

# Glad Tidings

*Of The Kingdom Of God*



## Featured **Articles**

An End to Poverty (p. 3)

The Last Adam (p. 8)

The Irony of Iran (p. 12)

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 humankind; to call attention to the divine offer of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ; and to warn people that soon Christ will return to earth as judge and ruler of God's worldwide Kingdom.

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# An End to Poverty



**Poverty exists:**  
not because  
there's not enough to feed the poor,  
but because  
there's not enough to satisfy the rich.

ISN'T  
THAT TRUE?

The statistics are readily available. The world could produce enough food to feed every human. Around half of the food the world produces is consumed (or thrown away) by the wealthiest 10% of the population. Nearly half of the world's wealth is owned by the richest 1%, while nearly 10% of its population lives in extreme poverty. Wealth inequality is a serious global problem.

Everyone agrees that something should be done about this. But what—and by whom?

Many charities and non-governmental organisations, as well as governments themselves, grapple with the problem. From time to time a concerted movement emerges, such as the 'Make Poverty History' campaign which burst on to the world stage in 2005 and, for a while, promised to make headway towards alleviating the suffering of the world's poorest people. But the problem persists. And with the gathering climate crisis

compounding the problems of economic inequality, corruption, and wars and unrest on a global scale, the solution seems to be as far away as ever.

## A Prosperous Society

As far as we can tell, poverty has always been a problem, throughout the world and throughout history, even in the most affluent and peaceful societies. This makes the bold claim of the Bible seem almost outrageous:

*There will be no poor among you; for the LORD will bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance to possess—if only you will strictly obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all this commandment that I command you today (Deuteronomy 15:4–5).*

These were God's words to Israel as they were poised to enter the Promised Land. It was a seminal moment in history—never before or since did God set up a nation, and give it a Law and a system of government.

*For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today? (Deuteronomy 4:7–8).*

With its emphasis on equality of all before the law (Leviticus 19:15), enforced periodic wealth redistribution (Leviticus 25), and

the demand for high standards of personal morality (Leviticus 19:18), the Law of Moses (as it was called) was supremely fitted to eradicating poverty.

Interestingly, in the same chapter in which it says *'there will be no poor among you'*, it continues: *'If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be... For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, "You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land"'* (Deuteronomy 15:7–8, 11).

That people will fall on hard times is a fact of life. Wealth inequality is inevitable in this age. The key, according to the Law of Moses, was that those who had wealth must look out for those who did not. This would enable poor people to live with dignity, and either them or the next generation to lift themselves out of their situation. Poverty would become a phase of life, not an inescapable fate.

So here is the solution. Governments and organisations will do what they can, but the onus is also on individual members of society to "open wide our hands".

What, me? Here I am, struggling to make ends meet. I can point to many people who are much richer than me, and who (in my opinion) could well afford to give some away. But that's not the point. Rather than looking at people who have more than me, I should be looking at those who have less.

The Law of Moses made generosity a commandment, and so did Jesus Christ himself:

*Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you (Luke 6:38).*

## The End to Poverty

In this present age, the scourge of poverty is a fact of life. But it will not always be so. The solution to this particular problem is the solution to all the world's problems—the Kingdom of God which He has promised, which is so fully described throughout the Bible (and of which this magazine is dedicated to spreading the Glad Tidings).

So the most effective thing we can do to address the problem of poverty is to pray, as Jesus taught: *'Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven'* (Matthew 6:10).



# David— A Man After God’s Heart

IN THE LAST ISSUE we looked at Abraham, the friend of God. Time has moved on, and Abraham’s family has grown into a group of about 70 people. Because of a severe famine in Canaan they all moved down south-west into Egypt, where Joseph, one of Abraham’s great-grandsons, had been made the important governor. After Joseph’s death the new king of Egypt became worried about the family’s ever growing numbers, and made the nation of Israel slaves. Eventually God chose an Israelite man called Moses to become their leader, and he brought them out of Egypt.

