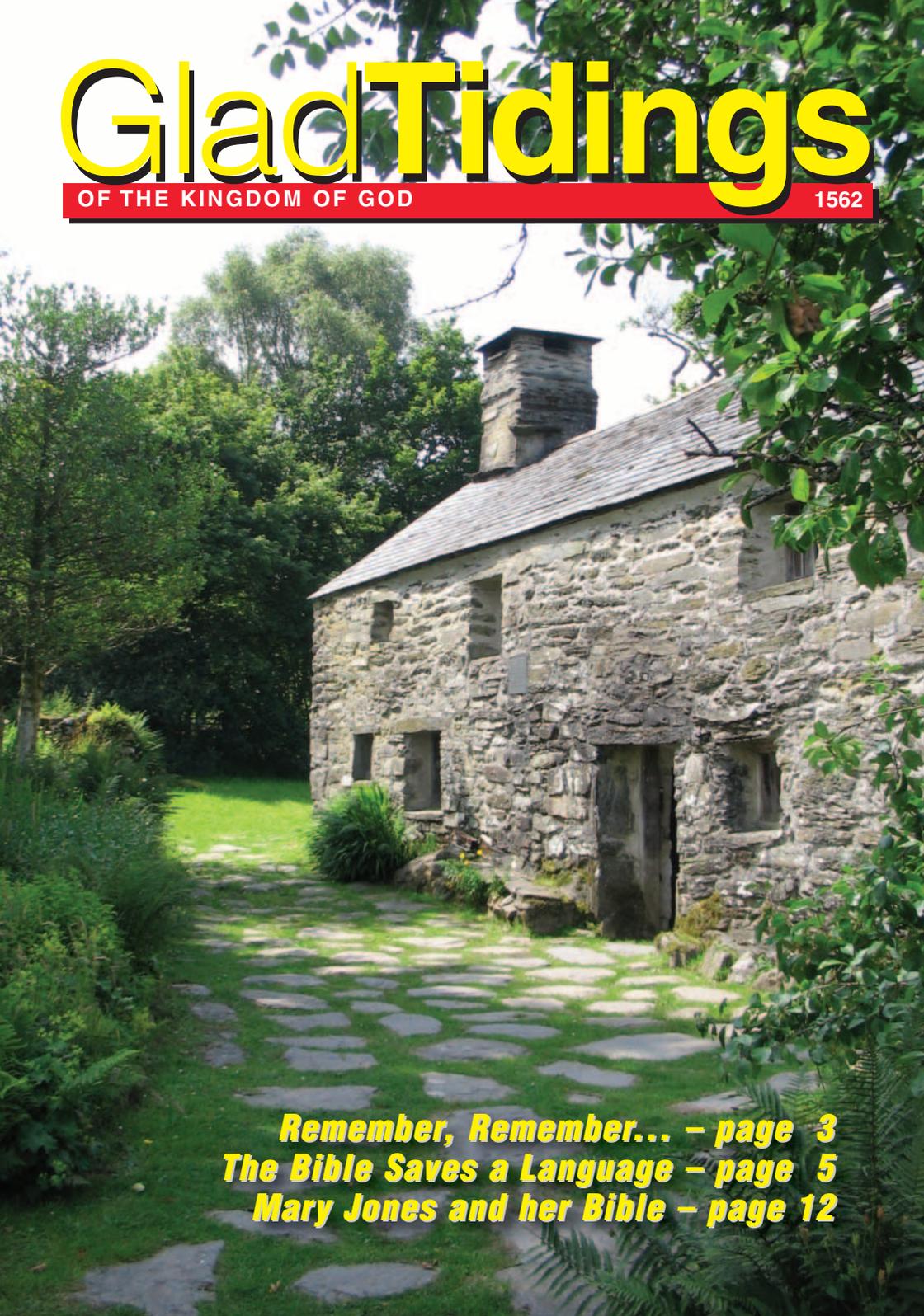


Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1562



Remember, Remember... – page 3
The Bible Saves a Language – page 5
Mary Jones and her Bible – page 12

Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

130th Year

G14

1562



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

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

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Contents

Remember, Remember... 3

The Bible Saves a Language.....5

Why I Believe the Bible...8

Mary Jones and her Bible.12

Your Precious Bible15

Poem: The Scriptures17

The Cornerstone of the Gospel18

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Remember, Remember...

It's so easy to forget. Our memories are like sieves, which seem to let things slip through, although everything may be somewhere in the mind, if only we could retrieve it! But what about things that happened years ago, things which a nation needs to remember as part of its political, cultural or religious heritage? How about that?

Memorials

One way is to erect a memorial, a plaque or an inscription. Many towns and villages have war memorials to remind people about soldiers who died in battles fought long ago and ceremonies are held annually at the memorial to remember the fallen.

