

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured **Articles**

The Bible – Key to the Future (p. 3)

An Amazing Bible Prophecy (p. 6)

A Healer of Eyesight (p. 17)

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

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

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Glad Tidings Distributors for orders and payments

United Kingdom

Fiona Oram, 24 Windermere Avenue,
Ashby de la Zouch, Leics. LE65 1FA, UK
Tel: +44 (0)7521 079 190 (24 hrs)
fiona@gladtidingsmagazine.org

Australia

Ruth Morgan, 51 Jesmond Road,
Croydon, VIC 3136, Australia
gladtidingsaustralia@gmail.com

Canada

Vivian Thorp, 5377 Birdcage Walk,
Burlington, ON L7L 3K5, Canada
vivianthorp@bell.net

New Zealand

Neil Todd, 14 Morpeth Place, Blockhouse
Bay, Auckland 7, New Zealand
thetodds@xtra.co.nz

U.S.A.

Pat Hemingray, 1244 Pennsylvania
Avenue, Oakmont, PA 15139, USA

Other Countries

Andrew Johnson, 22 Hazel Drive,
Hollywood, Birmingham B47 5RJ,
United Kingdom
andrew@gladtidings.me.uk

Editor

Andrew Hale, 52 Mardale Crescent,
Lymm WA13 9PJ, United Kingdom
editor@gladtidingsmagazine.org

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The Bible – Key to the Future

THE old man, Daniel, was waiting. He had waited for many years. He had seen kings, conquerors and even empires come and go, and he had held high office in them. He was respected as a wise man, a skilful administrator and a man of faith.

Yet there was one thing he really wanted, one event which would vindicate his faith and fill his heart with joy. And now it was time.

It was around 540 BC and Daniel believed that God was going to bring the Jews out of exile and return the people to the Land of Israel. What is remarkable is that he knew when this would happen, because he read what God's prophets had written:

I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem (Daniel 9:2).

Sure enough, 70 years after the Jews were taken into captivity by the Babylonians, the Medo-Persian successors to Babylon allowed them to return to their homeland.

Foretelling the Future

Moving forward to the New Testament, we find more wise men using the Bible to unlock the future. At the birth of Jesus, we read about travellers coming from the East

to visit the new-born king. They asked at the palace in Jerusalem:

Where is he who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East and have come to worship him (Matthew 2:2).

The people of Jerusalem used their Old Testament – specifically the prophecy of Micah chapter 5 – to answer the question:

But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel (v6).

The birth of Jesus was foretold in such detail that these men were able to travel to Israel at the right time and be directed to Bethlehem, where Jesus was born. This is remarkable, but quite normal for Bible prophecy. The Word of God tells us what will happen in the future, and what we should do about it.

What Next?

How often we wish we could see into the future, to know what lies ahead for us. The Bible does not foretell the events of our individual lives, but it gives very clear details of the future of the world, and how we can fit into it.

Firstly, the Lord Jesus Christ is going to return to the earth:

This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw him go into heaven (Acts 1:11).

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

He will raise those men and women who have heard his message, then judge them, to decide who should be part of the Kingdom of God which will follow:

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt (Daniel 12:2).

Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear his voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation (John 5:28–29).

For those who have responded to Jesus' message in the right way, there is a welcome into the Kingdom he will rule for his Father, where they will live forever:

Then the King will say to those on his right hand, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).

That kingdom will be a perfect world, here on the earth, where eventually God Himself can live with men and women.

And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:3–4).

Using the Key

God wants every one of us to be part of that kingdom, and He even sent Jesus to die and make it possible. To use this key and unlock our future, we need to read our Bibles to understand what God wants, then:

- ◆ Believe God
- ◆ Be baptised
- ◆ Live God-centred lives.

God gives us the key – we have simply to use it!



The Burton ‘Heretic’

BURTON-ON-TRENT is an English town with a dark claim to fame. This is the birthplace of the last man in England to be burned at the stake, who died in 1612.