God gave Moses a new system of laws to ensure Israel worshipped God in the correct way, and after 40 years they crossed the River Jordan and entered their “Promised Land”. This was Canaan—the country where Abraham had settled after his massive journey from Ur in Mesopotamia. Joshua had succeeded Moses as leader, and he was followed by several Judges who repelled enemies and acted as God-given saviours in different parts of the country over a period of some 300 years.

## A King

Samuel was the last Judge. The people came to him and demanded a king, to be like other nations—which did not please either Samuel or God. Saul was appointed,

but proved to be a disappointment. God then chose David to be king, and his descendants reigned for over 400 years until the capture of the nation by the Babylonians.



David began as a shepherd boy who both protected his sheep, and composed Psalms or hymns to praise God. He was recommended to King Saul because of his musical ability, but proved to be a very capable soldier after he had killed the Philistine giant Goliath (1 Samuel 17). Sadly King Saul became very jealous of David, and spent many years trying to kill him. However at Saul’s death David was anointed as king over Judah, the southern part of Israel, and seven years

later was made the ruler over the whole country. He reigned for a total of 40 years (1 Kings 2:11).

King David was a godly man—the only one in the whole Bible to be described as a man after God’s own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). He was blessed by God, Who enabled him to really consolidate the kingdom to Israel, and to organise the nation’s worship. He very much wanted to build God a temple, to replace the tabernacle—the tent which was made during the 40 years’ journey to the Promised Land, and which had been the centre of Jewish worship since. God would not permit this, saying David had been a man of war (2 Samuel 7), but David’s son Solomon was directed to build it. David spent much time and money in collecting costly building materials for Solomon to use.

## David’s Mistake

Despite the fact that David wrote many hymns of praise to God, and tried to serve



David and Uriah

and obey Him, he made one massive mistake which could well have brought the death sentence on him. He had a liaison with a married woman called Bathsheba while her husband was away in the army. When he was told that she was expecting his baby, he recalled her husband from the front line and tried to persuade him to go home and sleep with his wife. He refused to do that, and so David sent him back to the war, instructing his commander to arrange for his death.

God was very displeased with David. To show his regret and remorse David wrote Psalm 51, which includes these words: *'Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me'* (vs. 9–10). God punished David by allowing the baby to die, and David also suffered from severe family problems several times in his life.

## The Promise

The most important time of David’s life was when God made far-reaching promises to him about his family. David had wanted to build a house (temple) for God, but in reply God said that He would build David a house—that is, a family. *'Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever'* (2 Samuel 7:16). This promise became the basis upon which David’s descendants reigned over Israel until the





time of the Babylonian captivity, and even more importantly was part of the promise God made to Mary the mother of Jesus.

About a thousand years after David had started to reign, God's angel Gabriel was sent to a young woman in northern Israel, and brought the awesome news that she had been chosen to be the mother of God's Son. He said, *'He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to 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 1:32–33). Mary was a descendant of King David, and therefore her son would be the result of God's promise to David.

## The Promised Descendant

The amazing miracle happened that God's power, the Holy Spirit, started the baby to grow, and so God was his Father, and Mary his mother. Jesus referred to himself as 'Son of Man', which helped the people to understand that he was one of them. Jesus was not a king during his time on earth, but when he returns to earth he will inherit the throne of David (as Gabriel said), and reign

not only over David's land of Israel, but over the whole world.

Jesus never sinned, and so his dreadful death was the means of sinful people like us being forgiven. *'For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God'* (2 Corinthians 5:21). If we are baptised into Jesus to wash away our sins, and live faithful lives in obedience to God, then His wonderful promises to both Abraham and King David will be ours, and we will benefit from a place in God's Kingdom.

**David Simpson**

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# The Last Adam

JESUS CHRIST is the Son of God, the Saviour. The Bible describes him as unique in every respect, incomparable, and perfect. *'At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father'* (Philippians 2:10–11).

The record of his life and ministry is shown to us in the Gospels—how he *'went about doing good'* (Acts 10:38) and *'proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom'* (Matthew 4:23).