Many buildings have plaques attached to say that so-and-so was born or lived there, although the property might now bear little resemblance to the original dwelling. Sometimes the original property might have been preserved much as it was, perhaps as a museum or an exhibition centre.

The cottage on this month's cover is exactly that. Named "Ty Mawr", which translates as 'Big House', it is located in a remote part of North Wales and has been preserved to remind visitors that in 1545 William Morgan was born here. His father was a tenant farmer and William might have followed in his footsteps, in which case we would never have heard of him. Instead, somehow he was able to attend St John's College in Cambridge where he became proficient in Hebrew and Greek, the languages in which the Old and New Testaments were first written. Years afterwards, as a later article explains, William Morgan was respon-

sible for publishing the first printed Welsh Bible. If you remember that the Spanish Armada was conquered by Sir Francis Drake in 1588, you also know the date when William Morgan's Bible was first published.

Plaques

The translation itself was undertaken when William was vicar of a church in the village of Llanrhaedrym-Mochnant (not very far, as it happens, from where the Editor was born). Visit there today and you will find the church, a plaque, an inscription where a summerhouse once stood, where much of the work was done, and the former vicarage has been renamed in his honour.

But the Bible would mean nothing to



The plaque on the former Vicarage, now named "Morgan Hall".

a nation if nobody wanted to read it. Journey towards the Mid-Wales coast, near Dolgellau, and you can find another memorial, this time in recognition of a young girl who had a burning desire to read the Bible and to possess a copy of her own. The story of Mary Jones and her Bible is widely known but in 1800 she was just a poor girl who had saved for six years in order to

buy her own Welsh Bible and walked 25 miles to Bala in order to purchase one. What happened as a consequence is described in a later article, but so that people don't forget her and her fervent desire to read God's Word, there is a plaque at the ruined cottage where she once lived, a memorial within its walls and, of course, a suitable inscription on her gravestone in the village of Bryn-Crug.

Statues

Some people like to re-enact Mary's 25 mile walk to Bala, following a likely route, especially as it's a beautiful part of Wales. Arriving in Bala they head, of course, for the building where Thomas Charles once lived – the man who could have sold Mary that Bible. Bala is a lovely lakeside town, very popular with tourists, and it too has suitable ways of remembering Mary's journey and its aftermath. There are three plaques on the house where Mr Charles once lived (which is now a bank), and an imposing statue of the man himself, a founder of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

These three people – William Morgan, Mary Jones and Thomas Charles – are all worth remembering for they help us to appreciate how privileged we are to have such ready and affordable access to God's Word and they challenge us. We can compare ourselves with them to get



some measure of our own determination, commitment and concern. But we also show that every day by reading or ignoring what God says to us in the Bible.

Remember Jesus

Nobody really knows just where the Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem, where he lived in Nazareth, or Capernaum, just where he died in Jerusalem, or where he was laid in a tomb. He has no gravestone, for he rose from the dead, and lives now in heaven.

But we must never forget what he did and said, and how he lived – entirely without fault or failure. He asked for no plaque, memorial or statue to be erected to keep us remembering him. Instead he commanded his followers to share bread and wine together, saying: “do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). It is when baptised believers do this Sunday by Sunday that they “proclaim the Lord's death till he comes” (1 Corinthians 11:26).

The Bible promises that Jesus will return from heaven to rule on earth and we need to keep that promise in mind. If we remember it, it should affect the way we think, act and live.

Editor

The Bible Saves a Language

In 1588, the Welsh Bible did more than simply make the Word of God available to the people of Wales. It also effectively preserved the Welsh language, which might otherwise have fallen into disuse. In this article, Alan Fowler explains how the Welsh Bible came to be translated, and argues that the Word of God can do more than save a language: it can save you too!

Abolition Threat

King Henry VII was a Tudor monarch, who also happened to be a Welshman. In the interests of unifying England and Wales into one kingdom, he decided upon the eventual abolition of the Welsh language. This policy was continued by his son, Henry VIII, who passed the Act of Union in 1536. His break with Rome in the same year, which led to the establishment of the Anglican Church, did not change his basic attitude to the appropriate language for worship. Like England, Wales continued to be dominated by a Latin-speaking church.



King Henry VIII

But by now the Reformation was unstoppable and the movement was encouraging the translation of the Bible into everyday languages. It was an especially active force in the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Richard Davies (1501-1581), who in 1530 graduated from New Inn Hall, Oxford, was a reformer and translator who was made Bishop of St. David's. He may well have been instrumental in persuading Queen Elizabeth to pass an Act in 1563 which was to check the decline of Welsh. For it called for a Welsh translation of the Prayer Book and Bible, and required that they be placed in every church in Wales.

Regular readers of *Glad Tidings* will note that this coincided with King Henry VIII's command that an English Bible be placed in each Parish in England. His decree was issued in 1538 and the resultant Great Bible appeared the following year.

