

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured **Articles**

The Name of God (p. 3)

Our Amazing Bible (p. 10)

Baptism is Not Optional (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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The Name of God

IN THE BIBLE names often have meaning—they tell us something about the person. For example Abraham was the ancestor of the Jews and many of the Arabs, and the spiritual ancestor of all God’s people (Galatians 3:29): and his name means ‘Father of a multitude’.

There is one name which occurs far more often than any other name. It appears only in the Old Testament, but it appears nearly 7,000 times. It’s a beautiful and majestic name which is full of meaning. As you would expect, it’s the name of God Himself.

If you’re a Bible reader you may just be wondering how you’ve missed it. The answer is that most Bibles don’t print it—but they indicate where it should be. Wherever you see the words LORD or GOD in capital letters, that’s where God’s name was in the original Hebrew manuscripts. Some Bible readers insert the name wherever they see that it was originally present. Some Bible versions print it.

He Who Is

It’s clear in the Bible that God’s name was known, revered and loved by His people: it was an expression of His character. For example the Psalms, the Bible’s songbook, abounds with phrases such as *“Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name!”* (Psalm 103:1).

So what is this holy name, and what does it mean? It consists of four Hebrew letters, which are translated into English as *YHWH*. There are no vowels in the written Hebrew of the Bible, so we can’t be sure how it was pronounced. Some know it as *“Jehovah”*, most scholars pronounce it *“Yahweh”*.



The name of God in biblical Hebrew, from a letter dated 6th Century BC. Note that Hebrew is written from right to left.

A translation into English might be *“He Who Is”*, or (as some linguists prefer) *“He Who Will Be”*. What more profound name could the Creator of the universe use to declare Himself? It speaks of the absoluteness and eternity of *“the One Who is and Who was and Who is to come”* (Revelation 11:17). And it shows the basis on which God wants us to come to Him and build our relationship with Him. We don’t have to be heroic or brilliant, we just need to accept that He is, and what He says is true: *“Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him”* (Hebrews 11:6).

The Hidden Name

Why has the name been taken out of our Bible? It was probably around 200–300 BC, in the time between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament. It's thought that the Jews decided the name was too sacred to mention, and avoided using it in case it should be treated with disrespect. They replaced it with the word 'LORD', which is how it appears in our modern Bibles.



It's likely that by the time of Jesus and his apostles God's name was no longer being used. In the New Testament God is not referred to by His name, and when the New Testament quotes Old Testament passages which use the name, it substitutes the word 'Lord'. However, the Jews certainly still knew, understood and revered God's name. For example its supreme importance is emphasised in the Lord's prayer: *"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name"* (Matthew 6:9); it appears in forms such as *"Alleluia"* (Revelation 19:1), which means "Praise Yah"; and it appears in the names of people.

The name God chose for His Son was 'Jesus' (Matthew 1:21). This was a popular

name at the time, it was the First Century form of 'Joshua', the name of the Old Testament hero. But it's also a name with significance: it means "Yah Is Salvation". It expresses precisely who Jesus is: the man sent by God to be the Saviour of the world (Luke 2:11).

It's perhaps no coincidence that in the New Testament the most common title by which Jesus Christ is addressed is "Lord".

The Name of Jesus

In his letter to the Philippians the Apostle Paul urges the disciples to follow the example of humility which was set by Jesus Christ, who laid down his life to save his people from their sins. Because he humbled himself, God has lifted him up: *"Therefore God also has highly exalted him and given him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"* (Philippians 2:9–11). These are amazing words. They show how highly God has exalted His Son, and how highly we should regard him!

Paul here is looking forward to the Kingdom of God, when Jesus Christ will reign as King of the world. As a result of his righteous rule, *"all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD"* (Numbers 14:21).

At last, everyone will know and worship "He Who Is". That's the destiny of this world, and we can be part of it if we want to be.

Malachi

MALACHI'S NAME means 'messenger of God'. He was the last of God's prophets in the Old Testament, prophesying after the Jewish exile in Babylon. After his days 'the sun went down on the prophets' (Micah 3:6) for about 400 years—until the time of Jesus.

