

# Glad Tidings

*Of The Kingdom Of God*



## Featured **Articles**

Clouds (*p. 3*)

Only Her Suffering to Give (*p. 10*)

Irreducible Complexity (*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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Publisher  
The Glad Tidings Publishing Association  
A registered charity—Number 248352

# Clouds

THEY'RE AN ESSENTIAL part of our planet's ecological system, we couldn't survive without them. And have you ever stopped to wonder at how beautiful they can be? Constantly changing, and washing the world in subtly different qualities of light throughout the day and night, they're a wonder of creation that we so often take for granted.

It does appear that sky-watching is good for your health. It rejuvenates the eyes because they're focused at a far distance and exposed to a large amount of natural full-spectrum light, and it calms the mind.

When you're familiar with the sky, you can read it: "*When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, 'A shower is coming.' And so it happens*" (Luke 12:54). Like many things, you can watch the sky too much: '*He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap*' (Ecclesiastes 11:4).

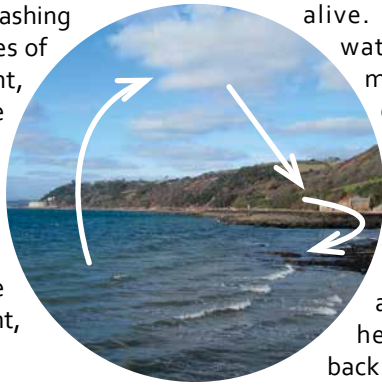
## Symbols of the Spiritual

The Bible often uses features of nature to make us think about spiritual things. Sleep and awakening are a picture of death and resurrection (Daniel 12:2). Marriage is a picture of the relationship between Christ and his followers (Ephesians 5:22–32). And when you look, there are lessons in less obvious places.

Let's remind ourselves what clouds are and what they do. You may be familiar with the 'water cycle', the fundamental mechanism that keeps the world alive. The sun causes water to evaporate, mostly from the oceans. The water vapour cools and condenses in the atmosphere and forms clouds. When the clouds are sufficiently heavy, water falls back to earth, usually in the form of rain. The water finds its way back into the oceans, and the process starts again.

Now let's think about some figures of speech the Bible uses.

The oceans are used as a symbol for nations. The prophet describes his own day: '*The wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up mire and dirt*' (Isaiah 57:20). Whereas in his vision of the Kingdom of God, the Apostle John sees a '*sea of glass*' (Revelation 4:6).



The sun is used as a symbol for God (Psalm 84:11), and Jesus Christ (John 8:12).

Jesus says 'Come to me' (Matthew 11:28). By this means, God is calling out of the world's population a 'people for his name' (Acts 15:14). Compare this to the sun warming the oceans and causing water to separate from them and rise towards heaven.

The community of believers (both dead and living) is referred to as a cloud: *'Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us' (Hebrews 12:1).*

When Jesus Christ returns to establish the Kingdom of God, we're given the picture of refreshing rain, bringing life to a parched land: *'May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth!' (Psalm 72:6). 'The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing' (Isaiah 35:1–2).* When he establishes God's Kingdom, he will not be alone—he'll reign along with those who have given their lives to him, and to whom he will give immortality. *'You have made them a*

*kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth' (Revelation 5:10).*

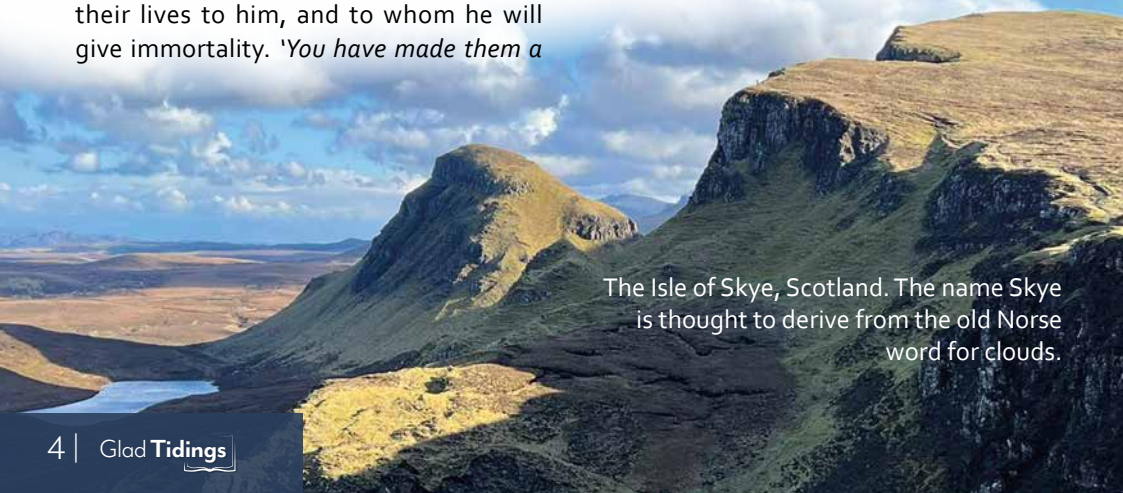
Symbolically, then, when Jesus returns the clouds will drop their rain on the earth.