New Testament

To fulfil the Act's requirements, Richard Davies enlisted the services of William Salesbury (1520-1584), a brilliant Oxford scholar and linguist, who had already published a Welsh lectionary containing the gospels and epistles. Together they published the first complete printed New Testament in Welsh, in 1567. Unfortunately, Salesbury's New Testament was marred by his idiosyncratic alteration of Welsh words, to make them resemble their Latin equivalents. As a result the book was more suitable for scholars than for the common people.

Interestingly enough, there was a similar development in England when, in 1542, an attempt was made to bring the Great Bible more into line with the Latin Vulgate. Fortunately the work came to nothing, otherwise we might have had such sentences as “This is my dilect son in whom compacui”, instead of the preferable wording “*This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased*” (Matthew 3:17).

Richard Davies and William Salesbury had planned to proceed with a Welsh translation of the Old Testament but the partnership was dissolved, so the tradition has it, because of a difference of opinion over one Hebrew word. As a result, it is said that Wales had to wait another 21 years for a complete Bible in Welsh.

William Morgan

This task was undertaken by William Morgan. He was born in 1541 and entered St. John’s College, Cambridge in 1563. William Tyndale (who first printed an English New Testament in 1525) and Miles Coverdale (who produced the first English Bible), were also educated at Cambridge, which thus continued its good tradition of close association with Bible translation.

William Morgan studied Hebrew, Greek and Latin and the year after he started in Cambridge Queen Elizabeth visited the college and made speeches in Greek and Latin. It is quite likely that this visit could have inspired the young student to be the scholar who, 24 years later, would present this same Queen with the first complete Bible in Welsh.

William Morgan graduated in 1568 and became a minister at a small town, near Aberystwyth. Ten years later

he moved to Llanrhaedr ym Mochnant, near Oswestry, six miles from the English border. He was to stay there until he was appointed to another post, in 1595, at the request of Queen Elizabeth, and it was during the first ten years in this country village that all his energies were to be devoted to the work of translation. In these busy times, it is as well to reflect upon the benefits that have come from quiet contemplation upon the Word of God. We have to find such time ourselves, if we are to appreciate, and then apply, the teaching of God’s holy and inspired Word.

From the Original

The work of this earnest man took him back to the original languages in which the Bible was first written – Hebrew and Greek – as well as to the English translations of Tyndale and Coverdale, and the Welsh New Testament of Salesbury and Davies. It was a huge task for one man to undertake. Yet, on its success depended not only the survival of Welsh Protestantism and non-conformity, but also in all probability the survival of the Welsh as a distinct and identifiable nation. If William Morgan had not produced his translation, the Welsh language would almost certainly have died out as did



The Vicarage in Llanrhaedr-ym-Mochnant

Cornish and other Celtic tongues. Thanks to him Welsh remains the oldest living language in Europe.

A parallel to this can be seen in the case of the Jewish nation who, dispersed from their original land, kept Hebrew alive through their use of Biblical Hebrew. It required Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, the father of modern Hebrew, to update the language when the Jews returned to Israel, and again it was the growing familiarity of the Welsh with the Scriptures that so embedded their language and their culture in the national mind.

A Book to Read

For William Morgan, however, the translation was solely intended for the purpose of giving his people a knowledge of the inspired Word of God. In his Dedication to the Queen he wrote, *“Unless religion is taught in the common tongue it will remain hidden and unknown”*.

His work made it possible for the people of Wales to follow the example of the people of Berea who *“searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so”* (Acts 17:11). Similar work, done by other translators, now makes it possible for us all to share this benefit. We too can read God’s Word in our native language. But do we really appreciate what a blessing that is?

In 1587 William Morgan set out on horseback carrying his precious manuscript. London was 200 miles away, but it was the only place where the Bible could be printed, even though the printer, Christopher Barker, was English. This meant that he had to remain in London in order to supervise the printing, and thus avoid errors.

All went well and in the following



year, 1588, he presented a copy of the Welsh Bible to Queen Elizabeth. When he died, in 1604, he was still a poor man, but he bequeathed incalculable riches to the Welsh nation.

So, when you examine Bishop Morgan’s Bible, or any other early translation, remember that these were written so that men and women could read and understand the Word of the living God. The Bible is a living book with a message for today; we neglect it at our peril.

If you really want to express appreciation for the work undertaken by Bishop William Morgan or by other translators, many of whom lost their lives for us, consider what William Morgan would have said if he were asked to advise. It would probably have been something like this:

“For the sake of your eternal salvation don’t just look at the Bible – read it!”

Alan & Margaret Fowler

Why I Believe the Bible

Do I mean that every word in the Bible is literal truth and is to be taken precisely as it stands, without interpretation or question as to its meaning within its context? I'm not sure that anyone believes the Bible like that! Such would be an invention of those who want to ridicule the whole idea of believing in such an old book.

