

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured **Articles**

God Is In Control (p. 3)

A Refugee's Story (p. 5)

Looking At Things Unseen (p. 13)

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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Front cover: The Fall of Babylon: Cyrus the Great defeating the Chaldean army

God Is In Control

CYRUS THE GREAT was one of the major figures in all of history. He was a brilliant soldier and statesman, he built the biggest empire the world had yet seen, and because of his humane attitude towards his subjects he's earned the reputation as the founder of human rights. He was also remarkable because his life was foretold in advance in the Bible.



Tomb of Cyrus, Iran

Isaiah's Amazing Prophecy

The prophet Isaiah lived around 100 years before Cyrus was born. His prophecy is wide ranging in its content. There's an eye-witness account of the invasion of Israel by the Assyrian army, in the time of the Jewish King Hezekiah around 700BC (chapters 36–39); there is encouragement for the Jewish nation to trust in God, and warnings of the consequences should they be faithless (for example chapter 1); there are remarkable prophecies of the Messiah, which were fulfilled 700 years later by Jesus Christ (for example chapter 53), and beautiful visions of the Kingdom of God

which are still to be fulfilled (for example chapter 35). There are prophecies of the destruction of the Jewish nation and the scattering of the Jewish people, which happened in 586BC and again in 70AD (for example chapter 24), and prophecies of their return from exile, which happened in 538BC and again in 1948AD.

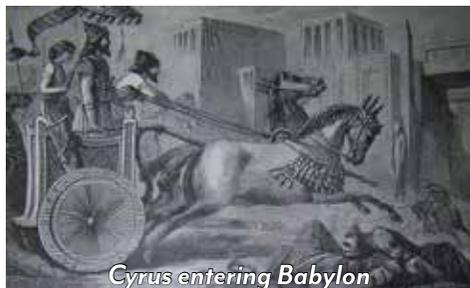
One of these prophecies of the return from exile is in chapter 44:

Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, and He who formed you from the womb: "I am the LORD, Who makes all things, Who stretches out the heavens all alone, Who spreads abroad the earth by Myself... Who says to Jerusalem, 'You shall be inhabited,' to the cities of Judah, 'You shall be built,' and I will raise up her waste places... Who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure, saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built," and to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid"' (vs. 24–28).

Chapter 45 continues to describe what Cyrus was to achieve in the outworking of God's purpose. *"For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me" (v. 4).*

Isaiah prophesied around 700BC. In 586BC Jerusalem was destroyed and its people taken captive by the army

of Babylon. Less than 50 years later in 538BC Babylon itself fell to a Medo-Persian invasion led by Cyrus. A year later Cyrus issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to their homeland. This is recorded in the Bible in Ezra 1:1–4.



Cyrus entering Babylon

Josephus, the First Century Jewish historian, says that Cyrus was motivated to make this decree when he read Isaiah's extraordinary prophecy about himself (*Antiquities of the Jews* Book 11 1:2).

God At Work

There is a view of religion that it is a purely spiritual thing, all about personal enlightenment or personal salvation and not about the real world. The teaching of the Bible is about personal salvation, of course—but it is also about the real world. God's dealings are with nations and empires, as well as individuals.

There was another Jewish prophet, Daniel, who held high office in Babylon in the period between the Babylonian capture of Jerusalem and Cyrus's capture of Babylon. He had a message for the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar: *"The Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses"* (*Daniel* 4:25).

Nebuchadnezzar was a tool in God's hands, bringing about God's judgement on His people Israel. But when he had done his job, Babylon itself would be judged for its wickedness. This is explained in detail by another Bible prophet, Jeremiah (25:8–14).

This is a key Bible principle: God has a purpose with the world and He is operating in the world, bringing about that purpose. The life of Cyrus was an extreme example of this principle, where God stepped in directly and explicitly. But all history is the story of God at work, generally unbeknown to monarchs and politicians and generals, overseeing and overriding and manipulating the things they do in order to bring about His purpose.

The great prophets of the Bible—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and others—described this process as they spoke about the rise and fall of nations in their own time, and as they looked far into the future. From our vantage point in the 21st Century we can look back at their prophecies and see the hand of God at work in history, and know that it is still at work now.