In the Seventeenth Century, the Church had a strong hold over ordinary people’s lives. They feared its teaching about eternal punishment, and the king could easily arrest you and imprison you for disagreeing with it. If you didn’t believe what the Church taught, you were in big trouble.

Edward Wightman was a man who wanted to believe what was right. It is likely that he had access to a copy of the English Bible which was newly circulating. We learn most about him from the Royal Writ from King James I sent to the Bishop of Lichfield in 1612 ordering Wightman’s arrest and execution.

Real Beliefs

The writ tells us that Wightman believed:

- ◆ That there is no Trinity of Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the unity of God
- ◆ That Jesus Christ is not God
- ◆ That the Holy Ghost is not God co-equal with the Father and the Son
- ◆ That the soul is mortal
- ◆ That the soul does not go to heaven when a person dies

- ◆ That baptism is to be administered only to converts of sufficient age and understanding
- ◆ That Christianity was not wholly professed and preached in the Church.



To Edward Wightman, it mattered what you believed. It wasn’t enough to agree with the priest; everyone had a duty to find the Bible truth out for themselves, and then to stand up for it. Such an attitude is still quite rare today.

The Christadelphians, who produce *Glad Tidings*, base their beliefs on the Bible and no other authority. In fact, we agree with Wightman that the things he believed are what the Bible teaches.

He was burnt at the stake in Lichfield Market Place on 11th April 1612, where a plaque still commemorates his status as ‘the last person in England so to die’. History has labelled him a heretic, but perhaps he should be remembered because he read the Bible for himself.

Paul Tovell

An Amazing Bible Prophecy

THERE are many amazing prophecies in the Bible, but there's one that's in a class of its own. The prophecy contained in the first half of Daniel chapter 11 is unlike any other, because of the sheer volume of detail it contains.

The Bible's critics generally try to dismiss the fact that its prophecies come true as lucky coincidences, but when it comes to Daniel 11, this is just not plausible. So instead they suggest that the prophecy was written **after** the events it describes.

In this article we'll look at this remarkable prophecy. Then we'll look at the compelling evidence that it was actually written **before** the events.

Persian Kings

Daniel was a Jew who had spent most of his life in exile after the capture of his country by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. He rose to high office in the Babylonian empire, and when Babylon itself was captured by the Persian king, Cyrus the Great, Daniel continued to be important.

The first verse of Daniel chapter 11 locates the prophecy in the 'first year of Darius the Mede'. Darius the Mede is thought to be a title given to Cyrus' general Gobryas, who Cyrus appointed as governor over the province of Babylon. The date is 536 BC, and the prophecy begins:

Now I will tell you the truth: Behold, three more kings will arise in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than them all; by his strength, through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece (Daniel 11:2).

Cyrus the Great was succeeded by three more kings: his son Cambyses, his other son Smerdis, another Darius, then Xerxes. Xerxes is notorious as being the richest of all the Persian monarchs. (Incidentally, he's thought to be the Ahasuerus of the Bible book of Esther.) He led an unsuccessful invasion of Greece, which was defeated in 480 BC, and this was the start of the decline of the Persian empire.

Greece and Beyond

Verse 3 whisks us forward 150 years to the climax of the Greek empire, the brief but spectacular reign of Alexander the Great, 336–323 BC.

Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. And when he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken up and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not among his posterity nor according to his dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be uprooted, even for others besides these (v3–4).

Alexander died at the height of his power; he had two children but neither succeeded him. His dominion was quickly divided between four of his generals: Ptolemy



established himself in Egypt, commanding the southern section of Alexander's empire; Cassander in Greece, Lysimachus in Asia Minor, and Seleucus in Syria.

Also the king of the South shall become strong, as well as one of his princes; and he shall gain power over him and have dominion. His dominion shall be a great dominion (v5).

Ptolemy established himself as a ruler in his own right and founded a kingdom in Egypt (he's called 'the king of the South'). Seleucus had started off as one of Ptolemy's generals ('princes'), but in the power struggle that followed Alexander's death he established a rival dynasty. For a while his kingdom (the Seleucid kingdom) was stronger than the Ptolemaic kingdom. The other two generals waned, and by

280 BC the Middle East was dominated by these two rival kingdoms – the Ptolemies in Egypt, and the Seleucids in Asia Minor.