Am I saying that I believe the Bible only to the extent that when I come across anything in it that's difficult to understand or appears to cut across conventional thinking, then I'm prepared to water it down or re-interpret it to make it more palatable?

No, I'm not pushing either of those points of view. I'm saying that I believe what the Bible says about itself – that it is the inspired Word of God; that it is, as the Apostle Paul puts it, “*able to make you wise for salvation*” (2 Timothy 3:15). I trust its statements. I approach it, not from the point of view of asking it to justify itself, but rather seeking what it has to teach – not simply because it's true, but because it tells me how to order my life and it gives me hope for the future.

Properly Interpreted

In the main, the Bible means what it says. There is Biblical language which is literal and must be interpreted literally and there is figurative language which has to be interpreted figuratively. Remember that a simile or metaphor does not detract from the underlying literal meaning. And there is symbolic language which must be interpreted symbolically. This symbolic language is normally clearly recognisable as such, but can be hard to understand without



first obtaining knowledge of the underlying literal fundamentals. The Book of Revelation is the most obvious example of this. Here are a few simple illustrations that might help.

- ❖ The New Testament tells us that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. It tells us so in literal language, and there are strong reasons (which we'll come back to later) for believing this miraculous event to be literally true.
- ❖ When the Bible describes, as a matter of history, the Babylonians taking Judah into captivity, it is a true historical record - with important moral lessons attached.
- ❖ The Lord Jesus Christ told a story about a man going into a far country. This wasn't literally true, but was a parable with an important truth and a lesson which the story conveyed.
- ❖ In the book of Daniel we read about a conflict between a ram and a goat. These animals are symbols, and we're actually told who they represent – two nations.

- ❖ In the Book of Revelation we read about a woman seated upon seven hills. That's a literal impossibility, but the description was a symbol which was designed to make the reader think of the city of Rome, which is situated on seven hills.

Inspired Composition

I mentioned earlier the claims the Bible makes for itself. Some famous poets and composers are sometimes said to have been “inspired”, by which it is meant that they tapped into a stream of consciousness that was beyond their normal capability. The Bible's claim to be inspired is explained in that it also claims to be the Word of God.

Of course, anybody can claim anything, so the claim itself isn't conclusive. Bear in mind, however, that if this claim is fraudulent then the Bible's teaching is most seriously devalued. If, however, the Bible's claim is valid, then its teaching is of the utmost importance, surpassing that from any other source. It would be deserving of our very closest attention.

Let's consider a few examples of the Bible's own claim to be the Word of God. Time and again in the Old Testament you find sections prefaced with the words, “*Thus says the Lord*” or, “*Hear the word of the Lord*” or, “*The word of the Lord came to me*”.

These claims are very, very numerous, and they're not limited to what writers say about themselves. The books of the Old Testament support and add authority to each other. What's more, the books of the New Testament make constant reference to those of the Old Testament. These are not just in isolated instances, but rather the Old Testament is woven right through the fabric of the New in such a

way as to clearly indicate that the Old Testament quotations and allusions are adding indispensable authority to what we read in the New Testament.

Inspired Examples

Here are two passages in the New Testament which testify to the inspired truth of the Old Testament:

“From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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 3:15-17).

“We also have the prophetic word made more sure, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:19-21).

This approach to the Old Testament Scriptures was very much a characteristic of the teaching of Christ himself. Just consider what he is recorded as saying to his disciples after his resurrection from the dead:

“He said to them, ‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning me.’ And he opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

Then he said to them, 'Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day...' (Luke 24:44-46).

As discussed earlier, none of this proves the Bible to be inspired. Nevertheless, the unity, harmony and coherence of both Old and New Testaments are phenomena you would expect to find in inspired writings. They are so well matched and dependent upon one another that they would have been extremely hard to produce without inspiration, particularly in works that were written over a period of 1500 years.

Endorsed by Jesus

From those verses in Luke chapter 24 we can see just what the attitude of Jesus Christ was towards the Old Testament. In particular he understood that it had foretold the nature of his mission and what would happen to him. If you read through the Old Testament this is demonstrably true. In it you find many, many predictions about him:

- ❖ the circumstances and the place of his birth;
- ❖ the purpose of his work and mission;
- ❖ descriptions of his demeanour and character;
- ❖ the attitude of people towards him;
- ❖ his final entry into Jerusalem;
- ❖ his betrayal;
- ❖ the way he was forsaken by his disciples;
- ❖ the harsh treatment he received before being executed;

- ❖ the precise details of his death including the mode of execution (vivid descriptions that were written centuries before crucifixion was known as a method of execution);
- ❖ his resurrection from the dead and his ascension to heaven.