And what is the world's destiny, which God is working towards? In the words of another prophet:

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea (*Habakkuk* 2:14).

The culmination of God's purpose is the Kingdom of God. The prophets show us that it will be a real kingdom, here on earth, and it will come soon.

A Refugee's Story

IRAN is a country with a long history and a rich heritage. Two and a half thousand years ago under its former name Persia, its most illustrious king Cyrus the Great built a world empire which lasted for two centuries. It has been at the heart of the life and culture of the Middle East since.

But in recent years Iranians have been fleeing their country in increasing numbers. These people—men, women and children, mostly from educated and comfortable backgrounds—leave everything they have and everyone they know behind, put their lives in the hands of ruthless people-smugglers, and set off into the unknown. Why do they do it?



We follow the real-life experiences of Meysam, a young Iranian who fled to England.

A Muslim in Iran

Meysam grew up as a strict Muslim. He lived in a region where Islam was taken very

seriously, and although his parents were not overly strict he was attracted to Islam and practised it faithfully. He attended all the ceremonies at his mosque, and all the further religious observance of his community. He travelled to Iraq three times to visit one of the holiest shrines of the faith.

He prayed and worshipped, but as he grew older he was troubled by the feeling that his faith seemed to be just a series of rituals. He struggled with the way some people practised their faith, and in particular with the way many men treated their wives.

He fell in love with a girl. They were very happy together and wanted to marry. However, because they were from different sections of Islam (Sunni and Shia), their parents forbade the union. He was devastated.

A Christian in Iran

Meysam's grief was clear, and his friends were worried about him. In an attempt to assuage his pain one friend introduced him to an 'underground' Christian church. Christianity is banned in Iran, so believers have to meet in secret.

He was quickly converted. He had only attended the church around half a dozen times, but he was enthused by his new faith and felt he had to spread the word to others. He preached to his former girlfriend

and gave her some Christian literature—but the literature was discovered by the ‘moral police’ and suddenly his life was in danger.

It is a regular occurrence in Iran: people who convert to Christianity are arrested, and never seen again. Meysam knew that he had to flee.

Journey Into the Unknown

He found a people-smuggler who took him to Turkey, obtained a false passport and flew with him to London. They landed at Luton Airport. The smuggler disappeared, and Meysam was on his own, in the middle of a busy airport in a foreign country with no documents. He summoned the courage, and spoke to the Border Force. They gave him a form, and so started the process of claiming asylum. It was stressful and frightening, even for a young and well educated man.

He spent a week in a hostel in London, then he was moved to a hostel in Liverpool. This is where he first came into contact with Christadelphians.

Meysam arrived in the UK as a Christian, but he had little grounding in his faith. Because of the dangerous situation and the lack of access to Christian materials, there is not much Bible teaching in Iranian congregations—services consist mainly of praying, singing, and sharing life stories, which provide valuable moral and spiritual support but little substance. Meysam wanted to learn about the Bible.

From Liverpool he was moved to Manchester, where he continued his Bible studies and his faith deepened and widened. In time he was baptised, and he began to help his fellow Iranians in the hostel get to know the Bible and build faith for themselves.

Meysam’s New Faith

Meysam left Iran because of his Christian faith. We asked him about how he came to that faith, and his experiences since.

What is the religious situation in Iran?

“Many Iranians no longer believe in Islam, in fact many just pretend to be Muslims. In Iran today there is no justice, no economy, and a weak education system. People are terrified by the government and their secret police but are financially weak and have no one to lead them. Religious observance is the top priority for Iran’s government. This is probably because of all the many problems in their society, this is one they can control.”



“The younger generation are often well educated and prepared to question the religious authority. More and more reject

religion altogether, others join secret Christian groups. It used to be very rare that you met a Christian; now most people have a friend or know someone who is Christian.”

How do you view the Koran?

“I believe that the Koran is an Arabic history book, which is in some respects copied from the Bible. It is not the word of God and doesn’t hold the truth. If you read it, you will be confused. The Koran doesn’t teach about salvation or the love of God—just sin and the punishments you get unless you do everything right all your life.

