

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured **Articles**

Things To Come (p. 3)

The Wonder of Bible Prophecy (p. 6)










The Temple of God (p. 16)

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.

Front cover—underground city of the future, from the film Things To Come

Table Of Contents

Things To Come		3
The Pool of Siloam		5
The Wonder of Bible Prophecy		6
Amos		11
“I Am The Way”		12
Tamar		14
The Temple of God		16
Your E-mails		18
Bible Reader’s Wordsearch		19

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Things To Come

IN 1936 EUROPE was on the brink of war, and the world wondered what the future would hold. It was an apt moment for the release of a film entitled *Things To Come*. The film was written by the author and visionary H G Wells, and it presented his view of the future of humankind. He predicted that the approaching war would be so dreadful because of the advanced technology available, that it really would be the war to end all wars and humankind would finally come to its senses and decide to live in peace. The peoples of the world would set about using the marvels of modern technology to build a utopian society of harmony and prosperity. The film ends with a stirring speech by the president of the new order, in which he extols humanity's unending quest for knowledge and advancement which will lead us to the stars.

The Second World War broke out three years later. It was a war in which the world experienced the very worst of what humanity is capable of, amplified by the devastating capabilities of 20th Century technology. In 1945, the year the war ended, Wells wrote his last book *Mind at the End of its Tether*, in which he questioned whether humanity is fit to survive at all.

The advance of technology has vastly improved the lives of much of the world's

population. But it has done nothing to make humankind better morally—it has only made us more dangerous. The fact is we have never been able to create a harmonious society. For all our increased knowledge there is no more prospect of our building utopia now than there ever has been. Now perhaps more than ever before the world wonders what the future will hold.



Glad Tidings of the Kingdom

We do not need to wonder, because actually we've been told what the future holds. The Glad Tidings of the Kingdom of God, which are central to the Bible's message, are not the hopeful musings of a visionary—they are the promises of God, Who has shown Himself to be reliable.

Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel

shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure' (Isaiah 46:9–10).

The destiny of the world is in God's hands, and it is expressed in a sentence by 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). Utopia will be established on the earth, but it will be the work of God, not us.

Here in brief are some of the things we're told about the establishment of the Kingdom and what it will be like:



Ezekiel 38 describes the nation of Israel, recently re-established and dwelling in prosperity and complacency, invaded by a military confederacy led by a northern super-power. The invasion is met and defeated by God Himself.

Zechariah 14 reveals that this is the time of the second coming of Jesus Christ to earth (compare verse 4 with Acts 1:11–12). The invading army will be destroyed and the world transformed.

Psalms 2 shows Jesus Christ as the new king of the world, established on his throne in Jerusalem and subduing the world to his authority.

Micah 4 describes life in the Kingdom—the nations submissive to Christ's rule, learning the ways of God and living in peace.

Ezekiel 40–48 details the restructuring of the land of Israel which is to centre on a magnificent new temple.

Psalms 72 celebrates the glory and prosperity of Christ's reign.

All these are Old Testament prophecies, from the first part of the Bible which deals with events before the birth of Christ. But the New Testament prophecies continue the same theme—notably a prophecy of Jesus himself, which is sometimes referred to as the Olivet Prophecy (because it was delivered on the Mount of Olives), which you can read in Luke 21. This prophecy weaves together warnings of an immediate attack on Jerusalem and destruction of the city, which happened in 70 AD, and a long-term vision of a time of worldwide distress which will herald his second coming.

The prophecy ends with a personal warning. The return of Christ will be an event which shakes the earth to its core, along with all its inhabitants. It demands preparation.

But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man (Luke 21:34–36).

The Pool of Siloam

IN 2004 A SEWER sprang a leak in Old Jerusalem, and while repairing it the workmen came across a length of buried stone steps. Archaeologists moved in to investigate, and identified that the steps dated to the Second Temple Period (around the First Century AD, that's the time of Jesus). As the excavation was widened it emerged that they belonged to a *mikveh*—a ritual bath in which pilgrims visiting the city for religious festivals would purify themselves before heading up to the Temple to offer their sacrifices.

The bath was roughly square, and huge, about the size of two Olympic swimming pools. (The First Century historian Josephus records that over two million people would descend on Jerusalem for the feasts.)