The Message

Malachi was told to remind Israel that God had been good to them, but that priests and people alike had failed (1:2). Their punishment must come and God would open His message to the Gentiles (non-Jews). A greater priest is to come—the Lord Jesus Christ, “*the Messenger of the covenant*” (3:1). Through him God will make a new covenant with believers, both Jews and Gentiles.

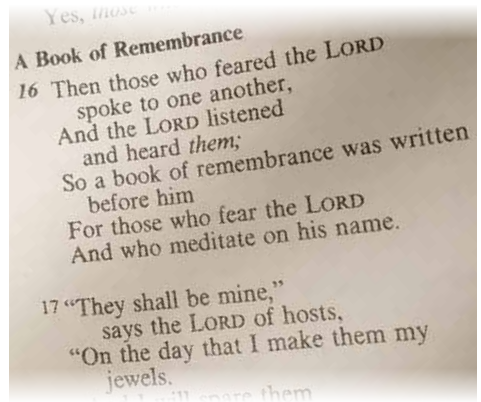
Chapter 3 foretells Christ's coming in judgement—or blessing—depending how he is received. He is to be preceded by a forerunner who will “*prepare the way before Me*” (3:1). When he first came, his forerunner was John the Baptist (Matthew 11:10). Malachi also foretold that Elijah the prophet will come to Israel at the time of Christ's return to earth (4:5).

A Delightful Land

Malachi looks to the Kingdom of God, when He will bless Israel. The land will become “*delightful*” (3:12) and all nations

who respond will be blessed through Israel's King.

There is a promise for those who love God:



Malachi 3:16–17

Just as the High Priest carried the names of the twelve tribes of Israel close to his heart, on the jewels on his breastplate (Exodus 28:29), so we can be amongst God's special treasure in the coming day (3:17).

Norman Owen

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Some interesting links with other parts of the Bible:

- ◆ Malachi 1:11—see Isaiah 49:6; 60:3; Romans 9:24–26.
- ◆ Malachi 3:16, 17—see Exodus 28:29; Deuteronomy 4:20; 1 Peter 2:9.
- ◆ Malachi 4:2—see Luke 1:78, 79; Ephesians 5:14; Revelation 1:16.

The House of God

WHEN GOD BROUGHT His people Israel out of slavery in Egypt to lead them to the Promised Land, they camped in the desert in a city of tents. They needed a place that was set aside specially for the worship of God, and at first they used the tent of Moses, the man whom God had appointed as the people's leader. This tent was pitched outside the main camp (Exodus 33:7–11).

The Tabernacle



While they were in the wilderness God gave them the Law which was to govern their life and worship, which became known as the Law of Moses. And He instructed them to build a special tent to be the focus of their national worship. This tent was called the Tabernacle, and whereas Moses' tent had been outside the camp God insisted that the Tabernacle was erected in the centre

of the camp, in the midst of His people (Leviticus 15:31).

The tents of eleven of the tribes of Israel were pitched in a huge square. The tents of the twelfth tribe Levi were pitched immediately around the Tabernacle, between it and the people (Numbers 1:53)—God wanted to be in the midst of His people, but they had to be aware of His holiness, and approach Him with care.

The Tabernacle was built precisely to God's detailed instructions, and according to Exodus 40:16–17 it took a full year to finish it.

During the 38-years' wilderness journey of the children of Israel, the whole nation moved about, and every time they set up camp the Tabernacle was erected in its centre. But when they entered the Promised Land (Canaan) it was appropriate that the Tabernacle be erected in one established place. That place was Shiloh, where it remained for over 300 years (Joshua 18:1). Shiloh was in the territory of Ephraim—the tribe of their leader, Moses' successor Joshua—and was geographically central in Canaan.

It was at Shiloh that the Tabernacle was pitched longest. It was the site of many significant events in Israel's history. Here the priesthood became corrupt

(1 Samuel 2:12). Psalm 78:60 tells how Shiloh was eventually destroyed because of the wickedness of the people.