“It’s a real problem that people are too scared to research it for themselves, they have to rely on Imams. If the government believe Islam is true, why do they stop people researching it?”

What is your view of the Bible?

“The Bible is the word of God, and by reading it and asking questions we can see the whole picture of the Bible and it all connects together. This is how we can develop our faith and understanding

of God’s plan. It is also vital to put Bible teaching into practice every day, for example, love your neighbour, don’t lie.”

You left everything behind—a career, possessions, qualifications, family. What is it like having come here with nothing?

“It really is hard! At 34 years old, to have no ID card or passport, no accommodation, no car or driving licence, no money and no friends. Many have left families, wives, husbands, or children. But we can find comfort and peace in the Bible.

“If we accept that God has a plan for each of us, then we can deal with the situation. We must leave everything in God’s hands. “To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

“He is in control and He will fulfil His promises. Even Abraham had struggles about God’s timing, like when he was waiting for Isaac to be born. Yet that happened, and God will fulfil His promises to all of us in His Kingdom.

“God made my life hard to introduce His truth to me—even that situation with my girlfriend. Now I’m happy and confident, even though I have no visa or material things. I am finally truly happy, which I never was back in Iran. I had everything but didn’t have God and Jesus in my life, and now I do. Being happy is not about material things, it’s about your attitude and state of mind; for me that is belief in God and His care and His plan. There is no room for doubt.”



Some may ask, ‘Do Iranians convert to Christianity just to get help with their visa applications?’

“Some Iranians may have tried to use Christianity to help get their visa, but it doesn’t fulfil them. They can go to a church a few times and get a document, but they soon stop going.

“By contrast, I have seen many people who already have their visa wanting to be baptised and bringing their friends and family. It’s really important to have the true Gospel. They get this through reading the Bible themselves and asking questions. Then they can build a real, lasting faith.”

Why does the Bible-based Gospel have impact with Iranians?

“Most churches teach that God is three persons in a trinity. People who come from a Muslim background find this idea incomprehensible. The Bible’s simple teaching that God is the Creator and Jesus Christ is His Son makes perfect sense.

“Having grown up indoctrinated by Iran’s hatred for Israel, many Iranians are



fascinated to see the central place of Israel in God’s purpose. Christianity is not about political support for the nation of Israel, but we do recognise that the Jews are God’s people. It’s exciting to see the connection between prophecy, history and the future.

“Most powerful is Jesus’ preaching about the Kingdom of God: ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel’ (Mark 1:15). He died for our sins and rose from the dead—that teaches about salvation and demands our attention! He taught us about love, repentance and faith. We can see that this is the Truth.”

Andrew Hale

“COME to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Jesus Christ—Matthew 11:28–30

Questions? Comments?
We’d love to hear from you!

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Undesigned Coincidences

This is the eighth in a series in which we examine this fascinating Bible book. You can catch up with the previous articles at www.gladtidingsmagazine.org.

ONE OF THE more interesting methods of establishing whether a set of accounts provides an accurate record is to compare the various accounts and see whether they correspond with one another. The important comparisons are those which concern tiny details; these are called 'undesigned coincidences'.

An undesigned coincidence occurs where irrelevant details in two or more independent accounts fit together to provide a picture which is otherwise not present in any of the accounts. The point about coincidences like this is that they are very difficult to manufacture. They appear in accurately reported factual accounts, but they seldom appear in fiction. It is very difficult for someone who was not a part of the action concerned to include undesigned coincidences in their account.

Acts and Paul's Letters

There are a large number of connections between the book of Acts and the letters of Paul. This shows that the letters and Acts fit together in a manner which it would be difficult to manage for someone trying to produce a forgery.

However, while these connections are good evidence of authenticity they are not really undesigned coincidences; they are not sufficiently insignificant to qualify. Real undesigned coincidences should have the qualities of *coherence*, *insignificance* and *independence*. There are many such examples in Acts and the letters. The following are some examples.

Timothy

Timothy came from Lystra; he was baptised before Paul arrived there on his second missionary journey.

Then he [Paul] came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek (Acts 16:1).