Detail Over a Long Period

From now on the prophecy refers to the Ptolemaic kings as the 'kings of the south' and the Seleucid kings as the 'kings of the north'. The next 25 verses describe in vivid detail the 150 years' power struggle between these two kingdoms, which often involved fighting over the land of Israel in the middle.

If you read through the prophecy it won't make much sense, unless you're familiar with that period of history! It is very detailed and specific as to what happened, but here's a flavour of the way it works:

And at the end of some years they shall join forces, for the daughter of the king of the South shall go to the king of the North to make an agreement; but she shall not retain the power of her authority, and neither he nor his authority shall stand; but she shall be given up, with those who brought her, and with him who begot her, and with him who strengthened her in those times. But from a branch of her roots one shall arise in his place, who shall come with an army, enter the fortress of the king of the North, and deal with them and prevail (v6-7).

This is how these verses were fulfilled. In 252 BC, in a political move, Ptolemy II (king of the South) gave his daughter Berenice to Antiochus II (king of the North). He did so on the condition that Antiochus should divorce his existing wife, and that their two sons should lose any right to inheritance of the kingdom. That right would pass instead to any son that Antiochus and Berenice would have.

A son was born to Antiochus and Berenice, but shortly afterwards Ptolemy II died. Antiochus divorced Berenice and took back his first wife. She took her revenge by arranging the murder of Antiochus, Berenice, and their infant son.

In 246 BC Ptolemy III, the brother of Berenice, mounted a successful invasion of the Seleucid kingdom in revenge for his sister's murder.

The prophecy uses pictorial language and describes the events with undeniable accuracy. This is consistently the case as the chapter continues.

Refocus on Israel

Finally we come to the last big character of the prophecy, the Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanes. Verses 21 to 30 foretell in detail how Antiochus ascended to the throne by intrigue and diplomacy, acquired the provinces of Syria and Israel by political manoeuvring and bribery, performed military exploits, and finally (verse 30) attacked Jerusalem. Here he desecrated the temple and commenced active efforts to turn the Jews away from their religion.

It's now around 170 BC and the time of the Maccabees, a Jewish resistance movement which achieved a degree of independence for Israel for a while before it was absorbed into the Roman empire – which is how we see the nation at the beginning of the New Testament when Jesus is born.

The Evidence

At this point the prophecy becomes less focused, and so the Bible's critics seize on this. They say it is because the book of Daniel was actually written sometime around 165 BC at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes – they say it was a patriotic national epic designed to bolster the Maccabean resistance movement, written in the style of a prophecy. Therefore, the critics argue, the detailed prophecies in Daniel 11 are actually accounts of what's already happened, dressed up to look like prophecy.

So let's look at the evidence. Was the book of Daniel really written in the late Sixth

Century BC, before the events it describes, in which case it simply has to be the work of God – no one could have foretold those 400 years of history in such detail. Or is it a clever but fraudulent historic epic?

1. First Century Use

The Jews in the First Century CE accepted Daniel as genuine. For example, Jesus mentions Daniel a number of times, and the First Century Jewish historian Josephus actually makes a specific reference to Daniel 11:3. The Jews were very careful and reverent with their scriptures. They believed that the book of Daniel was written by a real prophet 600 years previously – it’s difficult to imagine that they would take as genuine a false document that was only 200 years old.