In fact, a whole library of information was written down about Jesus Christ hundreds of years before the event. All those details can be found in the Old Testament. Of course, we read about them plainly in the New Testament, but this is what we can read about him in the Old Testament. That means that, hundreds of years beforehand, prophecies were written which were to be fulfilled to the letter by Christ. As one writer aptly expressed this inter-dependence:

The New is in the Old contained
The Old is in the New explained
The New is in the Old concealed
The Old is in the New revealed
The New is in the Old enfolded
The Old is in the New unfolded.

Human or Divine?

So, is the Bible a book of merely human origin? True, the writers, the penmen, were human; but what about the mind behind them? Only a Divine mind could have made such accurate predictions. Bible prophecy is therefore one indication that the Bible is inspired. We have already noted how the life story of the Lord Jesus was foretold in very great detail, and Jesus is right at the centre of the revealed purpose of God. Here is another, albeit less important, example of how God can both foretell and control the future.

The people of the nation of Israel are styled in the Old Testament, "God's witnesses". God, we are told, chose Israel not because of their importance but because He loved them. The Old and New Testaments contain an amazingly candid record of their history, with their flaws and failings plainly revealed. There was a consistent record of failure that no nation on earth would be willing to compile for themselves. The question is: Why did Israel preserve records that expose their faithlessness and corruption in such forthright terms? Other nations would have got rid of such unflattering material long ago. Why has Israel not dared to do so? The answer must be because they acknowledge that these writings emanated from God.

We read in the Old Testament of interventions by God in Israel's history, scatterings and regatherings, declines and revivals. The Jewish people have survived persecutions, expulsions, massacres - indeed all attempts either to assimilate or exterminate them. Just ponder the astonishing growth of the number of Jewish people living in Palestine. In 1882 there were only 24,000; in 1917, the year of the Balfour Declaration, 55,000; by 1948, when the modern State of Israel was founded, 657,000; and today there are about 5 million Jews living in Israel. This regathering was foretold by Old Testament prophets. Here is the message God gave them:

"...I am with you, says the Lord, to save you; though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet I will not make a complete end of you. But I will correct you in justice, and will not let you go altogether unpunished" (Jeremiah 30:11).

"He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock" (Jeremiah 31:10).

"...I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land" (Ezekiel 36:24).

The USA is the only single nation still having more Jews living in it than there are in Israel. Clearly though, there's more revival and regathering to happen. Nevertheless, the regathering of Jews to Palestine and the establishment of the State of Israel in the 20th century has been a most remarkable fulfilment of Bible prophecy. It has shown dramatically that such prophecy, far from being the forecasting of trivia or purposeless crystal-gazing, testifies to the existence of a purpose and plan with the earth that God is working out and will bring to fruition.

Conclusion

There are many other ways of checking on the authenticity of the Bible. In this article we have looked at the internal consistency of the record (Old and New Testaments) and the remarkable way in which God foretold the future. Bible prophecies about the Lord Jesus Christ have come absolutely true as have those made about the nation of Israel and the return of the Jewish people to their ancient homeland.

This is the sort of evidence that makes me believe in the inspiration and accuracy of God's Word. These are reasons why I believe the Bible. I commend it to you as the Word of God and urge you to read it systematically and prayerfully, and to take its message to heart.

Mark Sawyer

Mary Jones and her Bible

*In the autumn of 1800 a 15 year old Welsh girl walked 25 miles to Bala, a small market town in Mid Wales, to buy her own Bible. This incident had profound consequences, as **Alan Fowler** now explains.*

The story begins in Llanfihangel-y-Pennant, a small hamlet in a remote Welsh valley lying in the shadow of Cader Idris, a mountain in Mid Wales. It was here that Mary Jones was born in December 1784, in a poor weaver's cottage called Tyn-y-ddol, by the banks of a tumbling stream.

Poor Folk

At that time rural Wales was a very poor, almost feudal, society. There was no state education and the majority of country folk were illiterate. Before Mary was five her father had died, so her mother had a hard struggle to make ends meet.

This was a time of religious revival in Wales, a movement led by Methodist preachers. Mary and her mother attended meetings for Bible reading and prayer conducted by William Hugh in Lechwedd in the same parish. These meetings gave Mary a great love for the Bible which sadly she could not read, and it was not until she was 10 years of age that she learnt to read, at one of the circulating schools that had been set up by Thomas Charles, a well known preacher from Bala, in the nearby village of Abergynolwyn.

Unfulfilled Desire

When Mary could read there was still a problem: Welsh Bibles were far too expensive for Mary's mother to buy. But there was a Bible belonging to a



Mrs Evans, who lived at Penybrynaiu farm, about two miles from Mary's home.