It was soon realized that this was none other than the Pool of Siloam, which is well known to Bible readers because it was here that a blind man was sent to wash and was miraculously cured by the Lord Jesus (John 9:7).

It's known that the water in the Pool of Siloam was especially pure—hence its value for ritual bathing. It was probably a source of drinking water as well. The reason it was so pure is that it was brought directly into the city from a spring outside the city walls. The Bible records how, around 700 years previously, the Jewish king Hezekiah built

a tunnel to bring spring water into the city as a defensive measure against an enemy siege (2 Chronicles 32:2–4 and 2 Kings 20:20). The Pool of Siloam was one of a number of reservoirs that were built during the following centuries to hold this water.



Artist's reconstruction of the pool in Jesus' day

If you visit Jerusalem today you can see the Pool of Siloam and Hezekiah's tunnel, you can see the past for yourself and you can feel connected to the great events of Bible history. But there's even more significance to this pool.

Water is precious in Israel, it always has been. The water of the Pool of Siloam played a key role in the life of the city and the rituals of those who worshipped there. One of the most beautiful pictures of the Kingdom of God is the picture we're given in Ezekiel 47, of a mighty river that will issue from God's Temple and bring healing everywhere it flows.

Doug Potts

The Wonder of Bible Prophecy

IT IS DIFFICULT TO COMPREHEND the ideas of time without any beginning and space without any end—but they are ideas which are generally accepted nowadays. In my opinion these ideas are at least as difficult to comprehend as the idea of an infinite God Who can foretell the future. So why is this idea not more widely accepted?

The Bible contains many prophecies of events that were future to the time of writing, and even future to our day. These prophecies are not viewed with favour by many modern intellectuals. I would call it prejudice, and when I am explaining the idea of Bible prophecy to friends my first and hardest task is often to open their closed minds in order that they might pay proper attention to the subject.

A Unique Feature

The fact is that Bible prophecy has been recognised by many eminent thinkers.* It has often been noted that the Bible made specific, emphatic and repeated predictions about the nation of Israel, which have been fulfilled so comprehensively and in such detail that it is unreasonable to dismiss them as coincidence. The prophets of

* For example Sir Isaac Newton, one of the most influential scientists of all time, was a dedicated Bible student and wrote as much about Bible prophecy as he did about science.

Israel did not merely make forecasts which might easily be proved true and which in the absence of a time limit could never be proved false. When they were foretelling the future of their nation they presented negatives as well as positives, sometimes in defiance of all probabilities (for example Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28, Jeremiah 30 and 46 among many other passages).

There are many other prophecies we could mention. The super-power of Egypt was to be defeated and to remain a 'lowly kingdom', ruled by strangers, never again to exalt itself among the nations (Ezekiel 29). The great city of Tyre was to be made like the top of a rock and never to be built again (Ezekiel 26). Mighty Babylon was to be perpetually desolate (Jeremiah 50–51).



Ruins of Babylon

So with all the forecasts regarding the world empires of the day, there were

extraordinary negatives as well as positives. Human predictions are as likely to be proved wrong as right.

We must not underestimate the importance of these ancient prophecies. The predictions of the Bible are different from human prognostications, not only in the range and extent of their predictions but in their very nature, as they confidently declare that some apparently likely events will never happen, and vice-versa.

Prophecies of Jesus

When people set out to make an impartial investigation of Christianity, it's strange that they often ignore the subject of prophecy. Yet it is clear from the Bible's accounts of the early church that it was largely as a result of prophecy that many people were converted. Paul and Apollos appealed to the Old Testament prophecies to prove that Jesus is the Christ (for example Acts 9:20–21 and 18:24–28). The people who heard them were well aware



that Jesus had been killed and that now his disciples were claiming that he was alive. They knew that Christian witnesses were

willing to endure persecution and death rather than recant their claims. Many people became convinced that the Old Testament prophecies fitted so perfectly into the pattern of what was happening in their own time that the Christians' claims could not be resisted.