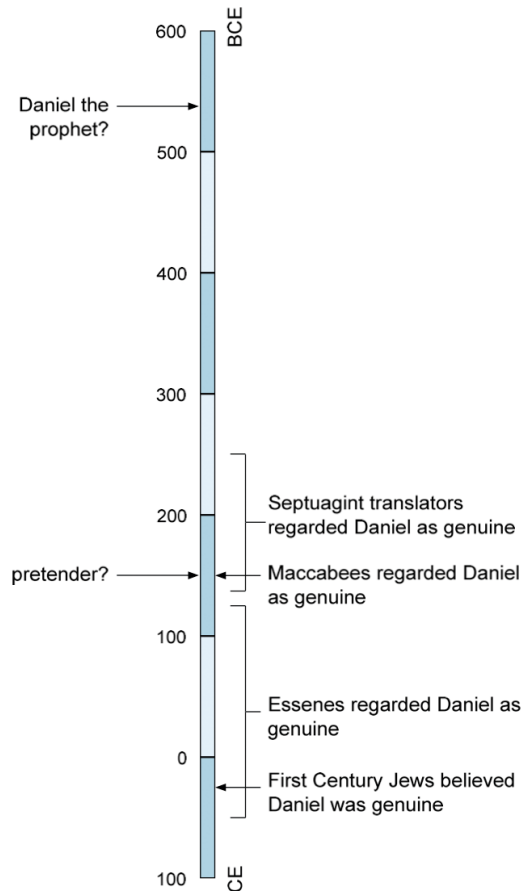
2. The Dead Sea Scrolls

The Dead Sea Scrolls are a collection of manuscripts that were hidden on the shore of the Dead Sea by a sect of Jewish scribes called the Essenes in the First Century CE and rediscovered in the 1940s. There are fragments of eight separate Daniel manuscripts among the Dead Sea Scrolls. These Daniel manuscripts have been dated – the earliest

is believed to have been written in the late second century BC.

Among the other scrolls found in the caves is a document that has been dated to around 100 BC which refers to Daniel’s writings as scripture.

Who wrote Daniel?



So, suppose the book of Daniel is actually a fraud, perpetrated probably within the lifetime of some of the scribes in the community. They must have been very careless to believe it to be authentic and gather numerous manuscripts of it. Actually, what we know about the Jewish scribes is that they were obsessively cautious – they were definitely not careless.

3. Earlier Adoption

The book of Daniel was accepted as scripture during the Maccabean era (164–63 BC). It is mentioned in the contemporary First Book of Maccabees. Moreover, it appears that at this time the book of Daniel was accepted by Jewish communities both in Babylon and in Israel, and by the opposing factions of Pharisees and Sadducees. How could a fraudulent book immediately become universally accepted as genuine scripture, virtually as soon as it was written?

4. The Septuagint

The Septuagint is a translation of the Old Testament of the Bible into Greek, which was made in Egypt between the mid Third Century and the mid Second Century BC. Interestingly, the text of Daniel in the Septuagint is of poor quality – it varies from the majority of other Daniel texts, and contains extra sections. So again, the critics would have us believe that a fraudulent piece of patriotic exaggeration was mistaken by Jewish scribes for genuine scripture, as soon as it was written – and

it had already been copied so many times that the best manuscript they could find was one that had been corrupted!

Surely the reasonable assumption is that Daniel chapter 11 is what it claims to be – a prophecy, written before the events!

Why this Special Prophecy?

It's an intriguing question – why did God give to His people this phenomenal prophecy about the course of Mediterranean politics over the two hundred years from Alexander the Great to Antiochus Epiphanes?

The time period which the prophecy occupies is after the finish of the Bible's Old Testament, and before the start of the New Testament with the miraculous events around the birth of Christ. This period between the two Testaments was a grim time in Israel's history, when marauding armies repeatedly conquered and carved up their land and it might have seemed as though God had abandoned them.

Perhaps this prophecy was given simply to reassure them that God Himself was still watching over the things that happened. Certainly as we read the end of Daniel 11 and into chapter 12, we find ultimate reassurance that God's Kingdom will come.

Whatever the reason for the prophecy, as we've seen it provides a hugely compelling case for the divine authorship of the Bible.

Chris Parkin

The God of the Bible and You

A MAN was in the sea clinging to a raft for days, exhausted and close to death. He saw a ship in the distance, which spotted him and drew alongside. A voice shouted down to him, “You’re all right now. We’ve come to save you!” Weakly, he cried, “No thanks, I’m alright as I am.”

