

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured **Articles**

God's Witnesses (p. 3)

Father of the Faithful (p. 5)

God's Hand at Work (p. 8)

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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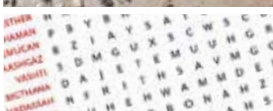
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God's Witnesses

WHAT DO YOU THINK of the Jews? Whatever you think, you have to admit that they are unique. Throughout their long and turbulent history they have defied repeated attempts to destroy them. They have retained their identity despite huge pressures to assimilate into other cultures. They are a tiny minority of the world's population, and yet their impact on history, science and culture has been huge. They seem able to attract hatred like no other group of people: there's a special word for it, 'anti-Semitism'. The Jews are an enigma.

History

They were crushed and exiled by the Babylonians in the 6th Century BC, and again by the Romans in the 1st Century AD. During the last 2000 years they have wandered all over the world, enduring persecution almost wherever they went.



Jewish prisoners in the Warsaw Ghetto, 1943

At various times they have been expelled from many different countries including Cyprus, Egypt, Germany, France, Spain, Italy and England. There have been

numerous massacres of Jews, most infamously by the Church in the Crusades, the Russians in the Pogroms and the Nazis in the Holocaust.

One of the remarkable features of Jews is that they tend to rise to prominence wherever they find themselves. Some of the world's most notable politicians, businessmen, artists and scientists have been Jews.

In 1948 the Jewish state was re-established, nearly 1900 years after it was last destroyed. It began as a beleaguered collection of settlers in the midst of powerful hostile neighbours who were intent on destroying it. Since then it has won various wars for survival against huge odds, and grown to be one of the most prosperous and powerful nations in the world.

There is no denying it—when you look at the history of the Jews, you can see something highly unusual is happening.

A Challenge

The Bible is a Jewish book. It was written almost entirely by Jews, and the history and prophecy it contains is focused on the Jews and the land of Israel. One of the great Bible prophets was Isaiah, who lived during the time of the Jewish Kingdom around the 8th Century BC. Through Isaiah God issued a challenge to the nations of his day:

Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled. Who among them can declare this, and show us former things? Let them bring out their witnesses, that they may be justified; or let them hear and say, "It is truth." "You are My witnesses," says the LORD, "and My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me" (Isaiah 43:9-10).

Look at yourselves, God said to the Jews. You are living evidence that I am God. Their own history, which is recorded for us in the first dozen books of the Bible, would show them that. Nearly 3000 years later, with so much more extraordinary history to view, that declaration still resonates for us.



Jerusalem,
Israel's capital

Does this mean that Jews are somehow better people than the rest of us? Experience shows that it does not. And the modern state of Israel is no more enlightened or less prone to corruption than other states. This is what we should expect. The Bible's account of the Jewish story is a brutally honest and often vividly detailed picture of their human failings.

The Bible book of Deuteronomy contains the last words of Moses, who had led

the people of Israel out of their slavery in Egypt and to the border of the Promised Land. It's a book of reminders, warning and encouragement as they prepared to capture the land which would become known as Israel. Moses explained why it was that God was doing all this for them:

For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. 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 7:6-8).

The Jews always have been and still are a special people. They have played a key role in world history, and they are central to God's future purpose. This is not because of any merit of theirs. The key is in those words of Moses: it's the oath that God swore to their fathers. That's one of the key subjects we'll explore in this issue: who were their fathers, and what made them so special to God?

We'll also see what this means for us. The Apostle Paul referred to the Christian Gospel as the 'hope of Israel' (Acts 28:20), but he also demonstrated how we can all, Jews or not, share in the blessings which God promised to their fathers.

Father of the Faithful

WE KNOW VERY LITTLE about his early life, but much about his later life. He is revered by Jews, Muslims and Christians. The Jews trace their ancestry back to Abraham and regard him as their father.

We first meet him in Genesis 11:28 as Abram (before his name was changed). He was a rich man living in Ur, a city in modern Iraq. Archaeologists inform us that the inhabitants of Ur were advanced and sophisticated. Abram would be schooled in mathematics and astronomy, and he would have lived in a comfortable brick-built house. If he was a merchant he would have possessed his own private army to protect his business interests.

His family worshipped the gods of Ur, but Abram and his wife Sarai appear to have been different, worshipping the true God.