The same argument can carry conviction now. Taking only those broad facts which are admitted even by Christianity's opponents, it is clear that in the Old Testament—the Bible which was revered and guarded by the religious leaders who rejected Jesus and had him killed—there is a mass of prophecy which comes to us with compelling logic: the time when the Messiah would appear, the work he would perform, the fact that he would be cut off, and that after this the city and temple would be desolate (Daniel 9, Isaiah 61); his death as a sacrifice (Isaiah 53), his resurrection (Psalm 16); his rejection by the Jews and the call of salvation to the Gentiles (non-Jews) (Isaiah 49); and finally his appearance in glory when Gentile rulers will have the surprise of their lives (Isaiah 52:15) and the Jews will be the subject of their greatest deliverance and their greatest humiliation (Zechariah 12:10–14). All these and many more details are contained in prophecy.

Prophecies By Jesus

There is an idea that the teachings of Jesus will be spread throughout the world by his followers, and eventually bring about the Kingdom of God by reforming people's hearts. This is taught by many churches,

who see themselves as the nucleus of that Kingdom. But this idea was repudiated by Jesus himself:

Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household' (Matthew 10:34–36).

The history of the spread of Christianity has proved this prophecy true. The Bible teaches that the Kingdom of God will be imposed on humankind by God, not brought about by a gradual reformation.

In John 16:2 Jesus told his disciples that a time would come when those who persecuted and killed them would think that they did God a service. This came true in the First Century (for example Acts 7), and it has come true down through the centuries as the established church has persecuted dissenting minorities.



The Spanish Inquisition

Perhaps the most famous of Jesus' prophecies is that which is known as the Olivet Prophecy. It is recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. There Jesus clearly warned that the Jerusalem temple would be destroyed, the Jews scattered, and the city of Jerusalem trodden down by Gentiles until their time was fulfilled. Persecution of disciples would continue, there would be wars and rumours of wars, nation rising up against nation until the last days of the Gentile age. And there are details in this prophecy which can give us confidence that we ourselves are living in those last days.

The Imminence of Christ's Return

True followers of Jesus Christ have always lived in expectation of his return—as he told them to (Matthew 24:44). They have not always expected it to be imminent. For example there were many Protestants during the Reformation in the 16th Century who certainly believed in Christ's return, but the books they wrote attest that they did not expect it to happen in their day. It was only as recently as the early 19th Century that there arose a general expectation amongst believers that Christ's return was near at hand. Why was this? Here are some reasons.

Signs In the World

In answer to his disciples' question as to what should be the sign of his coming and of the end of the age, Jesus said:

There will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of

nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken (Luke 21:25–26).

Has there ever been an age when the world's nations have been in such a universal state of perplexity as this, and when people's hearts are so fearful about the future?



Signs In the Middle East

Joseph Mede was a Fellow of Christ's Church College in Cambridge, England. He wrote a book *The Key to the Revelation*, which was published in English in 1643.

The Book of Revelation is the last book of the Bible. It begins by stating its purpose: "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants—things which must shortly take place*" (Revelation 1:1). It describes world events which will lead up to and surround the return of Christ. It is a difficult book which is full of symbols,

but the symbols can be interpreted by comparing them with other parts of the Bible. In chapter 16 there is a series of seven bowls containing the wrath of God which lead up to the day of judgement on the world. Mede concluded that the sixth bowl represented a period of wars and unrest, along with the decline of the Turkish Ottoman empire. This would pave the way for the re-establishment of the nation of Israel (which was within Ottoman territory at the time) and for the final battle which is called Armageddon (verses 12–16). Note that in the 16th Century the Ottoman empire was at its height and dominating the Middle East; there had been no nation of Israel for 15 centuries and there was no prospect at all of it being re-established.

John Thomas was a 19th Century doctor, who studied his Bible and achieved a grasp of its message. Others were persuaded by his teaching, and that was the origin of the group who are called Christadelphians. In 1849 Thomas published a book *Elpis Israel* ('the Hope of Israel'), in which he expressed his conviction that he was living in 'the latter days'. He agreed with Mede's interpretation of the bowls of Revelation, and he believed that the Jews would return to the land of Israel in two phases. This conclusion was based on prophecies such as Ezekiel 37 in which the rebirth of the nation happens in stages. Thomas expected that initially the Jews would establish a largely secular state, which would have little regard for their God. Then will come Armageddon, which will usher in the return of Christ, and will be followed by another wave of Jews from all

over the world converging on the land in acknowledgement of their king.