God wants to save people from sin and death. But first we have to realise that our position as members of the human race is desperate and that we need His help. Without that, none of us will have a truly fulfilled life or exist after our death.

The soul who sins shall die... But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live... Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?” says the Lord God, “and not that he should turn from his ways and live? (Ezekiel 18:20–23).

God is utterly opposed to sin, but He will respond to anyone who recognises their plight and asks for help. First, we have to find out how to get that help and what God’s conditions are.

What does God Want from Us?

1. Read What He Says

God wants us to take time to read His Word – the Bible – and to get to know Him



and His Son, the Lord Jesus. That’s the only way to discover God’s promises and how He wants us to live.

2. Be Baptised

Jesus himself said that his followers should be baptised, when they are old enough to understand the Gospel and what discipleship means.

He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned (Mark 16:16).

The method he taught and practised was immersion in water, not a mere sprinkling on the head. True baptism is the way God has appointed for us to declare publicly our belief of the Gospel and to show that we are ‘putting to death’ our old way of life, dominated by sin. We rise from that watery

‘grave’ to a new life that is directed by our wish to follow Christ. In being reborn we follow the pattern of Jesus who died and rose to a new life.

Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3–4).

3. Join in the Fellowship of Believers

Baptised believers are instructed to meet together to worship God, by praising and thanking Him for all that He is and does. They meet specially to remember the death and resurrection of Jesus by eating bread and drinking wine in his memory. They help each other to live according to God’s commandments and to prepare themselves for when Jesus returns to the earth. Together they try to tell others the good news about “*the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ*” (Acts 8:12).

4. Live Like New People

In the near future God is going to fill the world with His glory, in His Kingdom. Those who are baptised into Jesus will want to give God glory now, by telling others about their belief in the God of the Bible and by behaving like disciples of Jesus. They aim to lead God-centred lives, trusting in Him and the Lord Jesus.

Having our sins forgiven does not mean that we can behave as we like, in the hope

that God will overlook even our worst excesses. It must lead to a determination to resist sin in all its forms.

On the other hand, unlike Jesus, it is not possible for us to be sinless. Because Jesus actually did conquer sin, God shows mercy to the rest of us by forgiving our sins. In other words, as far as God is concerned, ‘it’s the thought that counts’. We should therefore continually pray to Him for forgiveness.

Reconciled to God

Those who turn to God have a joy and an inner peace that results from being reconciled to the God of the whole earth. For the breach that exists between God and us is healed, when He forgives our sins.

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered... I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,” and You forgave the iniquity of my sin (Psalm 32:1, 5).

Joy also comes from becoming part of God’s family – a new relationship with Him, His Son and those who also believe the teachings of Jesus and his apostles.

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when he is revealed, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:1–2).



Life Now and in the Future

Suddenly, life will have a new purpose and meaning. Our goal in life will no longer be merely to 'get on'. There is a better, a higher aim in life that is altogether more satisfying. Possessions and careers will not seem so important. Losing them will no longer seem so threatening. Jesus put this life into the right perspective, when he said:

Seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you (Luke 12:31).

Baptism gives a real hope for the future. God offers us something we don't deserve and can't achieve for ourselves – immortality in a perfect world on this earth when Jesus returns.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive (1 Corinthians 15:22).

In an Old Testament passage that describes what the Kingdom of God will be like, the prophet refers not only to the King but also to his helpers:

Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule with justice (Isaiah 32:1).

Jesus himself promised his faithful followers both immortality and power in the Kingdom which is to come:

He who overcomes, and keeps my works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations — 'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels' — as I also have received from my Father (Revelation 2:26–27).

What Are You Waiting For?

Most people make some provision for the future. They plan their education and careers in the hope of a good life. They may buy a lottery ticket, even though the odds against winning are very high. They take out insurance policies, in case the worst happens. They plan for retirement, to enjoy later life.

The return of Jesus Christ is certainly going to happen. How are you preparing?

Rod Hale
Concluded

Blood, Medicine and the Bible



other bodily fluids were regarded as ‘humours’ which needed to remain in good balance to maintain health.