He was in an especial sense 'a new creation' (2 Corinthians 5:17). He was born of the virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). He gave his life as a sacrifice for sins (Hebrews 10:12), then God raised him to life again and he was the first to be given immortality (1 Corinthians 15:23). He was taken to heaven into God's presence and will come again. *'This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven'* (Acts 1:11). In the mean time he is an

intercessor for those who are his followers, taking their prayers to God (Romans 8:34).

## Adam and Eve in Paradise

Jesus Christ is called the 'last Adam' (1 Corinthians 15:45). Adam was the first man, who brought sin and mortality upon the human race. Jesus is the 'last Adam' because he brought blessing and the prospect of immortality.



The definite lesson we can learn from Adam, indeed must learn sooner or later, is that God always means what He says. Adam and Eve, placed in the Garden of Eden—the Paradise of God—were given a wonderful privilege. *'The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die"'* (Genesis 2:15–17).



Adam and Eve disobeyed. They ate of the forbidden fruit and incurred the penalty of death. God always means what He says. *'By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return'* (Genesis 3:19).

## The Tree of Life

There were further consequences. There was a tree in the garden which, in common with all the other trees, had not been forbidden. Now that Adam had sinned, access to that tree was barred!



*Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life (vs. 22–24).*

*Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned (Romans 5:12).*

The human race is mortal, under sentence of death. For the time being eternal life is barred. It is here that we learn the value of Jesus as the Saviour. For, in his last message to his disciples through the Apostle John he declared,

*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God (Revelation 2:7).*

R W M

## Questions? Comments?

### We'd love to hear from you!

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or write to the Editor—address inside front cover

# We Can Get it Wrong

A SCIENCE JOURNALIST was reporting the results of research about a drug, which had shown positive effects on animals. Understanding the limitations of such results, she wrote: “In a discovery that will have no implications for human health, scientists announced today...”



Her editor looked at her aghast and said, “Listen, what’s the use of being accurate if no one’s going to read beyond the first sentence?” The drug might theoretically impact humans. So the introduction was rewritten, “In a breakthrough that could have significant medical benefits, scientists announced today...” Consequently many readers would misinterpret the findings.

Such issues are not uncommon. Even highly qualified, credentialed scientists can ‘discover’ things that are subsequently shown to be false. This is despite their best efforts to be rigorous in their work. There are several causes for this—for example faulty equipment, incomplete data, misinterpretation of data, or just bad luck with a ‘chance’ result. And, worse still of course, unscrupulous people

can knowingly present fake claims. Unfortunately, disclaimers which retract spurious results attract a lot less attention than the original ‘exciting’ claims, and so people can harbour incorrect beliefs for many years. For example, some people still believe that a meteorite contained evidence of primitive life on early Mars. The original paper was published in 1996, but the scientific community no longer believes the evidence to be persuasive.

So the chain goes something like this: data are collected, they are analysed and interpreted, and then they are conveyed first to experts and then to non-experts and lay people. And we can make mistakes.

What does this have to do with the Bible?

## The Bible Message

The Bible contains messages and we try to understand them. Just as in scientific research, we can make mistakes. Bible words are like the data, they need to be read, analysed and interpreted; and then we pass on our understanding to other people. Books and articles present studies of the Bible, which can be accurate or inaccurate—sensational or realistic.

Now we believe that the Bible itself comprises the words of God Himself, and so is accurate, totally error-free. Given this premise, the onus is on us to try to interpret and communicate it accurately. Admittedly, for some parts of the Bible

(such as prophecies of things yet future) this is not always easy, but this is no excuse for not trying.

First of all, then, we need to read for ourselves. If somebody tells us something about the Bible message we do well to check it. Indeed, please check the references in this article: examine whether they are fairly presented. False prophets were common in Israel (Jeremiah 5:31, 14:14; Lamentations 2:14; Ezekiel 22:28). Jesus warned his hearers to be wary of them (Matthew 7:15, 24:11); and the apostles warned about them (2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 4:1). The Jews of Berea were commended because when receiving the Gospel message they *'received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so'* (Acts 17:11).

And false prophets, like scientists, may not be knowingly fake but genuine and misguided.