The Promises

In Genesis 12:1 we see God's call to Abram to leave his life in Ur and travel to another country, which God did not name. They were an elderly couple (Abram was 70). How would he feel to be chosen like this? It must have been a challenge, but as a faithful man he obeyed. He took his household, including his nephew Lot and his family, and set off into the unknown.

The New Testament Letter to the Hebrews describes Abram's journey: *"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going"* (Hebrews 11:8).

God made some amazing promises to Abram, which were so important that they are repeated several times in the Bible. They changed his life and the whole course of history:

I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed (Genesis 12:2-3).

They came to the land of Canaan. *"Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, 'To your descendants I will give this land.' And there he built an altar to the LORD"* (Genesis 12:7).

Driven by a severe famine in Canaan he journeyed to Egypt, where he had a test of his faith. God delivered him out of danger, and he returned to Canaan.

So far the family had kept together. But because of the vast numbers of their



livestock “the land was not able to support them” (Genesis 13:6) and they needed to separate. Here we see the kindness and humility of Abram, as he invited Lot to choose which way he wanted to go. “And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere”. But the people who lived there “were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the LORD” (verse 13). It’s appropriate that Lot’s name means ‘veiled eyes’.

Lot headed for the plain and Abram headed for the hills. Lot had lifted his eyes and been beguiled by the lushness of the valley. Now God invited Abram: “Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you” (verses 14–17).



Chapter 14 relates an invasion of the land, during which Lot and his family were taken captive. Abram pursued the invaders with his household army and rescued his nephew. There followed a momentous meeting with another worshipper of God, Melchizedek the king of Salem. The Letter

to the Hebrews points out the prophetic significance of this meeting (chapter 7). That’s another subject.

Abram was now 85 years old. God had promised him descendants, but he and Sarai were too old to have children. Chapter 15 opens with God’s promise that He would give them a son. It must have seemed impossible, but “he believed in the LORD” (verse 6). This was what marked Abram out—he believed what God told him. The verse tells us that God “accounted it to him for righteousness”.

The Apostle Paul discusses this episode in his Letter to the Romans. Nobody is righteous in God’s eyes—but if we show faith like Abraham, God will account our faith as righteousness (Romans 4:16–25).

Names Changed

Genesis 16. Abram had waited faithfully for many years, but he had no heir. At last he took the matter into his own hands and had a son by Sarah’s maid Hagar. But in chapter 18 God visited him and assured him that His promises would be fulfilled by a son of Sarah. And sure enough, by a miracle she had a son, whom they called Isaac. Abram was now 99 years old.

In chapter 17 God changed Abram’s name to Abraham (‘Father of a Multitude’), and Sarai’s name to Sarah (‘Princess’).

They had waited so long for Isaac. All God’s promises depended on him. But in chapter 22 came Abraham’s biggest test of faith. God told him to offer Isaac as a

burnt offering! Imagine Abraham's grief. But as always he obeyed.

Again, the Letter to the Hebrews contains a commentary on this: *"By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called,' concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense"* (Hebrews 11:17-19). Abraham trusted God's promises completely, so he believed that even if Isaac died God would bring him back to life.

In the event God did not allow Abraham to harm his son. But witnessing his tremendous faith, God declared: *"By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son—blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice"* (Genesis 22:16-18).



Abraham's Faith

God keeps His promises. Abraham did become the father of a great nation,

which possessed the land of Canaan. And Bible prophecies describe the Kingdom of God, when Israel will be the centre of a worldwide kingdom and Abraham himself will be there to see it (for example Matthew 8:11).

But God's promises concerned more than the nation. The Apostle Paul brings out a deeper significance to that last great promise God made: *"Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed,' who is Christ"* (Galatians 3:16). It is Jesus Christ who is the ultimate fulfilment of all the promises God made to Abraham. He gave his life as a sacrifice to bring us to God, and it is he who will rule in the Kingdom and bring blessings to all the earth.

Remember that what really marked Abraham out and endeared him to God was his faith. That's where you and I come in. We don't need to be literal descendants of Abraham—we just need to share Abraham's faith in the things that God tells us.

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:26-29).

Tom Ingham

God's Hand at Work

THE BOOK OF ESTHER is the account of an orphaned Jewish girl who rose to become the Queen of Persia, during the Jewish exile around 500 years before the birth of Jesus Christ.

