖ He taught that sin and death are fatal conditions, capable of destroying our entire existence unless something is done about it (see Luke 13:1-5; John 3:15,16).
- ❖ His offer of salvation includes the meek inheriting “*the earth*” (Matthew 5:5) and Jerusalem becoming “*the city of the great King*” (5:35).

## Hope of Resurrection

The earth is to be renewed and revitalised when Jesus rules as King from Jerusalem over a world that is to be first subdued and then glorified. Men

and women who survive the traumas of the troubled days immediately before his Coming are to be allowed to live in peace and harmony. Barren places will be made fertile; injustices will be put right; oppressors will be destroyed; true religion will be reinstated – including the establishment of worship once again at Jerusalem.

Those who have been true followers of Jesus in the years before his Return as King will be made immortal and will become helpers and workers in the newly established Kingdom, as its influence and control gradually increases and extends throughout the earth. The end result will be that then: *“all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD”* (Numbers 14:21; see also Psalm 72:19 and Habakkuk 2:14).

How is this to be accomplished? Scripture says it will be achieved by the coming of the Lord Jesus and some of the angels from heaven. For the unconscious dead – many of those who now *“sleep in the dust of the earth”* (Daniel 12:2) will awake from their slumbers and be summoned to meet the Lord at his judgement seat. Those accounted worthy will be made immortal and others will return to the dust of death forever. And believers who are still living when Jesus comes will be changed, so that this mortal condition will be transformed to a state of immortality and incorruptibility (see 1 Corinthians 15:50-57 and Philippians 3:20-21).

## One True Faith

These are teachings and beliefs that belong to first century Christianity, for these are the things the Lord and his

apostles taught and they are part of a saving faith. There is only one true gospel which must be believed if we are to be saved and anything based upon man-made ideas is both wrong and misleading. The Bible insists that there is only one true faith: **“you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all”** (Ephesians 4:4-6).



Model in the Bible Exhibition of a baptismal bath of the 4th century

We must make sure that the hope we have is a Bible-based hope not a man-made one and that we have properly understood the nature and work of both Father and Son in the offer of salvation that is being made to us.

## Faith and Baptism

Notice that Paul says there is only *“one hope”* and he explains what he means by adding that it demands both *“faith”* and *“baptism”*. These were vital components of the Lord’s teaching and the way this was practised can be seen time and again in the New Testament.

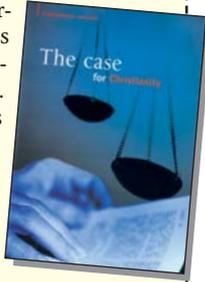
It was the command of the risen Christ that his followers: *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptised will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”* (Mark 16:15,16).

Thus it was that the apostles journeyed around Asia and Europe, as recorded in the Book of Acts, teaching and baptising, by immersion in water. It was God’s way of symbolising the end of an old life and the start of a new life in Christ. That same opportunity exists for us, once we accept read and understand the Bible – the Word of the living God. It can transform your life and give you a new start and a real hope, both for the present and the future.

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