And it's Psalm 132:13–14 which tells us that instead of Shiloh God chose Zion for His habitation: *"This is My resting-place for ever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it."* Zion is Jerusalem.

And so King Solomon, following the pattern which God had showed his father King David, built the glorious Temple at Jerusalem (1 Kings 6).

The Temple



Although the Temple, like the Tabernacle, was in the midst of God's people, there were degrees of separation as to how people could approach and worship there: first there was the courtyard which was open to both Jews and Gentiles, though Gentiles could go no further on pain of death. The next space was the outer sanctuary, known as the Holy Place, and here only priests and Levites could enter in the course of their duties; then there was the inner sanctuary,

known as the Most Holy Place, where only the High Priest could enter, and that only with suitable precautions and preparation, once a year on the Day of Atonement.

Solomon's Temple was destroyed in the judgements of God against the people's wickedness, when the Babylonians burnt and sacked Jerusalem in 586 BC. A replacement was built by King Herod, and this was destroyed in 70 AD by the Romans. Jesus had told the Jews beforehand, *"See, your house is left to you desolate"* (Matthew 23:38). It was no longer God's house, they had rebelled against Him and He had abandoned it. It has never been replaced. So where is the house of God in our age?

We have seen the principle that God wants to be in the midst of His people—He wants us to be near Him. In the days when the Temple still stood, God said to His people, *"Thus says the LORD: 'Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist,' says the LORD. 'But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word'"* (Isaiah 66:1–2).

God, as the Creator of heaven and earth, can live anywhere—no mere earthly building can contain Him. But He is willing to dwell with any man or woman who wants Him to dwell with them. That's why the Lord Jesus said, *"If anyone loves me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him"* (John 14:23).



The Church

We have to remember that a church does not consist of the place or the building where services are held. In the New Testament a church is always the body of people who make up the congregation. The word translated “church” is the Greek word “ekklesia” (compare our English words such as “Ecclesiastical”). I understand that “ekklesia” was the word used in everyday Greek when an assembly was called for a village or community to discuss specific issues or problems or situations. The people were “called out” from their homes to meet as a community to discuss and decide on civil issues. So the New Testament speaks of God “taking out” a people to bear His name (Acts 15:14), and these people become the “church”.

And so the church is the dwelling-place of God on earth, the place where He is worshipped. (Christadelphians tend to prefer the words ‘meeting’ or ‘ecclesia’ to avoid confusion, because the word ‘church’ conjures pictures of a building in many people’s minds.) In 1 Corinthians 3:16 Paul says to his readers, *“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”*

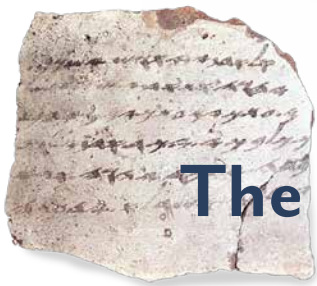
Experiences during the Coronavirus lockdowns in many countries have shown that believers don’t actually need to be

in the same location—with the benefit of modern technology services have continued online. One benefit of the lockdown experience is that we discovered a means whereby members of the meeting can attend all kinds of services even when they’re not physically able, through frailty or for other reasons. But the experience also demonstrated how precious it is for brothers and sisters to be actually physically together.

Some suggest that the worship of God requires a special building. We’ve seen that this isn’t true. At the other extreme, some suggest that worship is an individual affair, which might be conducted in a roadside kiosk for maximum convenience. We can also see that this is not true worship. A real church is a unity of fellowship in the midst of which God dwells.

In his splendid vision of the Kingdom of God, the Apostle John looked into the future and saw God and Jesus themselves become the new temple, where like the Tabernacle of old, they will dwell in the midst of their people (Revelation 21–22). You and I can be part of that new and glorious order of things in the Kingdom when Jesus returns, if we are members of his church now.

J Hamilton Wilson



The Lachish Letters

IN THE RUINS of a building which is thought to have been a guardroom, close to the remains of the ancient gates of the city of Lachish in Israel, excavations unearthed a number of fragments of clay jars. These were not ordinary broken jars, they're called 'ostraka'. They were pieces of broken pottery that were used as cheap writing material.