At the time he wrote this book the Ottoman empire was alive and well, there was no sign of a Jewish move on the land of Israel, and Europe was enjoying a period of prolonged peace. These Bible prophecies seemed very far-fetched. But within a hundred years the world had descended into a state of unprecedented unrest, the Ottoman empire had disintegrated and the first phase of the Jews' return had happened!



Declaration of the State of Israel, 1948

Difficult Truths

It was terrible that Jesus should be crucified; that Jerusalem should be destroyed shortly thereafter; that Jesus' disciples should be so regularly persecuted through the following centuries. It is terrible that the modern world should be in the state it is. But it is necessary to consider them, because all these things were foretold. It was to disciples in our own age that Jesus said

those words which have been in front of the world for two millennia:

Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man (Luke 21:36).

The signs of the last days are of such importance because they lead the way to the tremendous changes yet to come.

When I am talking to friends about this subject I sometimes feel as though we are in a darkened room. Outside is the light of the sun, but the blinds and curtains are firmly closed. But if a shaft of sunlight can break through and capture my friend's attention, they may just be sufficiently intrigued to pull up the blinds and draw the curtains, and the glorious sunlight will flood in. I know from experience that once closed minds begin to open and defensive scepticism begins to give way, the picture soon becomes too clear for it to be resisted any longer. Do you prefer the darkened room, or are you prepared to fling open the curtains and let in the sunshine?

Islip Collyer

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

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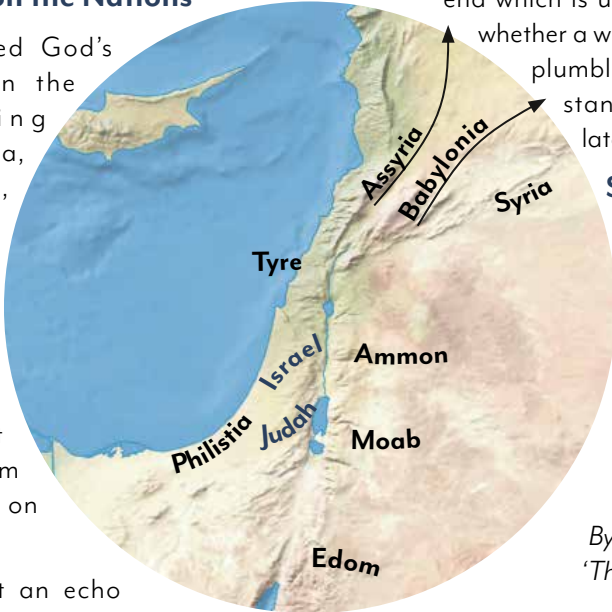
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Amos

AMOS PROPHESED around 800 BC. The nation of Israel was relatively prosperous, luxury and idolatry had turned the people away from their God. As a consequence they were threatened by invasions from the Assyrians and Babylonians in the north.

Judgements on the Nations

Amos predicted God's judgements on the neighbouring nations of Syria, Philistia, Tyre, Edom, Ammon and Moab. But he also foretold God's judgements on His own people—first on the kingdom of Israel, then on Judah.



Fire (7:4–6): indicated that the judgements would be severe—for the cleansing of Israel.

Plumbline (7:7–9): Israel was not upright before God. They needed a plumbline (a plumbline is a string with a weight on the end which is used for checking whether a wall is vertical). The plumbline is the Divine standard, as shown later by Jesus Christ.

Summer Fruit (chapter 8): Just as the fruits in the basket were ripe, so Israel was ripe for judgement!

Norman Owen

By kind permission of 'The Christadelphian'

We can expect an echo of these events in the last days, when the Middle East is again invaded from the north (as foretold for example in Ezekiel 35–39).

Various symbols are employed:

Locusts (7:1–3): these symbolised the coming invasions by Assyria and Babylon (the picture is similar in Joel 1 & 2).

Some interesting links with other parts of the Bible

- ◆ Amos 1:2—see Joel 3:16.
- ◆ Amos 5:8—see Job 38:31.
- ◆ Amos 9:14—see Jeremiah 30:3.