Timothy then continued on the journey with Paul, and from time to time undertook missions for him. Much later Paul sent Timothy to Ephesus to deal with problems in the church there. Paul writes to him in 2 Timothy and produces details which are consistent with the Acts picture:

... And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 3:15).

Here we find that Timothy knew the ‘scriptures’—a term which would probably refer to the Old Testament of the Bible (as the New Testament was still not complete)—and had done so since he was a child. Timothy would only have had access to the scriptures as a child if at least one of his parents was Jewish. This, of course, is what we read in Acts 16:1.

In the same chapter Paul mentions the persecution that he experienced on his journey:

But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me (2 Timothy 3:10–11).

Paul lists the cities in the order in which we’re told he visited them on his first missionary journey (in Acts 13 and 14). On this journey Paul visited Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe, but only suffered persecution in Antioch (Acts 13:50), Iconium (Acts 14:5) and Lystra (Acts 14:19). There was no persecution at Derbe. The list of cities where Paul suffered persecution matches the record of Acts.

Again, the detail is very minor and we would hardly notice it if we were not looking for it. Nevertheless, the correspondence

is very good. This is the hallmark of an accurate record.

The Church in Troas

Troas is the subject of another undesigned coincidence in Acts and the letters. On Paul’s second missionary journey he stopped in Troas (Acts 16:8–10), but there is no record of him having founded a congregation there at that time.

However, when he returned from his third missionary journey (Acts 20:6–12) there was a considerable congregation in Troas.

2 Corinthians mentions another visit of Paul to Troas:

Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ’s gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia (2 Corinthians 2:12–13).

The wording of this passage, “a door was opened to me by the Lord”, suggests that Paul’s efforts at proclaiming the Gospel were successful on this occasion and a congregation was formed in Troas.

The occasion of this event is covered briefly in Acts 20:1; however, there is no mention of a stay in Troas. In Acts 19:22 we find that Paul had sent some of his companions on ahead, but Titus is not included in the list.

It is clear from Acts that a congregation was formed in Troas between the second missionary journey and the end of the third missionary journey, but Acts gives no

details. The detail of the founding of the congregation appears in 2 Corinthians and it is fully consistent with the Acts account. The detail is insignificant; we would not notice it unless we were looking for it. This is a fully-fledged undesigned coincidence.



As Far as Corinth

In his second letter to the church in Corinth Paul indicates that they are the furthest point the Gospel has yet reached:

For we are not overextending ourselves (as though our authority did not extend to you), for it was to you that we came with the gospel of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:14).

He goes on in verse 16 to state his intention “to preach the Gospel in the regions beyond you”. This fits very well the picture that Acts gives of Paul’s third missionary journey. 2 Corinthians must have been

written in 55AD, shortly after 1 Corinthians, after Paul had left Ephesus and was travelling towards Corinth. At the point when the letter was written Paul had only reached Macedonia, but he was to go on to Illyricum shortly after. By the time he reached Corinth he had visited Illyricum, and he says in his letter to the Romans:

From Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ (Romans 15:19).

The visit to Illyricum is not mentioned in Acts; it only appears in Romans, where it is easily overlooked. So we have confirmation that Corinth was the most distant point that Paul

reached on his second missionary journey; the letters of 2 Corinthians and Romans provide extra incidental information. Again, we have an undesigned coincidence.

Paul’s Day Job

Paul followed a common practice among Jewish rabbis of having a trade by which he could support himself alongside his work as a teacher. There are numerous incidental references to this in Acts and his letters.

He wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus. While he was in Ephesus he worked to earn the money to support himself.

To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. And we labour, working with our own hands (1 Corinthians 4:11–12).

In Corinth, he met a couple of tentmakers named Aquila and Priscilla.

So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers. (Acts 18:3).

Again, he said to the elders of the church in Ephesus, “Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me” (Acts 20:34).

The coincidence is clear, but the accounts are independent of one another and consider the matter to be of little importance. Another undesigned coincidence.

Paul and the Law

One of the main themes of Paul’s letters is that salvation is not dependent on keeping the Jewish Law. However, Acts records three instances in which he observed the rituals of the Law:

- Acts 16:3—Paul had Timothy circumcised to satisfy the Jews in the area where he lived.
- Acts 18:18—Paul shaved his head at the end of a Nazirite vow.