There are a couple of dozen ostraca in the collection. It's possible that they all came from the same jar, and were a series of letters written by the same person. They were found in a layer of burnt remains which archaeologists date to the destruction of the city by the Babylonians in 588 BC.

The Babylonian invasion is described in the Bible, for example by the prophet Jeremiah:

The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army, all the kingdoms of the earth under his dominion, and all the people, fought against Jerusalem and all its cities... when the king of Babylon's army fought against Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah that were left, against Lachish and Azekah; for only these fortified cities remained of the cities of Judah (Jeremiah 34:1-7).

Jeremiah's prophecy contains distressing accounts of the wickedness of the people

of Israel, of God's pleas to mend their ways and His warnings of the consequences if they didn't. It also describes the final invasion and destruction of the kingdom. Many Israelites were slaughtered, and most of the remainder were carried away captive.

The Lachish Letters were written by an officer called Hoshaiah, who appears to have been the commander of an Israelite military outpost in the path of the advancing Babylonian army, to Yaush who was in command of the defence of Lachish. The letters give a glimpse of a time of intrigue, panic and distress in the dying days of the kingdom of Judah.

The illustration shows Letter II, which reads: "To my lord, Yaush, may Yahweh cause my lord to hear tidings of peace today, this very day! Who is your servant, a dog, that my lord remembered his servant? May Yahweh make known to my lord a matter of which you do not know."

Hoshaiah prays that God will bring them tidings of peace. But God's prophet declares "We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and there was trouble!" (Jeremiah 8:15). It's likely that both men perished soon afterwards in battle.

Doug Potts

Our Amazing Bible



IT IS EASY to get hold of an English Bible. In fact we have a lot of choice because there are dozens of different translations. We can use a paper copy or read it for free on the internet, or download it to a mobile phone.

However, there are an estimated 250 million people in the world without access to any part of the Bible in a language that they understand well. There are over 2,000 languages without a translation. Printed English Bibles have been available since the 1500s but translations into other languages came much later. For example the Bible was translated into Farsi and Russian in the 19th Century and into Afrikaans in the 20th Century. The Bible is still a best-seller, although not read as much as in previous generations. Nonetheless, many people still treasure their Bible. After all, it claims to be God's Word. But how did our English Bible get to us?

The Bible consists of 66 books written by more than 20 authors over a period of 1,500 years. People were able to write (for example by etching on stone) from 3,000 BC or earlier. The words of the Bible were originally written on clay tablets, material made from the papyrus plant, or animal skins. There were 39 books

written before the time of Jesus (the Old Testament), mostly in Hebrew. The 27 books of the New Testament were written after Jesus had ascended to heaven following his crucifixion and resurrection, and mostly in Greek.

The Manuscripts

None of the original manuscripts still exist. All of our translations come from manuscripts at the end of a chain of careful copying by scribes. After the Jews had returned to Israel from their exile in Babylon in 538 BC they assembled their sacred writings. In the 3rd Century BC more Jews spoke Greek than Hebrew and so a Greek translation was produced, taking decades to complete. This is called the Septuagint and was one of the versions in use at the time of Jesus. Translators often refer to this translation as well as to Hebrew texts, because it came from very old manuscripts.

The Jewish scribes treasured their (Old Testament) scriptures and carried out meticulous checks to prevent errors. This was most certainly true for the Masoretes (6th to 10th Centuries AD). They listed the special features of each section, for example the number of times a rare word or short phrase appeared, the total number of

verses, words, and letters, and which word, and which letter marked the centre of the section, and checked each copy. Experts have been amazed by the accuracy of the manuscripts.

In the 1940s a very important thing happened. A shepherd boy, apparently by chance, found a cave near the Dead Sea containing very old jars and scrolls. These became known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, and they contained extracts from every book in the Old Testament except Esther. They were important because they were about 2,000 years old. When compared with the later manuscripts that were being used for translation there were no significant differences. This shows the accuracy of the painstaking process carried out by the Jewish scribes.