It may surprise us now to think that mostly this was carried out by barbers, though it was recommended by physicians, and this led to the distinction we still see

today between surgeons and physicians. The red-and-white striped pole often seen outside a British barber’s shop today derives from this very activity – the red for the blood and the white for the bandages.

THIS grand but damaged building is Sinai Park House in Burton (UK), and it has a long history. The hilltop site was ideally situated a day’s march from both Lichfield and Derby. First the Romans and then the Saxons used the location as a convenient place for a stronghold.

It is thought this practice may account for the name still in use today: Sinai could be derived from *saignée*, the French term for bloodletting.

Eventually Sinai Park was given to the monks of Burton Abbey, which was built in 1004 and was at that time a highly significant monastic seat in England. In 1334, Abbot William Bromley of Burton Abbey allowed his monks a time of ‘indulgence’, or rest and recuperation at Sinai Park, after what he called their ‘bloodletting activities’.

Primitive Healthcare

We now know that, although sometimes it may have helped reduce blood pressure, in the vast majority of cases this was harmful to the patient, and thankfully bloodletting is no longer practised as a medical treatment.

The idea of bloodletting was to cure disease in patients by withdrawing some of their blood. It was based on the ancient system of medicine in which blood and

Sinai Park House was owned by the Paget Family after the Dissolution of the Monasteries under Henry VIII, and it then became a hunting lodge and a farm. The main building still standing today dates mostly from the mid-Seventeenth Century.

Meanwhile the name, whatever the origin of it, was fixed as Sinai Park.

Earlier, More Modern Medicine

The word Sinai itself is actually a Bible word. Mount Sinai, in the wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula in modern-day Egypt, was where God gave His Law to the people of Israel. They had just departed from Egypt and were on their way to the Promised Land of Canaan, which we now know as Israel.

This Law covers a wide range of the human experience, including farming, food, and medicine. It is perhaps most famous today for the Ten Commandments, which were revealed to Moses in Exodus chapter 20.

This Law was very much ahead of its time. Given well over 3,000 years ago, it included some very modern ideas:

He who touches the dead body of anyone shall be unclean seven days. He shall purify himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day; then he will be clean (Numbers 19:11–12).

Until about a hundred years ago, surgeons did not wash their hands between patients on whom they were operating. Many of their patients died from infections spread in this way, rather than from their original injuries.

The leper on whom the sore is, his clothes shall be torn and his head bare ... He is unclean, and he shall dwell alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp (Leviticus 13:45–46).

Here we can see that lepers (a term which covered a variety of skin diseases in those days) had to live separately from others – in quarantine. The way in which modern patients are isolated was derived directly from this ancient Jewish law.

These you may eat of all that are in the water: whatever in the water has fins and scales, whether in the seas or in the rivers – that you may eat. But all in the seas or in the rivers that do not have fins and scales ... they are an abomination to you (Leviticus 11:9–10).

We might wonder why there were such strict regulations on what Jews could eat. But consider that very often food poisoning today comes from seafood such as shrimps and crustaceans, which live in shallow, often polluted water, and contain bugs and viruses which are only killed by proper cooking. This law seems extremely wise.

This is one of the many reasons why we can believe that the Bible really was inspired by God, and it's worth investigating further. The monks who went to stay at Sinai Park in the Middle Ages should have known all about this Law and made this connection with the Bible – at least when they'd been revived after their painful treatments!

For more information on this law ahead of its time, and other good reasons to believe the Bible is the Word of God, you might like to look at the 'Evidence' website:

www.theevidence.org.uk

Paul Tovell

Deuteronomy

DEUTERONOMY means ‘second law’. The first giving of the Law was at Sinai. Forty years on, a new generation of Israelites was about to enter the Promised Land. This book records Moses’ last words, including a second giving of the Law (1:1).