- Acts 21:23–26—Paul joined in with Nazarites at the Temple in Jerusalem to show his respect for the Law.

The comment from one of his letters which illuminates this behaviour is this:

To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law (1 Corinthians 9:20–21).

Again, we are looking at an obscure point which is established by looking at independent accounts.

What it Means

The existence of these, and many more, undesigned coincidences in Acts and the letters of the New Testament shows that Acts is a reliable account of the events it narrates, and that it matches the letters down to tiny details. Paul really did travel around the ancient world proclaiming the Gospel and writing letters. He really did visit congregations of Christians within a few years of Christ’s resurrection. And he really did go from being a diehard persecutor of Christianity to one of the main proclaimers of the Gospel. This is further evidence that the New Testament is an accurate record.

John Thorpe

Looking At Things Unseen

AGAIN AND AGAIN in the Bible, we are reminded that God has great things in store for this earth. For example in the culmination of Daniel's first prophecy:

And 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 (Daniel 2:44).

The Kingdom of God is the reward for those who have faithfully followed Jesus (Matthew 16:27). And more than this, it is the great purpose for which Planet Earth was created.



The apparent permanence and stability of this present world, with its countless millions living without God, is thoroughly misleading. *“We do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18).* The things

of this present world are temporary, it is the things of God's Kingdom which matter.

The New Creation

The Lord Jesus Christ gave his life as a sacrifice, and God raised him from death. When Christ rose from the dead he was a 'new creation'. When a person is baptised and becomes a follower of Christ, they share in that new creation. This is how the Apostle Paul puts it:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The Christian life is a new life, imperfect though it will inevitably be in this present age. But it is lived in anticipation of the glorious and perfect new life which is to come at Christ's return, when by God's grace *“We shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:51–53).*

“Your Will Be Done”

The present time is a brief introduction to an eternity of perfected creation on earth. This is what Jesus spoke of when he taught

his disciples to pray, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:9–10).



The destiny of the world is that God’s will is going to be done here. And quite beautifully, God’s will involves ultimate blessing and happiness for His creation—would that everyone could see that!

It is easy to lose that perspective, and to live as if Christianity means simply the acceptance of certain propositions, plus a gloss of charitable behaviour on a life basically devoted to present aims and pleasures. If your life is like that, you may appear to be a ‘good Christian’, whilst actually remaining in ignorance of what Christianity is really about.

No, the Grand Design behind creation is that God will be glorified. That is where everything is leading. The glorifying of you and me is part of it, but this will be upon God’s terms, which we can either accept or reject. Our power of choice is an essential element of godliness—‘God-likeness’. When Jesus said “The Father has not left me

alone, for I always do those things that please Him” (John 8: 29), he did not mean that he was incapable of any other action, but that he could not bring himself to choose any other course than what he knew to be the will of God. That difference is important. And although Jesus Christ is so superior to us, he is nevertheless the pattern to which we should aspire in grateful worship, mindful of what has been done for us.

This is the Apostle John’s vision of the consummation of God’s purpose in the Bible’s final book:

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away... 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’ (Revelation 21:1–3).

This is a symbolic vision, but it clearly shows the end towards which God is working—that He will at last be in unity with His creation.

Looking Beyond the Present

The Bible contains many wonderful promises which God made. Notable amongst them are the promises to Abraham, the ancestor of the Jews and Arabs and (of course) of Jesus Christ. Abraham did not see the promises fulfilled in his lifetime, so it stands to reason that he will need to live again to see them fulfilled.

Amongst other things he was promised a vast territory which would be his “for ever”

(Genesis 13:14–18), and he was told to walk to and fro in it and admire it. He never inherited any of it in his lifetime.

What effect on his life did this promise have? During his mortal life he was content to live in that land “as in a foreign country”, a “stranger and pilgrim on the earth” (Hebrews 11:9–13). Of Abraham and other faithful people like him we read:

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland (Hebrews 11:13–14).