## Getting It Right

We like positive and exciting news. The Gospel IS good news! The English word "gospel" originally meant "good message". The Greek word that is translated "gospel" in our Bibles is *evangelion*. It was used, for example, of a doctor saying that a problem was not serious, or when a battle had been won.

But it is not good news if the original message is distorted or only partially presented. We need to be especially careful about simplistic summaries or blanket assurances that everything is fine. For example, some say that God loves us whatever we do. The Bible does say that

God loves the whole world (John 3:16)—but it does not say that He will therefore tolerate whatever we do.

The message "repent or perish" (Luke 13:1–3; 2 Corinthians 7:10; 2 Peter 3:9) may not be popular. Indeed we may not want to read beyond it, but if God commands us to repent (Acts 17:30), then who are we to argue?

In fact, the true Gospel message about Jesus and the Kingdom of God (Matthew 4:23, 9:35, 24:14; Mark 1:1, 14,15; Acts 8:12) can become obscured and lost in vague and incorrect pleasantries. In his letter to Timothy, Paul warned that people would develop *'itching ears'*, not wanting to receive the true teaching of the apostles (2 Timothy 4:3). And God warned about adding to or taking away from His words (Deuteronomy 12:32; Revelation 22:19).

Like the over-optimistic beliefs about science, erroneous thinking about religion can become widespread and entrenched in societies.

Even earnest Bible students can misinterpret, or take verses out of context, and so distort their meaning. Quoting single verses is dangerous. We would probably all agree that it would be silly to encourage people to follow the advice of Job's wife, *'Curse God and die'* (Job 2:9). But although not so obvious we can make similar mistakes. So it is critically important to try to establish the original meaning, by studying context: the immediate context of nearby verses and the broader context of the rest of the Bible. We must, prayerfully, make every effort not to "get it wrong".

**Anna Hart**





# The Irony of Iran

*In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by descent a Mede, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans—in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years (Daniel 9:1–2).*

## Cyrus the Great

The name of the king who would initiate the return had been foretold before the exile had begun.

*Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: "I am the LORD, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself... who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose'; saying of Jerusalem, 'She shall be built,' and of the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid' (Isaiah 44:24, 28).*

The fulfilment is recorded.

*In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.*

IRAN IS CURRENTLY a key player in the politics of the Middle East. Bible prophecy shows that it will play a significant role in future events.

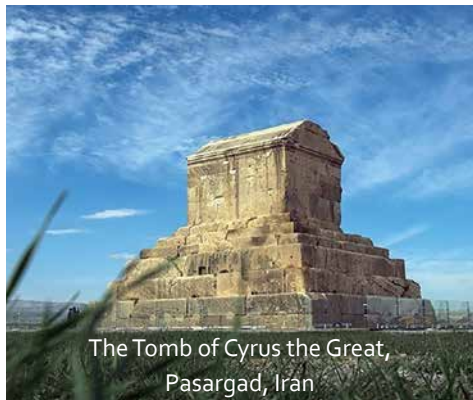
Iran is the modern name for the ancient country called Persia, whose vast empire dominated the Middle East, having conquered the Babylonians and taken over their empire in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century BC.

Earlier the Babylonians had taken the southern part of Israel, called Judah, and exiled to Babylon a significant proportion of its population, especially those with skills and education. The duration of their exile was foretold through Jeremiah's prophecy.

*For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place (Jeremiah 29:10)*

The Jewish prophet Daniel, in Babylon, was aware of this prophecy, and knew that the time for its fulfilment was imminent.

*Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel” (Ezra 1:1–3).*



The Tomb of Cyrus the Great,  
Pasargad, Iran

Iran is proud of its ancient past, but many overlook the details. There is a sharp contrast in the current regime’s attitude towards Israel. In the past, Persia sought the welfare of God’s chosen nation, and made contribution towards rebuilding the city which the Babylonians had devastated. Now, Iran is one of those nations hostile to Israel’s very existence, and has stated its intention to “wipe Israel off the map”. The country will be part of an alliance coming against the land, as shown in Ezekiel’s prophecy.