Moses looks back over the 40 years of wandering, as Israel “*went through all that great and terrible wilderness*” (1:19). He reminds them of their murmurings against God, who nonetheless had blessed them. Then, from 4:44 through to 28:69, he repeats the Law given at Sinai, but puts it in a new perspective. Deuteronomy points to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A Law of Love

In this second reading of the Law, there is special emphasis on love and faith:

Because God loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them; and He brought you out of Egypt ... You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart (4:37; 6:5).

Moses renews the covenant between God and His people (29:1):

I make this covenant ... with him who stands here with us today before the LORD our God, as well as with him who is not here with us today (29:14,15).

Moses foresees distant times ahead when the Jews, suffering for their unfaithfulness,

call upon God in their distress. If they will obey Him, He will have compassion on them “*and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you*” (30:2–3).

The Prophet Like Moses

Deuteronomy contains a very specific prophecy of the Messiah:

The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst ... him you shall hear (18:15).

Jesus was familiar with Deuteronomy and when he was tempted (Matthew 4:1–11), he quickly rebuffed the temptations with quotations from this book (8:3; 6:16; 10:20). In the same way, God’s word can help us overcome temptation.

The Jews – God’s Chosen People

The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt (Deuteronomy 7:7–8).

Norman Owen

By kind permission of ‘The Christadelphian’

A Healer of Eyesight

OUR eyes are very precious, aren't they? We rely so much on our sight every day, and people with visual impairment or blindness can find life very difficult. In fact we know that the vast majority of what we learn comes through what we see, and we are probably familiar with the expression, 'Seeing is believing'.

This has been recognised for thousands of years, and here is one example. In the seventh century AD, an Irish lady called Modwenna or Modwen travelled to the area we now know as Burton upon Trent, and set up home for seven years with the express purpose of converting the area to

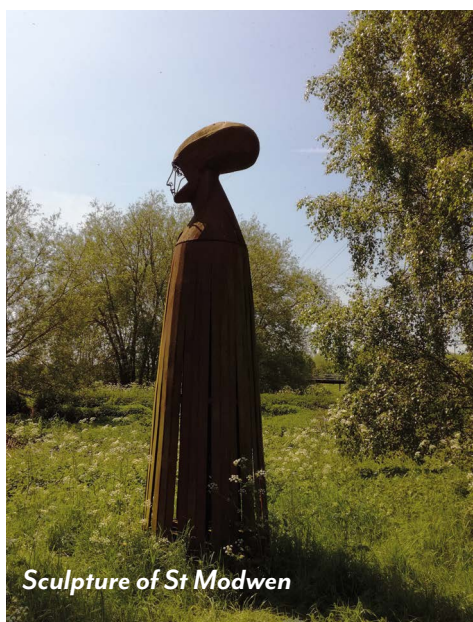
Christianity. She founded an abbey on an island in the River Trent, right in the centre of the town, and later also built a church at Stapenhill on the spot where St Peter's Church now stands. Legend says that she died at the ripe old age of 130, and is buried in Burton, which was formerly known as Mudwennestow (Modwen's place).

Although we don't know much about her character, there are stories that she was a healer of eyesight, or at least had an interest in this area. Blindness is something which not only affects our eyes, but also our hearts and minds. We can be blind to someone's situation, meaning that we don't understand it. Or we can be 'blinded by science'. Modwen may have simply been interested in healing people's spiritual blindness, since she was attempting to convert them to Christianity.

Amazing Ability

It's a great picture, as our eyesight is indeed extremely special. Did you know, for example:

- ◆ In the right conditions and lighting, humans can see the light of a candle from 14 miles away.
- ◆ Your eye is the fastest muscle in your body – hence why when something happens quickly, we say 'in the blink of an eye'!



Sculpture of St Modwen



him, who refused to believe who he was.

Spiritual Blindness

In the First Century, many Jews were waiting eagerly for their Messiah to come. They hoped he would deliver them from the hated Roman oppression in their land, as a victorious conqueror. This is partly why they did not wish to accept that a humble carpenter from the northern backwater of Nazareth, who

had no intention of fighting the Romans or igniting a revolution, was this promised Messiah. Even when Jesus performed miracles, they refused to believe that he was The One. Could they really not see?