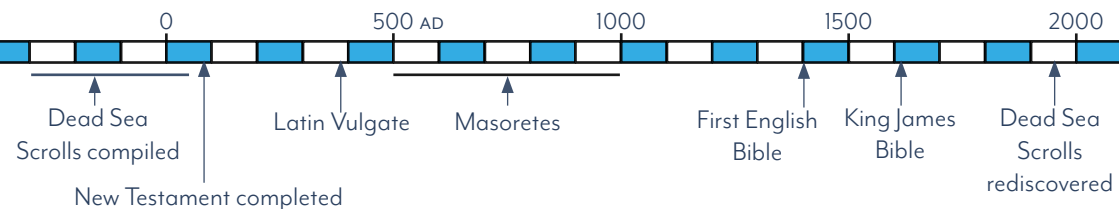
The oldest fragment of the New Testament is part of John's Gospel, and dates from the 2nd Century AD. There are over 5,000 Greek manuscripts of part or all of the New Testament. For other ancient documents (like Caesar's Gallic War) there are far fewer documents and much longer time gaps from the original time of writing. So, amazing though it may seem, we can have confidence that the Bible manuscripts used by translators are accurate.

Translations

In 382 AD a Latin version of the whole Bible was commissioned by the Pope. This is known as the Latin Vulgate Bible. But Latin could only be read by the highly educated. Even some of the clergy could not read Latin. So the Bible was not accessible to many people.

In about 1400 John Wycliffe translated the Latin Bible to English, and hand-written copies of his translation were circulated. The invention of printing meant that the Latin Vulgate version could be printed in Germany in 1455–6. By the end of the 15th Century there were printed Bibles in several western European languages.

But the established Church was opposed to people translating or reading the Bible without its permission. William Tyndale (1494–1536) translated the New Testament from the Greek and Latin, but (like many of his helpers) he was executed before he could complete the Old Testament. James Coverdale continued his work, translating the Old Testament largely from Latin, and the first complete English printed Bible was available in 1535. In 1539 copies of the 'Great Bible' were available in all parishes in England. But there followed a period of contention between the Roman Catholic Church and Protestants. Many people were killed for reading the Bible, and so some Protestants fled to Geneva and produced the 'Geneva Bible'. The Catholics tried to remove the influence of Wycliffe and produced their own translation from the Latin, called the 'Douay Bible'.



There was an important landmark in 1611 when the King James version was produced. This book had a huge influence on the development of the English language and is still in use today, although many now find its language archaic. The translators used the original Hebrew and Greek, also consulting translations in other languages. A team of about 50 scholars worked on the project, and their respect for the actual words of the text are shown in the Preface to this Bible. Since then there have been many different English and foreign translations. For these later translations the scholars often also consulted extra manuscripts which have been found more recently.

Translating an ancient language is not easy. Some words are no longer used and others have changed their meaning over time. Moreover, it is not simply a matter of translating word by word. A good translation conveys the same message as the original text. This requires an understanding of the context of the words. English translations vary in the degree to which they aim for 'word for word' (or 'literal') translation, or 'meaning for meaning' translation. The former can be more difficult to read as the language does not 'flow'. The latter are relatively easy to read but can be less accurate as there is always an element of interpretation

which can lead to inaccuracy. The preface of a Bible translation usually indicates the philosophy of the translators and the degree to which the translation is 'literal'. So translations can vary and it is wise to compare versions if possible. Some versions are paraphrases which cannot be used on their own for serious Bible study.

There are also many commentaries and dictionaries which attempt to explain Bible themes and concepts. They can be very useful, but we must remember that they are written by fallible people and are subject to errors of interpretation. It is always essential to check the actual Bible words and context in a reliable translation. It is also important to read the whole Bible. For example, the New Testament, including many of the words of Jesus, continually refers back to the Old Testament.

We Should Read It!

The Bible is an amazing book, with a unique and potentially life-changing message. If you can read this magazine then you can read a Bible for yourself. People have tried to destroy it, others have given their lives so that we can have it in our own language. More than that, it tells of a perfect man (Jesus Christ) who gave his life so that we can have hope of eternal life. Why not resolve to start reading it carefully today?