## **Invasion of Israel**

*The word of the LORD came to me: “Son of man, set your face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. And I will turn you about and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you out,*

*and all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed in full armor, a great host, all of them with buckler and shield, wielding swords. Persia, Cush, and Put are with them, all of them with shield and helmet (Ezekiel 38:1–5).*

Gog is a superpower in the far north of Israel, which is often identified as modern Russia. Note how the land of Israel is described:

*In the latter years you will go against the land that is restored from war, the land whose people were gathered from many peoples upon the mountains of Israel, which had been a continual waste. Its people were brought out from the peoples and now dwell securely, all of them. You will advance, coming on like a storm. You will be like a cloud covering the land, you and all your hordes, and many peoples with you (vs.8–9).*

The Romans destroyed and exiled the nation of Israel in 70 AD, and during their absence the land was poorly cultivated and deteriorated. Since the re-establishment of the nation in 1948 and immigration from many nations the land has blossomed, and Israeli produce is exported worldwide. This part of the prophecy is being fulfilled.

The prophecy ranges into the future. The chapter goes on to describe the invasion of Israel, and how God Himself will defeat the northern invader and its allies.

How far in the future is the fulfilment of this prophecy we cannot tell, but world events seem to be moving very rapidly towards the situations described here. We need to pay attention to the Word of God, and be ready.

**Peter Banyard**

# Noah— Herald of Righteousness

*Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD... Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God (Genesis 6:8–9).*

What a brilliant contrast with everything else that was going on in the world. Noah 'walked with God'—the same phrase used of his great grandfather Enoch (Genesis 5:22). Noah was a 'herald of righteousness' (2 Peter 2:5). He condemned his generation for their ungodly lives. It made him highly unpopular, but it endeared him to God, and in the long run, God's favour saved his life. God could have swept Noah away with his fellows in the day of judgement. What does one puny life matter amongst a million? We all have to die, sometime. But God is both merciful and just. He does not destroy the righteous with the wicked. He saved Noah from the Flood, just as He later delivered Lot from Sodom (Luke 17:29), and snatched the faithful in Judah from the siege armies of Babylon and Rome (Jeremiah 21:9, Luke 21:20–21). So He will rescue us from the day of judgement on this age, if we trust in Him.

Abraham once extracted this promise from God: '*Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge*

*of all the earth do what is just?'* he asked (Genesis 18:25). And God's angel promised that if there were as few as ten righteous men in a city, He would not destroy it, for their sakes.



Abraham haggles with the angels

## Building the Ark

But righteous Noah's faith was first to be put to the test. The offer of salvation from the waters of death was free, but it depended on his doing exactly what God asked. The idea of a stupendous, worldwide flood that would destroy all life would have seemed incredible. It is even possible that rain was unknown on the earth before the time of Noah—there is a cryptic comment in the creation account, '*The LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground*' (Genesis 2:5–6).



But God was quite definite about it. *'I have determined to make an end of all flesh'*, he said (Genesis 6:13). He proceeded to instruct Noah to build an enormous boat, big enough to keep afloat not only his own family, but also a representative sample of all land creatures, together with food reserves for the duration of the flood. The dimensions were given. It was to be 450 feet by 75 feet (150m by 25m), with three decks—about the size of a small modern ocean liner. Noah was told the materials to use. Then the heavenly voice fell silent.



Noah would seem to have been a farmer by profession, according to the pronouncement of his father at his birth (Genesis 5:29). Farmers are resourceful people, and used to working hard with their hands, but a project of this size was enough to daunt the strongest heart. How did he face up to the greatest challenge of his life? How would you have felt if you had been asked to do such an unlikely thing? Would your faith have stood the test? The obstacles Noah had to face were greater than the physical one of assembling the parts of the ship, as we shall see. Yet, as the Bible says: *'By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith'* (Hebrews 11:7).

The most striking feature of the Ark was its colossal size. If we assume that the Bible's cubit was the generally accepted "arm's length" of about 1.5 feet (0.5m), then the

dimensions stated in Genesis 6:15 give a gross capacity of nearly 1,500,000 cubic feet (42,000 m<sup>3</sup>).