Jesus uses the metaphor of seeing when telling his parables. He wants people to think deeply about their spiritual meaning, but he comments that in many cases, people take the story at surface value and do not bother to look into it in greater depth. He quotes some words of the prophet Isaiah, which were written 600 years earlier. These words reflect on the hardness of the human heart when people do not want to listen or to see:

Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and will not perceive; for the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed (Matthew 13:14–15).

- ◆ The human eye can function at 100% capacity at any given moment, without needing to rest.
- ◆ 80% of vision impairment worldwide is curable.
- ◆ Your eyes start to develop just two weeks after conception.
- ◆ About half of the human brain is dedicated to vision and seeing.
- ◆ While a fingerprint has 40 unique characteristics, an iris has 256. This is why retina scans are increasingly being used for security purposes.

In fact, sight is a subject that appears a lot in the Bible. Jesus speaks about eyesight and blindness on several occasions in the Gospels. There are four recorded miracles where he healed people who were blind. There are also many references to the spiritual blindness of the people around

These words could have been written about people in the world today – people who in many ways believe what they want to believe, and do not like having their consciences troubled. They are happy with not looking any further into the purpose of life or the evidence for a Creator.

Given Sight

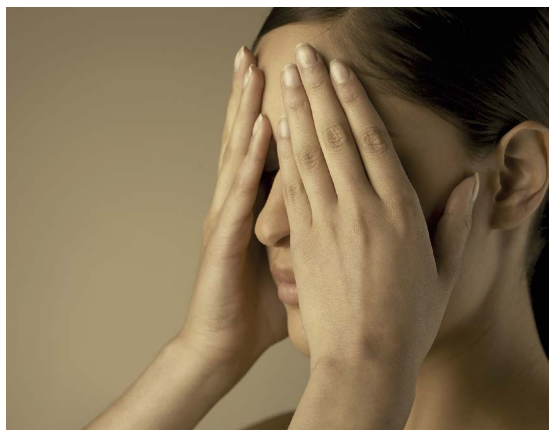
When Jesus heals the man born blind in John chapter 9, we are left in no doubt that this man now ‘sees’ in two different ways – both with his eyes, and with his understanding about Jesus. The Pharisees catch up with him after the miracle, and he says this to them:

Why, this is a marvellous thing, that you do not know where he [Jesus] is from; yet he has opened my eyes! (John 9:30).

There is a dual meaning here; not only has Jesus opened his eyes literally by restoring his physical sight, he has also given him spiritual sight, which he pointed out that the Pharisees do not have. This is what Jesus refers to when he later says:

For judgement I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind (v39).

This second part of the verse is referring to the way people were refusing to accept who he was, and therefore were counted as spiritually blind. As we’ve already noted, we might say the same thing about the secular society around us, who have no interest in seeing with spiritual eyes.



Jesus also refers to this in the book of Revelation, where he addresses the congregation at Laodicea, a group of believers in First Century Turkey. They were far too interested in gathering riches and wealth, so Jesus told them to “*anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see*” (Revelation 3v18). Of course, they were not physically blind, but their lack of spiritual sight was a real problem if they were to continue as a group of believers.

Whether we see Jesus for who he really is, and want to look into the Bible for ourselves, or whether we say “I just can’t see it”, is entirely up to us.

Our physical eyesight is precious, but our spiritual sight potentially affects our eternal salvation. So if someone asks you, “what are you looking for?” – perhaps it’s worth considering the question from a spiritual perspective too!

Paul Tovell

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requests@cbm.org.uk

The Americas

CBMA, 567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley, CA
93065, USA
cbma.treasurer@gmail.com

Caribbean

CBMC, Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280, 101
Avenue, Surrey, BC, Canada V3R 0J7
philsnobelen@shaw.ca

India

T Galbraith, GPO Box 159, Hyderabad,
5000001, India
tim@galbraithmail.com

South and East Asia

ACBM, PO Box 152 Cobbitty NSW
Australia 2570
coelmada@gmail.com

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