Baptism is Not Optional

I USED TO wonder why Christadelphians get so hung up on the subject of baptism, but now I know. Quite simply, it's because they take the Bible seriously.

I want to show you one particular 'golden thread' which runs from Genesis to Revelation.

In Genesis 6 we read of Noah, who built a huge boat to save his family and the animals with them from the Flood which God sent to sweep away the wickedness of the world. So a principle was established—salvation by means of water.

In Exodus 14 we see the nation of Israel escaping from the pursuing Egyptian army by miraculously passing through the Red Sea. The Apostle Paul says this was symbolic of baptism (1 Corinthians 10:2): they were being cleansed from their life of slavery so they could become God's people.

The thread shines through the New Testament. It's there all the time, and everywhere. Baptism—being dipped completely under water—was how people became Christians.

Jesus Christ himself is surely our supreme example. In Matthew 3 he comes to John the Baptist and requests John to baptise him. As Jesus has no sins to confess John tries to resist the request by stating that he should himself be baptised by Jesus. *“But*

Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness’. Then he allowed him” (v. 15).

Can I put Jesus' reply in simple English? “Allow this to happen now, as I ask, because this is how we fulfil all righteousness.”

So I have to ask myself the question: if Jesus Christ, my perfect and holy Saviour, considered it necessary to be baptised, do I ignore that, or should I follow His example?

Perhaps you feel that you were baptised as a baby, and maybe in your teens you were 'confirmed'. Isn't this just as valid as being baptised as an adult? I'm afraid that according to the Bible it is not. I invite you to read just three chapters, Acts chapters 8–10. You'll see the baptisms of many people in Samaria, a eunuch in the desert, Saul after he was converted on the road to Damascus, and the Roman centurion Cornelius and his household. They were all baptised after they understood and believed the Gospel message.

If you're thinking that “baptism isn't for me”, please think again—because, surely it is.

Richard Virgin



The Passover

ONE NIGHT EVERY YEAR, close to Easter, Jews all over the world observe the feast of Passover. It's a ceremony which dates back three and a half thousand years to the nation's deliverance from slavery in Egypt, which is recorded in Exodus chapter 12.



For a week beforehand they sweep their houses clean of every crumb of bread, for no food made with yeast may be left in the home on Passover night. At the appointed time, the whole family gathers round the supper table, and the ancient ceremony begins. Before them on a clean white cloth are spread wafers of dry, unleavened bread, just like their ancestors ate on the first Passover night. There is also a bowl of salt water to stand for the tears they shed in Egypt. Bitter herbs represent their cruel bondage, and a dish of fruity paste recalls the clay from which they once made

bricks for their Egyptian taskmasters. In the old days they would also eat the roasted Passover lamb.

During the service of hymns and prayers that goes with the meal there is one dramatic moment when, by a long tradition, the youngest person present enquires aloud "What do you mean by this service?" This is the cue for the oldest member of the family to tell again the moving story of how God delivered their forefathers from Egypt, and brought them on their way to the Promised Land. It does not take long to recount, but it stirs the blood of every Jew, for on that great night over thirty centuries ago the history of the nation of Israel began.

It may seem strange today when we see Israel and Egypt side by side as uncomfortable neighbours, to remember the connection between the two peoples goes back so far into history. It will seem even stranger when we look into the story. We find that a helpless, unarmed nation of slaves set off one spring night for freedom and a land of their own. We may be sceptical that such an event could happen at all. Yet the stubborn fact is that Jews throughout recorded history have kept this feast, year after year in unbroken succession, complete with its strange ritual and its dry, unleavened bread. It must have

started somewhere, to make such a lasting impression on the nation. It certainly bears investigation. With the help of the Bible, in this series we will unravel the story of their escape from Egypt and the journey to the Promised Land.

The Leader

Like all successful rebellions, the Exodus began with a great leader. At God's direction it was Moses who took on the role of deliverer, representing the people before Pharaoh the Egyptian king and leading them to freedom, then bearing the burden of their complaints and fears across the harsh wilderness for 40 years. So mighty a statesman and lawgiver was he, that a thousand years later in the time of Christ he was still revered as the mouthpiece of God.