Esther lived with her uncle Mordecai in the Persian capital Shushan. The first two chapters relate how, due to her striking beauty and her charm, she won the heart of King Ahasuerus.



At the end of chapter 2 Mordecai overheard a plot to assassinate the King. With Esther's help he foiled it, but he received no recognition.

Plot to Destroy the Jews

Chapter 3 sees a man called Haman appointed as chief of the King's nobles. All the King's officials were obliged to bow in homage to Haman, but Mordecai refused. Furious, Haman determined to get revenge not just on Mordecai but on all his people. (Neither Haman nor Ahasuerus knew that Esther was Mordecai's niece.)

Haman persuaded Ahasuerus to issue a decree to destroy all Jews in the empire. Adolf Hitler was not the first to propose a 'final solution' to the 'Jewish problem'!



When news of Haman's plot emerged, there was consternation among the Jews. Mordecai sent and urged Esther to act—only she could save her people

(chapter 4). She took her life in her hands, and commenced a strategy to persuade the king to reverse his decree.

In chapters 5 and 6 we see an amazing series of 'coincidences' in which we can see God's hand at work assisting Esther. She invited the King and Haman to a feast. Haman, full of pride and spite, built an enormous gallows on which to hang Mordecai. That night the King could not sleep, so he ordered his servants to read to him the chronicles of his reign. He discovered that Mordecai had not been rewarded for saving his life. Haman arrived to seek permission to hang Mordecai on his gallows. The King asked Haman what should be done for the man whom the King wanted to honour. Haman, assuming that was himself, said *"Let a royal robe be brought which the king has worn, and a horse on which the king has ridden, which has a royal crest placed on its head. Then let this robe and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that he may array the*

man whom the king delights to honour. Then parade him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him: 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honour!'" (6:8-9).

Ahasuerus commanded Haman to do that for Mordecai. Haman was humiliated,



and that night Esther exposed his plot and he was himself hanged on the gallows he had built for Mordecai (chapter 7).

The King issued a decree permitting

the Jews to defend themselves against their attackers. Each year ever since the Jews have celebrated their deliverance on the Festival of Purim on the 13th of Adar, the date they were to be destroyed.



How to Avert a Death Sentence

Although, curiously, there is no mention of God in the book of Esther, we can clearly see His hand at work in its events—just as

we can see it at work in the entire history of the Jewish people. If God can work so effectively in the life of a nation, He can also work in your life and mine.

We are all living under a death sentence. It's not as immediate as the decree to

destroy the Jews in the Persian empire, but it's real: "*The wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23). The Bible explains what we need to do—we must repent and be baptised. "*He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned*" (Mark 16:16).

Like Esther, we must recognise the peril we are in and make that leap of faith.

John Kendall

g l ea n ing s

Gleanings is a 40-page braille magazine which contains a selection of *Glad Tidings* articles along with Bible studies and encouraging meditations.

It is published bi-monthly and can be sent free of charge to anyone who is registered blind.

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Clarification

Last month's issue (number 1643) contained the article 'The Purpose Of Life', which was attributed to Malcolm Cross. Mr Cross has pointed out that the article was based on a talk given by the late Gordon Hunnings and adapted for publication.

Mary the Mother of Jesus

The Gospels of Matthew and Luke give lists of the ancestors of Jesus Christ. Only five women are mentioned. These were all very special individuals. In this series we've looked at them in turn—this month we consider the fifth woman, Mary.

You can catch up with the other articles in the series at gladtidingsmagazine.org.

IT WAS IN GOD'S PLAN, right from creation, that His Son Jesus would be born of the woman Mary. God would offer salvation to the world by Jesus' death. To introduce Christianity God enabled an elderly childless couple of the priestly tribe of Levi to have a son who would prepare the way for Jesus. Zacharias and Elizabeth's son was John the Baptist, who did what the priests should have been doing, "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17).

Six months after telling Zacharias he would have a son, God's angel Gabriel was sent to Elizabeth's relative Mary. She was of course startled by the angel's news that she had been chosen to bring God's Son into the world, but was reassured that God's Holy Spirit would enable the baby to be born, as she was an unmarried virgin. Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).