We need not doubt that the technology was available to build such a ship. The ancients had more skill than we usually credit them with, in this respect. For example, the Apostle Paul in the First Century sailed in a boat big enough to take in 276 passengers as an incidental to its main cargo, which was wheat (Acts 27:37–38). The Phoenicians were circumnavigating Africa on a three-year voyage to the Far East in the time of Solomon (2 Chronicles 8:18 and 9:21). Iron and brass working was well known before the Flood (Genesis 4:22). Neither did Noah have to complete the Ark in great haste. He and his three sons could take their time over the work—we can assume God gave plenty of notice of His intentions.

What is staggering to contemplate, though, is the cost of the project, both in materials and in time. We know nothing of Noah's financial circumstances, but since he seems to have built the Ark with his own hands, it does not look as though he was in a position to hire labour for the

purpose. Yet every board and every nail would have to be paid for, either in cash, or in the labour it took to cut down trees and get the materials ready for use. And since he had to provide income for his family to live at the same time as he was working on the boat, he must have fitted the building into the time he had left after his normal daily work. We shall probably not be wrong if we assume that he sank every penny of his savings, and the equivalent of all his evenings, weekends and holidays for years and years, on the great work.



You may know a friend who devotes all their time and spare funds to a project of some sort. They do it for the satisfaction of the finished product, and they may neglect family and social pleasures in the process. They have something tangible to show at the end, something to be enjoyed and to show off. It is different to sacrifice a huge slice of your life constructing an enormous lifeboat, miles from the sea, in preparation for a flood which your neighbours say will never come. Most of us, even if we started off with good intentions, would soon have been distracted and discouraged, and might even have laid down our tools.

There is a parallel between Noah's building of the Ark, and the call of the Gospel. God demands of us, too, that we should forfeit

pleasure and self-indulgence in this life, where it interferes with our devotion to His will. Jesus says, *'Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish'...* So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple' (Luke 14:27-30, 33).

We have deliberately to give over our lives to God, in trust that He will deliver us from the flood-waters of death, and raise us up to eternal life in His kingdom. As a sign of their faith, the would-be Christian is baptised, buried in water, and then brought out again to a new life, symbolising their belief in God's power to save them from the grave. The connection with Noah's building of the Ark is made by Peter in the New Testament. *'God's patience waited in the days of Noah,'* he writes, *'while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ' (1 Peter 3:20-21).*

## As in the Days of Noah

Another aspect of Noah's faith becomes apparent when we think of the abuse and jeers he must have suffered from his neighbours. The Ark would attract tourists from miles around, keen to see this curious sight, and wag their heads at the folly

of the man who could squander his life and savings on such an unlikely task. And Noah in turn, the 'herald of righteousness', would patiently explain that God's Day of Judgement was near, and that unless they repented, they would all be swept away. He made no converts. Very few down the generations of time have listened to the voice of the prophets of the Lord. It is just the same today. Look at these words of Jesus, warning men of the signs of his second coming:

*Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man. They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all... so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed (Luke 17:26–27, 30).*



A world obsessed by material things, a world with no time for God—that is the picture Jesus paints, and the description fits our world too well. His coming in judgement will overtake our society like Noah's flood. Yet how few take any notice of his sober words. Just think of the awful tragedy of those young couples getting married on the day Noah entered into the ark. (They were 'marrying and being given

*in marriage',* Jesus said). Noah had finally completed the last stages of his work. Every plank was nailed down and smoothed, every seam caulked and sealed with pitch. The stores of fodder had been loaded in. Representatives of all the 'kinds' of animals and birds had converged on Noah's homestead, presumably driven to migrate to him with a supernatural premonition of the coming disaster (Genesis 6:20). Now all was safely in, and the great door in the side of the ark was locked and sealed by God (Genesis 7:16). Inside, Noah and his family waited, hour after hour, for the flood to begin. But outside, in the cities up and down the land, there were weddings. Young people were pledging to love and cherish each other through the coming years—years that were never to be. For the services were barely over, before the great rain came, and they were swept away.