## Refreshing Rain

However good or not so good your life may be right now—when you look around, you have to admit that this world is in a mess. It has been, since paradise was lost in Genesis 3. But God has promised that the curse will be undone, when Christ returns. Literally, the climate will be repaired and the world will be fruitful (Isaiah 35). And symbolically, its people will be restored to godliness (Isaiah 2). The Bible's promise of the coming Kingdom of God is a promise of paradise restored:

*Show, O heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain down righteousness; let the earth open, that salvation and righteousness may bear fruit; let the earth cause them both to sprout; I the LORD have created it (Isaiah 45:8).*

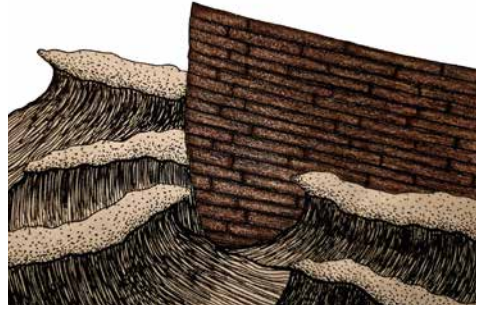
Clouds are a reminder of God's kindness to us now, and of His ultimate purpose to bless the earth.



The Isle of Skye, Scotland. The name Skye is thought to derive from the old Norse word for clouds.



# Aboard the Ark



FOR 150 DAYS, the earth was deluged. It was no ordinary rain that produced such a deluge. *'The fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened'* (Genesis 7:11). It sounds as though subterranean reservoirs of water came out through the mantle of the globe, while that great band of water in the outer atmosphere, described in Genesis 1:7, collapsed inwards at the same time. On the internet there are fascinating scientific explorations of the mechanics of how this could have been brought about. Certainly, a flood that covered the mountains to a depth of over 20 feet (6 metres) and kept them submerged for eight months (Genesis 7:19–20 and 8:5) must have been global in extent.

As we would expect, tales of the worldwide flood remain in the folklore of cultures all over the world. The most complete account of the flood, outside the Bible, is the Gilgamesh Epic, discovered on clay tablets in Babylon. However, its extravagant language does not compare with the Bible. The crisp, matter-of-fact way in which Genesis chronicles the events, with even such details as the days of the month in Noah's life when each stage began (for example, Genesis 7:11 and 8:3–5), gives us every confidence that here we have the authentic account of what happened, faithfully transmitted from Noah's son Shem to the descendants of Abraham.

We can imagine the feelings of Noah and his family as the rain hammered down on the ark, and the swirling waters began to lift it off the ground. They could hear the piteous cries of the wretched people outside, seeking, too late, to enter the vessel whose construction they had so recently scorned. They would experience profound relief that out of the millions that died, they had been saved. Those years of toil and sacrifice and jeers had suddenly become intensely worthwhile. As the great timbers groaned under the mighty pressures of the surging waves, Noah especially would have been thankful that he had refused the temptation to skimp on the quality of the materials and workmanship. He recognised that God meant what He said, and by his obedience he saved his household, as the apostle declares in Hebrews 11:7.

A year went by. At last, the months of waiting and confinement were over. The wind dried the swollen waters (Genesis 8:1). Noah sent out first the raven, and then the dove, which returned with an olive twig to start her nest. Now the voyagers knew

that vegetation was growing as it had before the flood. Soon the great day came when they could leave the ark.

In deep gratitude for their salvation, Noah offered a sacrifice to God (8:20). He obtained in return a gracious guarantee, upon which our lives depend to this very day. Never again would God blot out life on such a scale. *'While the earth remains,'* he swore, *'seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease'* (8:22).

With the stability God promised, we are able to plan our lives. If we sow seeds, we expect crops to grow in due course. We never stop to think what would happen if the globe should shift out of true, or some giant comet disturb our orbit round the sun. Yet, on a cosmic scale, we are frightfully vulnerable. Even worse, few of us bother to thank God for our daily bread. Saying grace at table before meals, for example, has gone out of fashion. How about a resolution to say a little prayer of thanks before every meal? You would be following the example of the Lord Jesus, who always gave thanks himself before he ate (for example Matthew 15:36). You would be showing God that, like Noah, you appreciate being allowed to live.

Another great promise was made to Noah and the rest of creation on that day of new beginnings, connected in a delightful way with the rainbow. When, in the months following the flood, the children of Noah noticed the gathering of the clouds before an approaching storm, they might naturally have been afraid that the flood

was coming back again. Storm clouds had unpleasant associations for them. To resolve any future doubts, God gave a categorical assurance that there would never again be a worldwide flood. To seal His promise, he gave the rainbow as a token of his good faith. *'I have set my bow in the cloud,'* he said, *'and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh'* (Genesis 9:13–15).