“I Am The Way”

The Gospel of John records a number of sayings of Jesus which begin “I am...” In this series we think about some of the profound things he said about himself.

AS THEY were sharing the Last Supper on the night before he died Jesus said to his disciples, “Where I go you know, and the way you know” (John 14:4).

Thomas, one of his disciples, asked him “Lord, we do not know where you are going, and how can we know the way?” (John 14:5). Jesus replied, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (v. 6).

The disciples had been with him for a long time. It is remarkable that Thomas did not know ‘the way’. Perhaps at the time the disciples still suffered a disconnect with Jesus’ teaching and failed to fully understand the Gospel he preached. It wasn’t until they had been endowed with the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1–4) that it all became clear.

What Did They Understand?

By this time, the disciples understood certain things about Jesus’ message. They understood and believed he was the Christ

—the Messiah, the anointed king—as Peter confessed when Jesus asked them if they would leave him:

From that time many of his disciples went back and walked with him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you also want to go away?” But Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (John 6:66–69).

At this point in Jesus’ ministry the disciples were fully convinced that following and obeying his teaching was the only way to eternal life. But although they understood his message, they apparently failed to understand the bigger picture. We can see this in the way they had difficulty in understanding some of the parables Jesus told and they had to ask him to explain them (for example Luke 8:9).

When Will The Kingdom Come?

Jesus told his disciples: “Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Mark 13:32). The Kingdom was not going to come immediately. There were certain events that would happen first (as he explained

in the Olivet Prophecy in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21, see pages 4 & 7).

But clearly the disciples did not fully understand, because after his resurrection they asked him *“Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”* (Acts 1:6). Jesus replied, *“It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority”* (v. 7).

Possibly the disciples were over-eager to see the Kingdom of God established there and then, in their lifetime. After all, they had recently fallen into a dispute about *“who would be greatest in the kingdom of God”* (Mark 9:33–35 and Luke 9:46–47).

The general expectation of the Jews at the time was that the Messiah would cast out the Roman occupiers and set up God’s kingdom in their place. This expectation seems to have been shared by the disciples, and it blinded them to Jesus’ words when he told them he was to die by crucifixion (Luke 24:7) and that the Gentiles had been given a time to tread down the city of Jerusalem (Luke 21:24). The disciples’ disappointment was expressed by two of them after Jesus’ crucifixion: *“We were hoping that it was he who was going to redeem Israel”* (Luke 24:21).

The Way of Christ

When Jesus said, *“Where I go you know, and the way you know”* (John 14:4), Thomas probably spoke for all of them when he said that they did not know the way. However, Jesus did not mean a literal way, or a real path. He was speaking spiritually.

In the First Century, Christians were known as followers of ‘the Way’ (see Acts 9:2; 19:23; 22:4; 24:22; Hebrews 9:8, 10:20). Peter, in his second letter, calls it “the way of the truth” (2 Peter 2:2).

The only way to the Father is through the sacrifice of Christ. As the Apostle Paul says, *“When we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son”* (Romans 5:10).

Anyone who wants to embrace true Christianity in their lives must believe in the Gospel message. In the words of the Bible they must believe *“the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ”* (Acts 8:12). Then having given ‘a good confession of their faith’ (1 Timothy 6:12) they must be baptised in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19), and live a new life. As the Apostle Paul puts it, *“that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness”* (Ephesians 4:22–24). This new life puts God and others first, and has as its focus prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17), the reading of God’s Word (1 Timothy 4:13), and the regular remembrance of Jesus’ sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins (Luke 22:19).

This is “the way, the truth and the life” that Jesus meant when he replied to Thomas.

Grahame A Cooper

Tamar

The Gospels of Matthew and Luke give lists of the ancestors of Jesus Christ. Matthew 1:1–17 provides his legal ancestry through his step-father Joseph, and Luke 3:23–38 provides his biological ancestry through his mother Mary. All the ancestors named in Luke are men, but Matthew also names five women. These five women were all very special individuals. In this series we will look at them in turn. The first is Tamar.