From Jesus' analogy it appears that the tragedy will be repeated. *'It will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth,'* he said. *'But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man' (Luke 21:35–36).* We still have opportunity to make the sacrifice that discipleship demands. Ignoring the taunts and jeers, we must climb into the Ark that God provides in the person of His Son. God's longsuffering still waits. *'The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise, as some count slowness,'* Peter continues, *'but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance' (2 Peter 3:9).*

**David Pearce**  
*(to be continued)*



SF

*Why is marriage so important? As long as a couple are committed to each other, why do they need the paperwork?*

Ed

THE BEST PLACE to start is at the beginning. God made Eve as a 'helper fit' for Adam (Genesis 2:20). He then brought her to Adam, whose first recorded words are: 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh' (v. 23).

Verse 24 gives the core definition of marriage which is referred to a number of times throughout the rest of the Bible: 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.' Marriage involves a man and a woman being joined together by a public commitment—joined together physically, emotionally, socially, and as the basis of a new family unit.

Throughout the rest of the Bible we see marriage in operation. Basically, it worked in the way we recognise—the two parties lived separately until the wedding day, then there was a ceremony, then they lived together.

God takes marriage very seriously. Sex outside marriage is strictly forbidden, for example Exodus 20:14, 22:16, Leviticus 20:10–20, Matthew 5:27–28, Galatians 5:19, Hebrews 13:4.

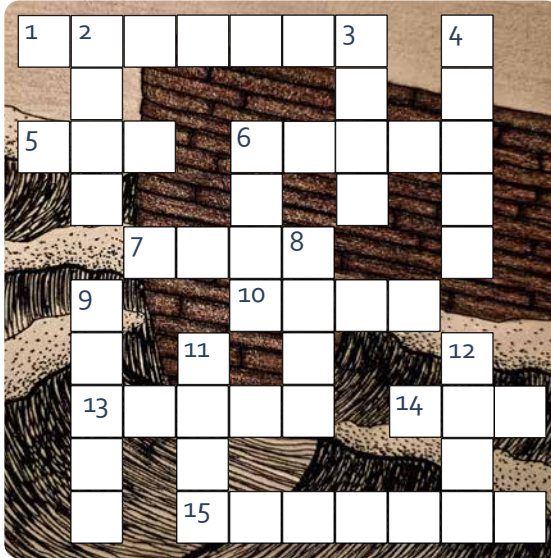
This is how Jesus put it: 'From the beginning of creation, "God made them male and female." "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate (Mark 10:6–9).

Like many everyday aspects of life, it turns out that actually marriage has a deeper meaning—it's a natural parable of something spiritual. According to Ephesians 5:22–33 marriage is a picture of Christ (the bridegroom) and the community of believers (the bride). Currently they are betrothed, waiting to come together, longing for each other and the day when they'll be united. At Christ's return, the celebration at the beginning of the Kingdom will be like a wedding:

*Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready" (Revelation 19:6–7).*

**Across**

- 1 Noah took these into the ark  
(Genesis 6:20)
- 5 One of Noah's sons  
(Genesis 6:10)
- 6 To live  
(Genesis 9:27)
- 7 This was also taken into the ark, to sustain the occupants  
(Genesis 6:21)
- 10 God told Noah to make this for the top of the ark  
(Genesis 6:16)
- 13 'Never again shall ... be a flood to destroy the earth'  
(Genesis 9:11)
- 14 God said that everything else on the earth would do this  
(Genesis 6:17)
- 15 The ark did this on the water  
(Genesis 7:18)



**Down**

- 2 He found favour in God's eyes  
(Genesis 6:8)
- 3 One of Noah's sons  
(Genesis 6:10)
- 4 God said that the serpent would in future go on this  
(Genesis 3:14)
- 6 God told Noah to put this in the side of the ark  
(Genesis 6:16)
- 8 Noah sent this bird from the ark  
(Genesis 8:8)
- 9 Noah built this after the flood had subsided  
(Genesis 8:20)
- 11 The bird in 8 down brought this back in her mouth  
(Genesis 8:11)
- 12 She went into the ark with Noah  
(Genesis 7:13)

(These clues use the English Standard Version of the Bible. If you're using another version some words may not be quite the same.)

**Colin Jannaway**

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