For followers of Christ, the more certain they are that God’s promises will be kept and His Kingdom established on earth, the more certainly will they see their own proper status and functions in the world of today—‘strangers’, ‘foreigners’, ‘pilgrims’, just passing through and not taking root or getting entangled. For, like Abraham, they “see the promises afar off”. The Apostle Paul sums it up:

But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none, those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess, and those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away (1 Corinthians 7:29–31).

The things of this world are things that are ‘temporary’ (2 Corinthians 4:18). It really is not worth striving for them. Jesus Christ had this reassurance for those who trusted him:

“Do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:31–33).

If we embrace these principles and live by them, what great benefit there is for us, both now and in the world to come.

Denis Jackson

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Ezekiel

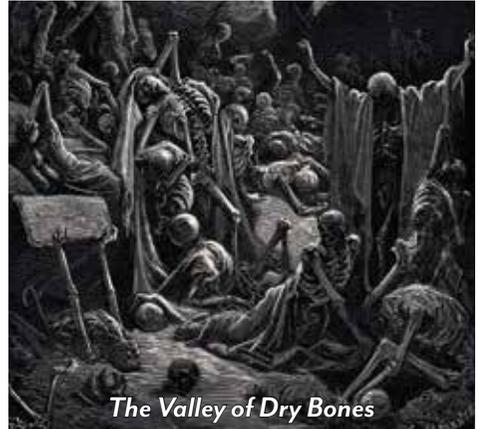
EZEKIEL was a Jewish priest who was taken captive about 597 BC when the Babylonian army attacked Israel. God called Ezekiel to be His ‘watchman’, acting out parables and speaking “*the word of the LORD*” to warn His people of the coming troubles (3:17; 33:7–9 etc.). Ezekiel was shown visions of the glory of God. He saw God’s glory with the captives in Babylonia (chapter 1), and he saw it with the Jews who remained in Jerusalem (chapter 8); he saw it leaving Jerusalem because of the people’s wickedness before the city’s imminent overthrow by Babylon (chapters 10–11).

Prophecy of Christ

God’s warnings, both to Israel and to the surrounding nations, are contained in chapters 3–24. Judah’s last King, Zedekiah, was to be removed because of his godlessness. There would be no Jewish king after him “*until he comes whose right it is*” (21:27). That king will be Jesus Christ!

Judgement and Restoration

Chapter 37 contains a dramatic prophecy of the ‘Valley of Dry Bones’—the regathering of Israel, after their worldwide scattering. This process has been happening in the last hundred years. Chapters 38 and 39 speak of an invasion of Israel which culminates in their deliverance by God Himself.



The Valley of Dry Bones

As a reassurance to the exiles who had seen God’s temple destroyed by the Babylonians, Ezekiel was granted a vision of the future temple to be erected in Jerusalem, a focal point for worship in the Kingdom of God (chapters 40–48). In 43:4 he saw the glory of God which had departed the temple in Ezekiel’s own time, at last return “*by way of the gate which faces toward the east*”.

Norman Owen

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Some interesting links with other parts of the Bible

- ◆ Ezekiel 18:20—see Romans 6:23.
- ◆ Ezekiel 38:15, 16—see Daniel 11:40–45.
- ◆ Ezekiel 40–48—see Haggai 2:7–9; Micah 4:1–4.

A Prophecy of Our Day

There are many prophecies in the Bible which give information about the events which will surround the return of Jesus Christ to the earth. One of the most detailed of these prophecies is Ezekiel chapter 38.

1. The prophecy starts with a confederacy of nations. “Gog of the land of **Magog**, the prince of **Rosh**, **Meshech**, and **Tubal**” are joined by **Persia**, **Ethiopia**, **Libya**, **Gomer** and **Togarmah** (vs. 1-6).

2. “In the latter years” this confederacy will mount an invasion of the nation of **Israel**, which has been newly established after an age of dispersion and is dwelling in comfort and complacency (vs. 7-12).

3. **Sheba**, **Dedan**, **Tarshish** and its allies offer a weak challenge to the invasion (v. 13).

4. God informs Gog that this is all in God’s plan, and the outcome will be that God is glorified by what He is about to do (vs. 14-17).