Tamar and Judah

ABRAHAM LIVED around 2000 BC. God made special promises to him, and he became the founder of Israel (the Jews) and of many of the Arab nations. Much of the Bible is concerned with the nation, and neighbours, of Israel. Jesus was born of Mary, a Jewess.

Abraham's son was Isaac, and Isaac's son was Jacob, and it was through these sons that God's promises were passed. Jacob had twelve sons, and the fourth was called Judah, whose descendants lived in the south of the land of Israel, called Judea. This area probably gave the name of 'Jews' to the nation.

Judah's Family

Genesis chapter 38 contains the account of Judah's family. He had three sons. The eldest son married Tamar, but died childless. Then Judah arranged for his second son to marry Tamar, hoping to raise a family in the name of the first son—but he too died without a child. This process of a younger brother of the deceased marrying his older brother's widow, was later enshrined in the Law of Moses which God gave to His people (Deuteronomy 25:5). Judah instructed Tamar not to remarry, and promised that when his third son was grown up she would marry him, but when that son was old enough Judah failed to keep his promise.

So Tamar decided to take events into her own hands. She dressed as a prostitute and waylaid Judah, who slept with her. He didn't have the means to pay her at the time so she kept his ring, bracelet and staff (or shepherd's crook) as a pledge.

Tamar conceived by her father-in-law, and waited to see what would happen. After about three months Judah was told that his daughter-in-law had been unfaithful, and was pregnant. Amazingly he took a very hard line, and said she should be executed by burning.

Tamar then sent a messenger to Judah with his ring, bracelet and staff, saying that she was pregnant by the man whose they were. Judah must have been aghast by this, and of course identified them as his own. "She has been more righteous than me," he said, because he should have given his third son to her. The death penalty was of course cancelled, and Judah had no further liaisons with Tamar.

When Tamar's time arrived she gave birth to twins—Perez and Zerah. It is Perez who features in the line through King David and right along to Jesus.

Why Is This Written?

I admit that this is a very unusual part of the Bible, but life does have its weird moments. The fact that the Bible honestly records such distasteful events in the lives of the nation's revered ancestors helps to show that it is authentic, and not the work of men.

Judah's comment that Tamar was more righteous than himself holds the key. God had obviously decided that the family line of blessing should come through Judah. Tamar believed God's promises and wanted to be a part of them. When Judah let her down, she took action herself and gave birth to his heir, for the child was counted as Judah's own son and not as his eldest son's heir.

It probably seems to us at first that Tamar did not follow a godly course of action. However, Judah commended her because she had shown up his folly. Her family became renowned in Israel. Later on another God-fearing woman, Ruth, was given a blessing before her marriage to the wealthy farmer Boaz: "May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah" (Ruth 4:12).

David Simpson

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The Temple of God

GOD'S PEOPLE ARE described in the Bible as 'the temple of God' (1 Corinthians 3:16), 'the temple of the living God' (2 Corinthians 6:16) and 'the temple of the Holy Spirit' (1 Corinthians 6:19). These fascinating terms refer back to the actual temple which existed in Jerusalem, and they have profound implications for how disciples of Christ should live.



Artist's impression of Solomon's Temple

It was King David who originally proposed to build a temple (or 'house') for God (the account is in 2 Samuel 7). God explained to him through Nathan the prophet that he would not be the one to build the house, it would be his descendant. Also, by means of his descendant God would build a house for David!

When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever (2 Samuel 7:12–13).

The initial fulfilment of this promise was through Solomon, David's son. Having been forbidden to build the temple himself

David responded excellently and 'made abundant preparations before his death' (1 Chronicles 22:5), and Solomon built the temple. But Solomon did not wholly fulfil the promise: his throne was not established for ever, his dynasty only lasted a few hundred years.

The New Testament of the Bible reveals how the ultimate fulfilment of God's promise to David was through Jesus Christ. Jesus was a descendant of David (Matthew 1:1, Romans 1:3). He is of the royal line, and when he re-establishes the Kingdom of God he will reign on David's throne (Luke 1:32–33). Worship of God will be centred on an actual temple in Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2–3). But he is building another house, here and now!

Through his life, death and resurrection, Jesus has made possible the construction of the figurative House of God—not a physical building, but a spiritual building for the glorification of God, a building made not of stones but of people! This wonderful teaching was foreshadowed in the house which Solomon built.