She would walk to Penybrynaiu every week in all weathers to read and learn passages from the Bible in Mrs Evans' parlour. Mary's dearest wish was to have a Bible of her own and she decided to save every penny to buy one. This was a daunting task because in those days you needed a small fortune to buy a Bible. Mary put aside every penny she received from neighbours for helping them, but it was not until she was 15 that she had saved enough to buy one.

Scarce Commodity

There was another problem. Welsh Bibles were scarce or unobtainable because, at that time, they could only be printed under licence by the King's printers in London and they demanded advance payments before agreeing to print Welsh Bibles, which most Welsh people could not afford to buy. It was a vicious circle.

So, the production of Welsh Bibles for the home depended on subsidies from sponsors and organizations such as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the Religious Tract Society. For example, the first Welsh Bible for the home (as distinct from pulpit Bibles) published in 1630, was made possible by a contribution of the then huge sum of £1,000 from two Welshmen living in London.

Personal Account

The story of how Mary Jones obtained her Bible from Thomas Charles can best be told in Mary's own words, spoken to Lizzie Rowlands. As a young lady, Lizzie used to read the Bible to Mary when she was old and blind.

"One stormy Monday morning when I was walking to a farmhouse about two miles from my home, a gentleman riding on a white horse and wearing a cloth cape came to meet me, and asked me where I was going through such wind and rain. I said I was going to a farmhouse where there was a Bible, that there wasn't one nearer my home, and that the mistress of the farm had said that I could see the Bible, which she kept on a table in the parlour, as long as I took my clogs off. I told him that I was saving up every halfpenny this long time to get a Bible, but that I did not know where I could get one. The gentleman was 'Charles

of Bala'. He told me to come to Bala at a certain time, that he was expecting some from London and that I should have one from him.

"When the time came my mother put the money and a little bread and cheese in one end of the 'wallet' and my clogs in the other, and I set off for Bala on a fine morning, resting where there was a stream of clear water, to eat the bread and cheese. I came to Bala, and trembling, knocked on the door of Mr. Charles's house. I asked for Mr. Charles; he was in his study which was at the back of the house. I was allowed to go to him and he told me that the Bibles had not arrived. I started to cry because I did not know where to stay. He sent me to stay with an old servant of his who had a house at the bottom of his garden, until the Bibles came. When they came, Mr. Charles gave me three for the money, that is for the price of one. I set off home with my precious burden. I ran a great part of the way, I was so glad of my Bible".¹

Life-long Treasure

Later Mary married a weaver, Thomas Jones, and settled in Bryncreg, where she had six children. All except a son, Ioan, died in infancy or childhood. Ioan and family emigrated to America and in 1852 Mary lost her husband, so she spent the last 12 years of her life in loneliness and poverty.

Mary kept and cherished her Bible to the end of her days and later it passed into the possession of the British and Foreign Bible Society and is now kept in the Bible Society Library, in Cambridge University. One of the other

¹. K. Monica Davies, *Journal of the Historical Society of the Presbyterian Church of Wales*, Vol. 3 Oct. 1967 pgs.74-80.

Bibles obtained by Mary Jones went to her aunt and later came into the possession of Lizzie Rowlands and is now in the National Library of Wales. The third Bible was probably taken to America.

Lasting Outcome

Mary died in 1864, at the age of 80, and is buried in the graveyard of Bethlehem Chapel, Bryncreg, but her story does not end there. The plight of Mary Jones and others like her showed the great need that existed for Welsh Bibles. The stock of Bibles published by the SPCK (The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge) in 1799 was soon exhausted and Thomas Charles determined to go to London and plead for more Welsh Bibles.

On 7th December 1802 he attended a meeting of the Religious Tract Society held in a warehouse on Swan Wharf, near London Bridge, which was owned by a man called Thomas Hardcastle, a keen Christian. At that time the Napoleonic wars were darkening all Europe and the fear of war was hanging over England also. It was not a good time to talk of new projects, but the men who met that morning were not afraid of new ventures.

“If for Wales, why not for England, why not for the whole world?” said one of them. And so, in 1804, the British and Foreign Bible Society was founded. It turned out that Thomas Charles had started something much bigger than a Society to print Bibles for his own country. Since then the Bible Societies have printed millions of Bibles, or portions of the Bible, by now in over 2,230 languages.

Excitement in Wales

When the first copies of the Bible Society’s Welsh New Testament



reached Bala in September 1806 there was jubilation. Contemporary records indicate that on the day the Testaments were expected the scenes in Bala were extraordinary. From the first light of day, companies of people could be seen gathering from the outlying districts, and when news came that the cartload was approaching the town, crowds rushed out to meet it.

The mare was taken from the cartshafts and strong young men took her place and pulled the cartload joyfully into the town, where they received a rapturous welcome from the crowds thronging the streets. Thomas Charles hardly had time to unload the New Testaments before they were all sold, such was the people’s desire for God’s Word at that time.