The story of the man is remarkable. If ever God raised up the right man at the right time, Moses has that distinction. He was born into a poor home in one of the smaller tribes of Israel, at a time when the national fortunes were desperately bad. It

was a problem that is perhaps familiar to us. An immigrant population was growing more rapidly than that of the host country and beginning to threaten their way of life. There were no attempts to come to terms with the situation amicably and reasonably, and no Race Relations Boards to solve the differences. Pharaoh king of Egypt decreed that the Israelites should be enslaved and used to build his enormous treasure cities and public works. When that failed to make an impression on their numbers, he settled on a solution of Hitler-like ferocity. Every male child was to be drowned at birth.

So it was that when Moses' mother-to-be announced to the family that she was expecting a baby, the news was received with mixed feelings. What if it should be a boy? Nine months crept by. As her time drew near, we can imagine her husband Amram grew irritable and haggard with worry. Nightly, the family would pray together that the baby would be a girl. When eventually the hour came, and the



midwife turned to the anxious husband and whispered that it was a boy, he and his wife would be numb with shock and grief. God had not answered their plea. Everything had gone wrong.

There must have been something striking about Moses as soon as he was born. The Bible states that his mother “*saw that he was a beautiful child*” (Exodus 2:2). In the New Testament the martyr Stephen adds that the baby was “*well pleasing to God*” (Acts 7:20). Whatever it was about him that stole their hearts, his parents decided to risk the wrath of the authorities and conceal the birth of the child. For many weeks his mother nursed him, and his brother and sister suppressed their excitement as best they could. But with the passing of time, his cries grew stronger, and his mother’s confinement to her home became more and more suspicious. Eventually, they realised they could keep their secret no longer. With tearful resolution they decided to stake everything on one desperate adventure. They would obey Pharaoh. Moses would indeed be cast into the river. But they would put him in a waterproof cradle first. Then they would float the precious little boat close to the steps where Pharaoh’s daughter came down to bathe. It was an act of courage, for the child could easily have been found by a hard-hearted Egyptian. Or his little ark could have been overturned in the currents and lost.

We can imagine the loving care with which that basket was woven and sealed with pitch, and the shaking hands that nestled

the baby into his tiny ark. “*By faith,*” says the writer to the Hebrews, “*Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months... and they were not afraid of the king’s command*” (Hebrews 11:23). Amram and Jochebed believed that if they threw themselves on the mercy of God, He would bless them and prosper their plan. He had given them a boy, and He had kept them safe for 12 weeks. Now they would leave their baby in His hands. They did all they could to help themselves, but when they ran out of resources, they left the outcome to God.

The fact that Amram and his wife did believe in God is more remarkable than it sounds. Israel’s spiritual health had sunk very low in that land of idols. Later, they would even need to be reminded of the name of the God their fathers had worshipped (Exodus 3:13–15). It is likely Moses’ parents were among a faithful few in the nation who continued to worship the LORD.



Prince of Egypt

At any rate, their stratagem worked perfectly. Pharaoh’s daughter spotted the

strange basket floating in the river, and curiosity impelled her to look Inside. As daylight fell on to the baby and strange faces peered down at him, he began to cry. Instantly the princess's maternal instincts were aroused. "This Is one of the Hebrews' children" she said (Exodus 2:6). She did not have the heart to throw him back into the water to drown, yet she could not think what to do with him. Just at that moment Miriam his sister appeared, and offered to fetch a suitable Hebrew nurse. The nurse, of course, turned out to be Moses' own mother. The whole episode ran so smoothly it might have been rehearsed. The outcome was that Moses started off life in the house of his faithful Israelite family. He was eventually transferred to the royal household, where he was brought up as Pharaoh's daughter's adopted son (Acts 7:21). In this way he knew both the hardship of the slave life of the Hebrews, and the sophistication and luxury of the court. More importantly, because he was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7:22), he became the ideal person in later years to conduct negotiations with the Egyptians. It was just as if Moses' career plan had been mapped out for him, like a management trainee in a giant organisation. But neither he nor anyone else knew what was happening at the time. It was God who was working unseen in the circumstances of his life, shaping him for his destiny.