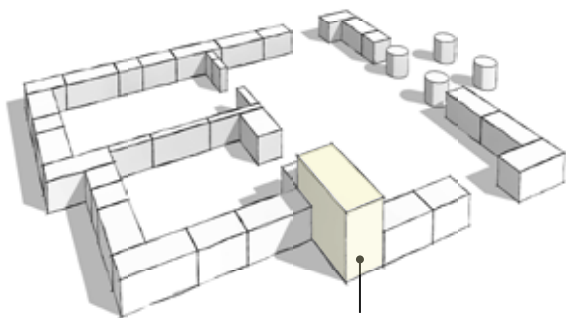
1 Kings 5 describes Solomon's preparations for building the temple. "And the king commanded them to quarry large stones, costly stones, and hewn stones, to lay the foundation of the temple" (1 Kings 5:17). Later the prophet Isaiah drew on this same language: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation" (Isaiah 28:16).

Isaiah was not talking about Solomon's temple. His words are quoted by the Apostle Peter, who reveals that it is a prophesy of Jesus Christ:

Coming to him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on him will by no means be put to shame" (1 Peter 2:4–6).

There is a spiritual temple of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the 'chief cornerstone', the principal stone that was put in place at the beginning of construction work and

which governed the setting out of the entire building. And his followers are the stones which are built around the cornerstone. Together they make up the temple of God.



The cornerstone

The wonderful privilege of being part of the Temple of God comes with great spiritual responsibilities:

If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are (1 Corinthians 3:17).

And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (2 Corinthians 6:16).

As the Temple was built for the glory of the God of heaven, that is the aim of the follower of Jesus: "For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Stephen Blake

WHAT ABOUT the 'rapture'? My mate is going to be taken up before the 'event' as he will be one of the chosen ones. The rest of us are going to have a hard time down here ...

LP

The 'rapture' is the idea which is held by some churches that at the end of the world Jesus' followers will be taken away to meet him. Some preachers present colourful pictures of the faithful ascending to heaven in bliss while down below the earth spirals into chaos and horror.

The idea is built upon a passage in one of Paul's letters:

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. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

The word 'rapture' comes from the Latin translation of that phrase 'caught up'. It literally means 'snatched away'.

Paul is talking about the return of Christ to the earth, when he 'descends from heaven'. Without going into any detail, let's consider some of the things we're told will happen:

It will be a time of trouble on the earth (for example Daniel 12:1). Christ will return in power and glory (for example Matthew 16:27). There will be a judgement of people who have

had the opportunity of responding to the Gospel (for example 2 Timothy 4:1). There will be a massive conflict (Ezekiel 38). Afterwards Christ and his followers will live and reign on the earth (for example Revelation 2:26-27).

Paul is talking about the judgement. What does he mean when he says that people will be "caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air"? Possibly that is what will literally happen; perhaps more likely he's using symbolic language: 'clouds' are used elsewhere as a symbol for crowds of believers (Hebrews 12:1). One thing for certain is that "we shall always be with the Lord" not in heaven but on the earth, for that's where the Kingdom will be.

What about the idea that believers will be taken away prior to the return of Christ? A number of prophecies indicate that when Christ is revealed to the world, the 'saints' (his followers) will be with him (for example Zechariah 14:5). They will already have been 'snatched away' to their judgement. So it does seem that there will be a point in time, as the crisis escalates and the world prepares for the final conflict, when a number of people suddenly aren't here any more.



THE WORDS IN the wordsearch are all taken from verses in prophecies about the return of Jesus to set up God's Kingdom.

They belong in groups of three per verse. The verses are:

Psalm 2:6

Psalm 72:4

Micah 4:3

Zechariah 12:10

Matthew 24:42

Luke 21:25.

(For example, three words from Luke 21:25 could be HEARTS, FAIL, FEAR, although these are not the three you need.)

Find the words and then group them into their sets of three.

BEAT
CHILDREN
COMING
DISTRESS
HILL
HOUR
KING
LOOK
MOURN
NEEDY
PIERCED
PLOWSHARES
SAVE
SIGNS
STARS
SWORDS
WATCH
ZION

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

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

Anna Hart

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