Mary wanted to find someone who would understand and appreciate her emotions, and went to visit Elizabeth, who was now six months pregnant. Mary showed her strong faith in God when she expressed her feelings to Elizabeth: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed" (Luke 1:46–48).

Joseph

Mary was engaged to be married to Joseph the carpenter of Nazareth, and we can be assured that God had specially chosen him as well as his fiancée to bring up God's son. Joseph was step-father to Jesus, but we hear very little of him in the Bible. The Roman taxation and registration of names took both Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem the



birthplace of their ancestor King David. Mary was then heavily pregnant, and we can assume that as they were slow in travelling all the lodging houses would

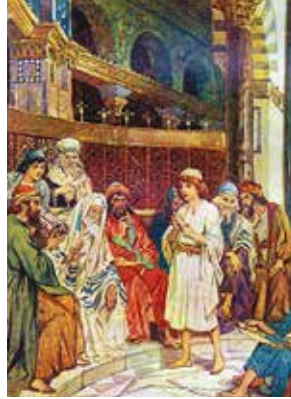
have filled up, and so they had to stay in a stable.

The baby was born in Bethlehem as had been foretold in Micah 5:2. God's angels told the wonderful news of this very special child to shepherds, who went to see for themselves. They found the baby lying in a manger, as the angels had promised, and praised God. We are told that Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart—another wonderful memory she treasured away.

Mary and Joseph then kept the Law of Moses by circumcising Jesus on the eighth day, and a few weeks later they went to the temple in Jerusalem to offer a sacrifice. They took the poor person's option of birds rather than a lamb, showing that they were of lowly means (Leviticus 12:6–8). While in the temple they received a beautiful blessing from a holy man Simeon, who also told Mary that she would endure some very difficult times. Matthew relates the visit to Egypt to escape the sword of King Herod. God spoke to Joseph three times during this entire episode, and kept the family safe, until they settled in Nazareth.

At the Age of Twelve

The next we read of this holy family was when Jesus was 12 years old. Each year they went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, but this time when the party set off home Jesus stayed behind in the temple talking to the learned men. Mary and Joseph were unaware of this, and it took them three whole days of anxious searching



before they found him. Mary rather hastily told him that his father and she had been very worried, but he very politely reminded her that God was his Father. It's

probable that Joseph died soon after this, as he is not mentioned in the remaining chapters.

The Saviour

The Gospels recount Mary's last quoted words in John 2:5, when a wedding feast they were attending ran out of wine. Mary said, "*Whatever he says to you, do it.*" This was to be Jesus' first miracle, and the wine he made out of water was of a very high quality. Mary's words at this feast showed that she knew that from that time onwards she had done all she could for Jesus. Three and a half years after this first miracle, when wicked men crucified him, Jesus asked his disciple John to take care of his mother.

Following Jesus' resurrection and ascension to heaven we read that Mary was associating with the apostles (Acts 1:14). So the picture painted in the Bible of Mary shows her wonderful acceptance of God's will, and the blessed role she had in bringing God's Son into the world.

David Simpson

The Glory of Israel

ALTHOUGH HIS PEOPLE were so frequently disobedient and unfaithful, God was supremely patient with them. As the prophet Isaiah reminded them: *“I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, according to their own thoughts”* (Isaiah 65:2). Some suggest that because of Israel’s unfaithfulness, which culminated in them rejecting and killing God’s own Son, He has disowned the nation of Israel. This is not what the Bible says. For example this is what the angel Gabriel told Mary:

“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:30–33).

Son of David

God had made a promise to the Jewish king David about a descendant who would sit on his throne (2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17). Jesus was that descendant. He will sit on David’s throne in Jerusalem, and rule over the ‘house of Jacob’ (a term which refers to the nation of Israel). Mary’s song of praise shows that she understood what

this meant: *“He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever”* (Luke 1:54–55).

Mary’s cousin Elizabeth also had a miraculous baby, announced by Gabriel (Luke 1:5–25). These are the words of Elizabeth’s husband Zacharias when their son John was born:

Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: “Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who have been since the world began, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to our father Abraham” (Luke 1:67–73).

These words of God which Zacharias spoke affirm the continuity of God’s purpose. The promises made to David and to Abraham would be fulfilled in the Son of God—Jesus the son of Mary, whose forerunner was John.