What lessons can we learn from this wonderful story of devotion to the Bible, the word of God? It is a story of perseverance and determination which surely puts us to shame! For now we all have Bibles – they are cheap and plentiful. But do we read them? Do we long to have this word of life in our hands and treasure its message of hope and light in a dark world?

Mary Jones read through her Bible many times. Why not start reading the Bible today?

Alan Fowler

Your Precious Bible

Just imagine it. A person burst through a door shouting, very loudly and excitedly, that he had just discovered God's Word! Why was he so excited?

Readily Available

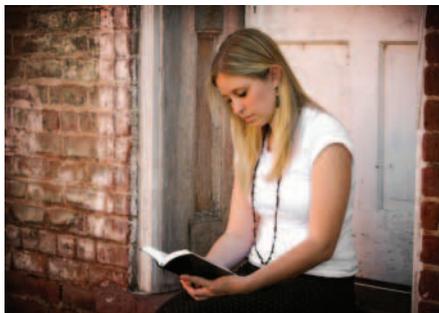
Nowadays, Bibles are not rare at all – six billion copies have been sold worldwide: more than 100 million last year alone! It tops the best-seller list every year! Not only are there teeming millions of Bibles circulating around the world, but just think of how many you might have in your own house.

So it would be hard for any of us to feel too excited about finding a Bible. It's not really a discovery, is it? We know that most people, in most countries, could get a Bible very quickly, today. Surely there's nothing special about this. Yet, if you first thought this, you might be surprised to hear that this story is not fictional at all, but actually based upon a true event. In fact, it's something that happened during biblical times – a long time ago.

King Josiah

During the time of the prophet Jeremiah – a very famous prophet of God – Hilkiah the high priest found the Book of the Law, and gave it to Shaphan the scribe who, in turn, brought it before the King of Judah. His name was King Josiah (see 2 Kings, chapter 22). Imagine what it must have been like for the young king to hear a portion of the Word of God being read to him for the very first time.

On hearing this Law – probably “The Book of Deuteronomy” – the king was



moved with such emotion that he told everyone in Judah about God's holy ways. Soon the Book was being publicly read and the king assembled all the elders of Israel to renew the covenant with the Lord God. As things turned out, King Josiah was just like his grandfather, King Hezekiah, who was famed for being faithful to God. Josiah was also a truly righteous king.

Lost and Found

Why had this Book of the Law gone missing, presumably years before? We know that during Old Testament times, the law had to be written down afresh, whenever a new king ascended the throne of Israel. We read from that Law that:

“It shall be, when he [the King] sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes” (Deut. 17:18,19).

So clearly there should always have been a copy of the Law available in the

king's palace but, for whatever reason, there wasn't one. Nonetheless, the all-important point here is that Hilkiyah – the high priest – discovered a copy of God's law and was overjoyed with his new find.

So what about us? Are we excited about opening the Word of God – the Bible – and reading it? Have we ever been so interested with a part of Scripture that we've spent hours studying it, even into the long hours of the night? Do we read the Bible daily, to learn more of God's plan and purpose with the earth? In actual fact, our answers here are good indicators of how much we truly love and value the Bible.

The Welsh Bible

Elsewhere in this issue we can read about the diligent efforts of William Morgan to translate the Bible into Welsh and the extraordinary lengths that Mary Jones went in order to get a Bible for herself, so that she could read it.

- ❖ Would we have been just like her, if we too had lived in the 19th century?
- ❖ Would we have been driven to such efforts?
- ❖ Would we have placed such a high value on possessing a Bible and reading it for ourselves?
- ❖ How much would we be prepared to pay?

What's it Worth?

Another way – albeit a very crude one – of looking at what the Bible means to us is to calculate how much a copy in days gone by would be worth today. It's been said that a skilled writer would take about 10 months to copy the



Bible by hand. So, as a basic calculation, if we assume that a scribe was paid a conservative wage and that he worked for 8 hours a day, 5 days a week, for 10 months, then this would come out at about £20,000 for a Bible! And in making this calculation we haven't included the cost of the materials used (paper, ink, glue, gilding, etc), just the cost of the labour!

It's also probably unreasonable to assume that a highly skilled scribe would be on a conservative wage, since scribal skills would have been rare and greatly in demand. Using a more realistic cost per hour for such services a written Bible might cost closer to £50,000 – or, by way of comparison, the cost of two new cars!

Obviously such a huge sum of money would put Bible ownership out of reach of the vast majority of normal people. Very few would be able to afford such a steep price tag! What a sorry picture this would be.

Privileged People

That said, it's impossible to estimate the real value of the Bible because it's

absolutely priceless! You simply can't put a value to it! For in it we have a revelation of the Creator's plan and purpose with the earth and mankind. It contains the only means of salvation. Without our Bibles we wouldn't know anything about the Lord Jesus Christ, and what he achieved on our behalf.