Perhaps there is a lesson here we can take to heart. We may not be ambitious, or consider ourselves worthy of great responsibilities, yet undoubtedly God can

control our lives if we believe in Him. He will put us through tests, correcting and exercising our judgment, preparing us for work He has in mind for us—if not now, then in His Kingdom.



This thought may comfort us if we feel our present situation is hard and unrewarding. Listen to these inspired words from the book of Hebrews: "For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons" (Hebrews 12:6–7). And the Apostle Paul: "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

David M Pearce

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AM

The world is full of opposites—hot and cold, light and dark, pressure and vacuum, love and hate. If God is the source of all love and kindness, then surely there must be an entity who is the source of hate and bitterness.

Ed

MANY OF THE WORLD'S religions are based on the assumption that existence is a struggle between good and evil. Applying this assumption to the Bible, some suggest that in the world and in the lives of individuals there is a struggle for dominance between God and Satan. But is this what the Bible says?

Isaiah 45 is a remarkable chapter in which the Hebrew prophet looks forward two centuries and addresses by name Cyrus the Great, the future King of Persia:

"Thus says the LORD to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—to subdue nations before him and loose the armour of kings" (v. 1).

He foretells Cyrus' military success and his kindness to the Jewish people (vs. 2–4). Then he says, *"I am the LORD, and there is no other; there is no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me, that they may know from the rising of the sun to*

its setting that there is none besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other; I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these things" (vs. 5–7).

It's interesting to note that the dominant religion in the Persian empire was Zoroastrianism, which viewed existence as a struggle between Ahura Mazda the god of light and Angra Mainyu the god of darkness. Isaiah says that is not true—God is alone and has no rival.

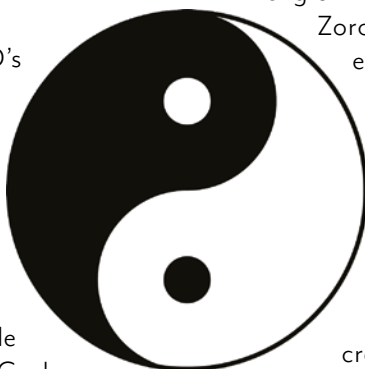
In the beginning God created the world very good (Genesis 1). Evil came into the world with the serpent's lie and the fall of the human race (chapter 3). The purpose of God involves undoing that disaster and restoring the world to its original perfection (1 Corinthians 15:28). Evil is not a necessary balance to good, it's merely a temporary state of affairs.

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

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Across

- 1 Moses was given his name because he had been drawn out of this (Exodus 2:10)
- 4 Moses' brother (Exodus 4:14)
- 5 Moses' sister (Numbers 26:59)
- 6 The years of one's life (Numbers 8:25)
- 7 To compensate (Exodus 21:19)
- 9 The skin of this animal was used in making the Tabernacle (Exodus 26:14)
- 12 Wrongdoing (Exodus 29:14)
- 13 Moses' ____ looked after him for Pharaoh's daughter (Exodus 2:8)
- 14 The ark was laid in these, by the river bank (Exodus 2:3)
- 15 The Children of Israel were to eat the Passover meal in this fashion (Exodus 12:11)



Down

- 1 The midwives said that the Hebrew ones were not like the Egyptian ones (Exodus 1:19)
- 2 Following his birth, Moses' mother hid him for ____ months (Exodus 2:2)
- 3 The Children of Israel took this before it was leavened (Exodus 12:34)
- 4 Moses' father (Exodus 6:20)
- 7 The officers struck Jesus with the ____ of their hands (Mark 14:65)
- 8 Pharaoh's daughter came to bathe here (Exodus 2:5)
- 10 When Moses scattered these, boils broke out on people and animals (Exodus 9:10)
- 11 Pharaoh's daughter asked Moses' mother to do this for him on her behalf (Exodus 2:9)

(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.)

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