Preaching to the Jews

John prepared the way for Jesus by preaching repentance to the Jews. He



taught them powerfully that merely being descendants of Abraham was not going to earn them God's favour: *"Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones"* (Luke 3:8).

Jesus followed, preaching his message of salvation to the *"lost sheep of the house of Israel"* (Matthew 10:6, 15:24). But when the Jews rejected the message, Jesus' followers turned to the Gentiles (non-Jews) as well (Acts 13:46).

Sadly so many of the children of Abraham were disobedient and did not accept Jesus as the Christ. As such, the 'wrath of God abode on them' (John 3:36). As a nation, this sorrowful situation will continue until the appearance of Jesus from heaven.

The Repentance of Israel

The prophet Zechariah looks forward to the return of Christ. He describes a future attack on Jerusalem which will bring the Israeli nation to its knees, and then the intervention of Christ himself. This appearance will bring about a repentance on the part of many Jews, who will at last return to God (Zechariah 12:9–10).

Clearly God's purpose is still bound up with the Jews. He made promises to their faithful

fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the Jews are 'beloved for the sake of the fathers' (Romans 11:28). In Romans chapter 11 the Apostle Paul explains that God has not cast away the Jews (v. 1). Rather, when they stumbled through their faithlessness the way was opened for Gentiles to become part of God's family: *"I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!"* (vs. 11–12).

The Kingdom of God will be centred on Israel but will bring blessing to the whole world (Isaiah 2:1–4). There will be eternal life for Christ's faithful followers, both Jews and Gentiles (John 6:54). Jesus Christ will at last be the glory of Israel (Luke 2:32).

Stephen Blake

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'Glad Tidings Magazine')

The Governor's Memoir

Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor who sentenced Jesus Christ to death. This is an imaginary memoir, but it is based on the facts as we know them from the Bible and archaeology. The Bible verses are given for reference.



You can catch up with the previous parts at www.gladtidingsmagazine.org.

Part 3

THERE WAS NOTHING I could do. I had given them the choice, they had decided, I hated the situation but I could not go back. I gave the order for the release of Barabbas, turned my back on the mob and stalked back into the Praetorium. The prisoner was dragged after me ([Matthew 27:27-29](#)).

I sat weakly on my seat. This was a part of the proceedings which I often enjoyed, but today I had no stomach for it. The hall was filling with soldiers, word had got round and anyone who was off duty was gathering to watch the sport. The king of the Jews! This was an opportunity for the lads to show what they thought of that.

The man stood there, meek, trembling slightly, head down, like a lamb in the middle of a pack of wolves.

They hauled off his tunic, cuffed his wrists and fastened him to the scourging pillar; then to the shouts and cheers of the assembly his back was whipped till the skin was in shreds and each blow spattered the floor with blood.

When the captain judged that it was unsafe to continue for fear the prisoner would die, they dragged him back into the middle of the hall. Someone had been to collect a bunch of thorn branches, and there were whoops of glee as they were twisted into a makeshift crown, which was then jammed on to the prisoner's head to a raucous cheer. He staggered and buckled, rough hands held him up, blood spurted from his forehead and coursed down his temples.

They flung the purple robe around his shoulders and jammed a reed into his hand as a mock sceptre. Someone shouted "Hail, King of the Jews!" and the crowd roared with laughter. The captain dropped to his knees in front of the prisoner and did obeisance, his men cheered, then he stood up and thumped him hard in the stomach. They started stamping and chanting, like a pack of dogs jostling around their prey. Someone snatched the reed from his hand

and cracked it over his head, and the hall rang with another cheer. They started to take it in turns to kneel before him then spit in his face ([Mark 15:16–19](#)).

The captain was watching expertly, ready to step in before the prisoner was killed. But before he did so I couldn't take any more. I rose to my feet and barked "Stop that!" The soldiers withdrew instantly and stood to attention. I beckoned to the two who were supporting the prisoner, and strode out to the portico.

The priests were waiting, expectant.

"Behold," I said, "I am bringing him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in him." The prisoner was shoved out on to the pavement, his escort withdrew and he stood there before them, haggard and blood-soaked, his face and his body twisting with fatigue and pain, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe ([John 19:5–16](#)).



"Behold the man!" I said. Perhaps I was appealing to their sense of pity. Instantly they bellowed, "Crucify him, crucify him!"