5. The invasion of Gog and his allies will be met by a supernatural response from God Himself (vs. 18-23). Putting this together with other prophecies, it is clear that this is the moment of Christ’s return.



The identity of some of the nations in the prophecy is obvious; others are addressed by their ancient names, and scholars debate about their precise identity. The map shows a common view of the locations of the nations which will be involved in the final conflict.



Heart Disease

IF YOU DON'T TAKE CARE OF YOUR HEART IT WILL DESTROY YOU!

Heart disease kills many people. Several risk factors for heart disease are behavioural and so under our control. Health campaigns urge us to change our lifestyles in order to reduce our chances of developing heart disease.

Our Sick Hearts

In the Bible a person's heart means more than a physical organ. The Bible refers to our hearts as the source of thinking (Matthew 9:4), emotion (John 16:22) and moral conscience (Hebrews 10:22).

However, the natural state of our hearts is extremely unhealthy. An Old Testament prophet said, "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?*" (Jeremiah 17:9). Jesus reiterated this view in Matthew 15:19.

This problem is so acute that an untreated heart leads inevitably to destruction.

The Remedy

Whilst we cannot help being born into this sick and sorry state, we can help what we do about it. In His great mercy, God has provided the one and only remedy—the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus (Romans 5:21). This can solve our

terminal problem. But we need to accept this solution in the way specified by God. So God tells us to *repent*—to change our way of thinking, which in turn will change our behaviour. This is so important that in the New Testament 'repentance' is mentioned in 53 verses. Repentance must be followed by baptism (Romans 6). And by reading God's word and learning about Him and the Lord Jesus we can start to purify our hearts (James 1:21–22; 4:8). If we do this then we remove the inevitability of extinction because God offers us eternal life (Ephesians 2:4–9). Whilst we can never earn this amazing gift we must try hard to live godly lives (Romans 12:2).

By changing the way we live we can reduce our chances of early death by heart disease. It is certainly worthwhile to stop smoking, eat sensibly, exercise, and avoid stress. However, by doing this we can at best gain only a few years on what is a short existence. By changing the way we think and behave—that is by adopting God's health plan—we can receive eternal life in His future most wonderful Kingdom on earth. This is the most important health campaign we can ever embrace. Let us be fully persuaded and respond in faith—**RIGHT NOW!**

Anna Hart

Across

- 1 'It came to ...' means 'it happened' (4)
(*Ezekiel 1:1*)
- 3 To consume liquid (5)
(*Ezekiel 25:4*)
- 5 Cities were this and later inhabited (6)
(*Ezekiel 36:35*)
- 6 Wrongdoing (3) (*Ezekiel 3:20*)
- 7 Those by which people are known (5)
(*Ezekiel 23:4*)
- 9 The powdery residue after something has burned (5) (*Ezekiel 27:30*)
- 13 Ezekiel was told to set his face against ... of the land of Magog (3) (*Ezekiel 38:2*)
- 14 Ezekiel was told that God would gather the Jews and make them this in Israel (6) (*Ezekiel 37:22*)
- 15 False gods (5) (*Ezekiel 36:18*)
- 16 God told Ezekiel the remains of Tyre would be a place on which to spread these (4) (*Ezekiel 26:5*)



Down

- 1 Ezekiel prophesied about this country, along with Ethiopia and Libya (6)
(*Ezekiel 38:5*)
- 2 Ezekiel prophesied about bones which would be covered with this (4)
(*Ezekiel 37:6*)
- 3 Ezekiel prophesied about this ancient place (5) (*Ezekiel 38:13*)
- 4 During the prophecy of 2 down, Ezekiel heard this (5) (*Ezekiel 37:7*)
- 8 In the prophecy about Tyre, God said these would be laid in the water (6)
(*Ezekiel 26:12*)
- 10 When breath had come into the bones in 2 down, they did this (5)
(*Ezekiel 37:10*)
- 11 Pieces of music which are sung (5)
(*Ezekiel 26:13*)
- 12 In the prophecy in 2 down, Ezekiel prophesied that the bones would do this (4) (*Ezekiel 37:5*)

(These clues use the New King James version of the Bible. If you're using another version some words may not be quite the same.)

Colin Jannaway

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