However, this numerical illustration does highlight what an amazing blessing we all have. Even as recently as a hundred years ago, books such as the Bible were very expensive. Possessions weren't so readily available back then, and families weren't as well-off.

Today, Bibles are owned by most people. This is one of the great advantages of printing and publishing, as Bibles no longer have to be handwritten. They can be mass-produced very quickly and cheaply, and distributed across the world. What an amazing blessing this is!

But the value of the Bible is not in its printing and binding, but in where the words have come from. They've originated from God Himself – the author of this extraordinary book! We need to read it daily, and treat it with the utmost care. And what an awesome privilege we have: to be able to listen to God – the Creator of the heavens and the earth – every day, when we read the Bible.

Sadly, although many people own a copy, few actually read it properly – as predicted by Jesus himself when he asked, *“When the Son of Man comes, will he really find faith on the earth?”* (Luke 18:8).

So let's try to learn more of God's Word now, while we still have the time and opportunity.

Stephen Whitehouse

The Scriptures

**The Scriptures paint for us God's bigger picture
And spiritual vision lets us see with ease
The peace and joy that's planned in God's new kingdom,
For those who see the wood, not just the trees.**

**The Scriptures open windows to the future
And with the eyes of faith, we can behold
This earth transformed, in splendour and in wonder —
Eden enhanced, as in God's Word foretold.**

**The Scriptures are our guide to godly living,
And we'll be changed and think of higher things;
We'll put God first, and strive to do His bidding,
And then receive the benefits it brings.**

Colleen Simons

The Cornerstone of the Gospel

The word ‘Gospel’ means ‘Good news’. But what is the really good news that the Bible contains?

The Bible speaks of the return of Jesus to the earth to set up God’s kingdom here on earth and promises the faithful that they will inherit a place in that kingdom. That good news is guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus.



Promises to Abraham

The coming kingdom of God on earth will bring about the fulfilment of the promises to Abraham. When he is raised from the dead, Abraham and his descendants will receive the land of Canaan (modern day Israel) as an everlasting possession, as God has promised:

Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God (Genesis 17:8).

However, these promises to Abraham extend beyond possession of a piece of land. Abraham actually heard ‘the gospel’ when God promised a blessing upon all nations, as the apostle Paul explains:

The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed” (Galatians 3:8).

The message here is that our sins can be forgiven. That is how a person is ‘justified’ before God. King David explains this saying:

“Blessed is he ... whose sin is covered” (Psalm 32:1).

This is how all families will be blessed through faith. That ‘faith’ is to be in the resurrection of Jesus.

The Resurrection

Consider what Paul said to believers in Corinth:

If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! (1 Corinthians 15:13–17).

Notice the key points made by the inspired apostle:

- ❶ *If there is no resurrection of the dead, Christ has not risen;*
- ❷ *If Christ has not risen everything we believe and teach is in vain;*
- ❸ *Without the resurrection of Jesus, our sins cannot be forgiven.*

Apostolic Teaching

If belief in the resurrection of Jesus is so important we would expect to find this as a major element of the preaching of the followers of Jesus, just after his resurrection. And so it is. Consider these two typical examples of what the apostle Peter preached:

Acts 3:15 (you) killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead;

Acts 4:10 by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth ... whom God raised from the dead ... by him this man stands here before you whole.

In the first passage the point Peter makes is clear. The Jewish leaders crucified Jesus; but he is now alive. In the second passage Peter is explaining how he had healed a lame man.

When writing to the church in Rome the apostle Paul explained the significance of the resurrection of Jesus. Speaking of Jesus he wrote:

Who was delivered up because of our offences, and was raised because of our justification (Romans 4:25).

In speaking of 'justification' Paul is referring to the sins that were forgiven after David's wrongdoing (see Psalm 32).

Why Resurrection?

But why is the bodily resurrection of Jesus important to us? Consider the two passages below. They are typical examples of things preached by the

apostles of Jesus. Notice the link between the resurrection of Jesus and the forgiveness of sins.

Him God has exalted ... to give ... forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:31);

Through this man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins (Acts 13:38).

It is just as Paul had said in 1 Corinthians 15:

If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! (1 Corinthians 15:17).

The same teaching appears in many of the New Testament letters, for example:

Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us (Romans 8:34).

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3).

The gospel message did not change over time. What was true when Jesus rose from the dead continued to be true for the apostles of Jesus. That message is still true today and is vitally relevant for you and me today.

- ❖ Without the resurrection of Jesus there is no forgiveness of sins.
- ❖ If there is no forgiveness of sins eternal inheritance of the land is impossible.

That is why resurrection is the cornerstone of the gospel.

Peter Forbes

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