I did not want to be part of this. "You take him and crucify him," I shouted over the tumult, "for I find no fault in him."

One of the priests launched himself at the balustrade and yelled back at me while he jabbed an angry finger at the prisoner: "We have a law, and according to our law he ought to die, because he made himself the son of God!" The others cheered and jeered, shaking their fists at me and my men.

I knew that the accusations were false. I knew there must be a special reason for such vitriolic hatred. There was nothing in the demeanour or behaviour of this man which gave me cause to think there was any insincerity about him, and it was obvious he was no ordinary man—in all my life I had come across nobody like him. And now they told me that he claimed to be the son of a god.

I was suddenly very afraid. I retreated into the hall. They dragged the prisoner after me, he swooned and one of the soldiers hoisted him to his feet. His head lolled to one side, the soldier grabbed his beard and jerked his face round to look at me.

"Where are you from?" I demanded.

One eye was completely closed under its throbbing black bruise, the other was smarting and bloodshot, but when he had managed to focus he regarded me patiently.

I leaned close and hissed, "Are you not speaking to me? Do you not know that I

have power to crucify you, and power to release you?”

He spoke quietly, in painful laboured gasps: “You could have no power at all against me unless it had been given you from above.” Through the blood and sweat which oozed down his face his eye flicked in the direction of the waiting priests. “Therefore the one who delivered me to you has the greater sin.” Then he fixed me again with his gaze.

I pulled myself away and shouted for my secretary. “Get this man out of here. I want a platoon at the door on Bakers’ Street immediately, get him down the rear stairs and get him out of the city.”

My secretary nodded and hurried away.

I bawled at the gathered soldiers: “To your posts, now!”

Soldiers snapped to attention and the Praetorium began to empty. I gathered my cloak and motioned to the guards who were supporting the prisoner to follow me. But at that moment a shout arose above the din of the mob outside: “If you let this man go, you are not Caesar’s friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar!”.

I stopped. My guards stopped. These rebellious Jews who made no secret of their disrespect for the Emperor and all he stood for—were they really prepared to report me to Rome? Perhaps they were aware that Sejanus had fallen out of favour at court and my situation was precarious.

I stormed out to the portico and faced the

mob. Silence fell. There at the balustrade stood the High Priest Caiaphas, smirking triumphantly. I glared at him. I sat down with as much dignity as I could muster, and called for the prisoner.

An innocent man. A divine man. But was he worth my career? There was nothing I could do.

Humiliated and angry, I pointed at the prisoner: “Behold your King!”

Instantly the mob resumed shouting, “Away with him, away with him! Crucify him!”

“Shall I crucify your King?” I taunted them, bitterly.

The chief priests shouted “We have no king but Caesar!”

And that was one consolation I drew from that day’s hideous events—no amount of bullying I could have inflicted would ever have extracted from them such a declaration of loyalty to the Emperor. I wonder whether they will live to regret it.

I rose to my feet, turned my back on the mob, gave the order that the prisoner was to be crucified, and walked inside.

Katie Cabeira

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

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To be concluded.

Zephaniah

ZEPHANIAH WAS a prophet of God during the reign of King Josiah over Judah, about 630 BC. Through him God warned that He would punish Israel's neighbours for their false religion, violence and fraud (1:2–3). Judah too would be punished!

Impending Judgements

First, God would send the Scythians. They would attack the Philistines, Moabites, Ethiopians and Assyrians (2:4–15).

Later, God would send the Babylonians against Assyria. Nineveh, its capital, would be overthrown. This was fulfilled in 612 BC.

These events involving surrounding nations were to be a warning to Judah. Jerusalem itself would likewise be overthrown by the Babylonians.



Some 25 years later the Babylonian attacks on Judah began. Jerusalem was finally overthrown by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC and many Jews were taken into captivity. Nevertheless, even in such troubled times,

God promised ultimate salvation for the faithful.

The Jews were to be punished by God for their rebellion against Him, despite His many appeals to them (see 3:1–7). They were proud and their rulers were corrupt (3:3–5). But not only the Jews were like that: other nations too were wicked. All were to be punished by the coming events. It still applies, that God will punish all nations for their wickedness (see 3:8).

God's Hidden Ones

The name “Zephaniah” means ‘hidden of God’. Just as the faithful in those days were saved out of the fiery judgements which came on the nations, so those who today are faithful believers will be ‘hidden of God’ in the Day of His wrath (see 2:3 and 3:12–13).

Norman Owen

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Some interesting links with other parts of the Bible

- ◆ Zephaniah 1:15—see Jeremiah 30:7; Joel 2:31–32.
- ◆ Zephaniah 2:3—see Isaiah 26:20; Amos 5:15.
- ◆ Zephaniah 3:20—see Isaiah 11:12; Jeremiah 30:3; Ezekiel 37:21.

C

In your magazine you speak of Israelites and Jews as one and the same. They're not! Jews are Israelites but not all Israelites are Jews.

Ed

THAT'S CORRECT. 'Jew' actually means 'man of Judah', and Judah was just one of the 12 tribes of Israel. So why do we use the name 'Jews' to refer to all people of Israel?

The kingdom of Israel began around 1000 BC. Its history is recorded in the Bible books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles. In time the kingdom split in two—ten tribes formed the northern kingdom which is known as Israel, and two tribes formed the southern kingdom. Judah was the dominant of these tribes and so the southern kingdom was known as Judah. The northern kingdom was destroyed by the Assyrians around 700 BC and the ten tribes were scattered. The southern kingdom was destroyed by the Babylonians around 600 BC, but its people retained their identity and many returned to the land of Israel (this is recorded in the Bible books of Ezra and Nehemiah). This is when they began to be called Jews—because they were survivors of the kingdom of Judah. By the time of Jesus all Israelites were known as Jews.

Not all Jews are from the tribe of Judah. During the declining years of the northern kingdom it seems that many of its people sought refuge in the southern kingdom, particularly during the prosperous reigns of Josiah and Hezekiah (see for example

2 Chronicles 15:9 and 30:11), so there will have been representatives of all the 12 tribes in the southern kingdom when they were taken captive and when they returned (see Acts 26:7).

Also there are many theories about the fate of the 'lost ten tribes' from the Assyrian captivity, with various modern ethnic groups claiming descent from them.

The Bible foretells a regathering of the Jewish people to the land of Israel in the 'latter days' (for example Jeremiah 23:3 and Ezekiel 38:8). This has started to happen, as evidenced by the existence of the nation of Israel since 1948. The regathered Jews in Jerusalem will play a key role in the events surrounding the return of Christ (for example Zechariah 12). But there are tantalising glimpses in prophecy of a bigger return of Israelites to their land, which will happen after Christ has established his Kingdom, and will involve all the 12 tribes:

Thus says the Lord GOD: "Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again" (Ezekiel 37:21–22).

The Book of Esther

1 The column below contains the names of 12 people in the book of Esther, which are all hidden in the grid. Two are alternative names of the same person. Which two?

AHASUERUS	H	S	E	R	E	Z	D	T	A	T	R	I
ESTHER	H	A	D	A	S	S	A	H	L	E	W	A
HAMAN	P	B	Y	B	H	N	A	J	H	R	C	C
MEMUCAN	B	Z	I	A	Y	S	A	T	Z	E	Z	E
VASHTI	S	D	M	G	U	X	S	C	W	S	C	D
BIGTHANA	D	A	J	E	T	E	M	U	U	H	G	R
HADASSAH	N	F	R	I	T	H	S	A	V	M	G	O
HARBONAH	O	U	H	E	H	W	A	M	M	D	E	M
MORDECAI	S	V	H	A	R	B	O	N	A	H	Z	M
TERESH	L	O	Z	A	G	H	S	A	A	H	S	O
ZERESH												

2 Here are ten different quotes from the book. In each case who was speaking, and to whom? Seven different people are involved, all from the list above.

- “The queen’s behaviour will become known to all women.”
- “They do not keep the king’s laws.”
- “The money and the people are given to you.”
- “Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king’s palace.”
- “If I perish, I perish.”
- “What is your request?”
- “Let a gallows be made.”
- “Whom would the king delight to honour more than me?”
- “Who is he and where is he, who would dare presume in his heart to do such a thing?”
- “Hang him on it!”

(CLUE: Answers are in these following chapters and verses
1:16-17; 3:8; 3:11; 4:13; 4:15-16;
5:3; 5:14; 6:6; 7:5; 7:9)

(These quotes are from 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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