Like a wedding ring on a finger, the bow would be a perpetual reminder of a solemn promise. The soft beauty of those colours, arching from heaven to earth against the background of gloom, still fills us with wonder, even when we have learnt how the rainbow 'works' in science at school. How good to think it has a meaning. This was the first great covenant God ever made. Significantly, when centuries afterwards, Ezekiel the prophet was shown a vision of the glory of the Lord, he remarked that round about God's throne there was a brightness, *'like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness all around'* (Ezekiel 1:28). Part of the glory of God is that He keeps His word. If He says He will do something, He does it. And that first covenant, like all the other promises He has made, He has never broken.

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

# True Love

WE HEAR A LOT about 'love'. Often these days the word is used glibly and sentimentally. It's important that we understand the meaning of the word 'love' as it's used in the Bible.

## The Good Samaritan

Let us consider the parable of the 'Good Samaritan' (Luke 10:25–37).

The Jewish Law taught, *'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself'* (v. 27). Jesus was asked, *'Who is my neighbor?'* (v. 29). In answer to the question, he presented this simple story about a man travelling down the steep road from Jerusalem in the hills to Jericho in the river valley. On the way thieves attacked him, stripped him and left him dying. By chance a priest arrived, but having seen the wounded man he hurried by on the other side of the road. Likewise a Levite, who also hurried on. The priest and the Levite were two upstanding members of the Jewish community. Later on a Samaritan arrived (the Samaritans were the Jews' northern neighbours,

and the Jews despised them). Moved by compassion and heedless of the danger he was in, he stopped to help. He treated and bandaged the man's wounds, set the man on his own donkey, and took him to an inn, where he promised to pay whatever was necessary for his care.



*'Which of these three,'* Jesus asked, *'proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?'* (v. 36). Of course, it was the Samaritan, he who had shown love for the man.

But let us notice that there was no emotional bond between the Samaritan and the victim. The man was unconscious, a stranger on the roadside. The Samaritan had seen someone in need of help and he helped without any questions about race or

creed. He shows to us the meaning of the word 'love'.

Before we leave the parable, let us notice that it was more than a simple story. It has layers of meaning. The Samaritan (despised by the Jews) can represent Jesus (whom they despised and rejected (Isaiah 53:3)). The victim can represent us. We are travelling a downhill road, and we are attacked and mortally wounded by sin (Romans 7:11). But Jesus has come to our aid; he has 'paid the price' for our healing (1 Corinthians 6:20).

But this is the important point—it is possible to show 'love' to an unknown stranger. The parting words of Jesus were, 'You go, and do likewise' (Luke 10:37).

## Love Your Enemies

Here are some more words of Jesus: 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you' (Matthew 5:44). Did Jesus mean, "Have a strong emotional bond with everyone?" No! That would be impossible. The Samaritan had come across the victim and he helped without hesitation. Jesus teaches, therefore, that "love" is like that. It would be easy to behave like that to our friends, to people who would help us if the need arose: that would be normal human behaviour. But Jesus calls upon us to do better, to behave like that even to people who have been unkind to us and whom we dislike.

It is not easy—but the call of Jesus is not intended to be easy. It is a call to self-denial. 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me' (Matthew 16:24). "Self" would say, "That person has been unkind to me so why should I help them?" But Jesus calls upon us to overcome "self" and to behave as he did, our own 'Good Samaritan'.

Jesus does not ask for the impossible; he calls us to be kind to all, friends and enemies alike.

Let us consider a practical example in Jesus' life. Judas Iscariot was the disciple who betrayed Jesus.

Did Jesus "like" Judas? He knew that Judas was a thief and a liar (John 12:5–6). He knew that Judas would betray him



(John 6:70–71). Surely the daily company of Judas must have been a trial to Jesus. But did Jesus "love" Judas? Yes he did! Jesus taught that we should "love" those who treat us badly—and certainly he put his own teaching into practice!



At first this looks like nonsense, that Jesus could love someone like Judas. How did he show that love? He treated Judas just like the other disciples—he washed his feet (John 13:3–5). When it was Judas’s turn, were those 30 coins still in his pocket as he held out his feet (Matthew 26:15)?

## Deeper Love

But can the word “Love” have a deeper meaning too? Yes, it can. Among Jesus’ twelve disciples there was an inner group of three, who witnessed the raising of Jairus’ daughter (Mark 5:37), Jesus’ transfiguration (Mark 9:2), and his suffering in Gethsemane (Mark 14:33). It seems that the relationship between Jesus and John, especially, was very close (John 21:20). It is obvious, too, that Mary Magdalene loved Jesus very deeply (Mark 16:9).



And so it is with ourselves. There are individuals whom we love deeply; we value their advice and would share our innermost thoughts with them. There are many others whom we “like” but we would not seek out their company especially. There are others whom we find it very difficult to like. But Jesus tells us:

*Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust (Matthew 5:44–45).*

Finally, let us consider the love of God. God wants us to be like Him, in our character, our thoughts and our actions. God is love (1 John 4:8). He has shown to us true love in all its splendour.

*God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).*

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16)*

David Budden

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

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or write to the Editor—address inside front cover

# Only Her Suffering to Give



RIZPAH WAS a concubine of King Saul of Israel. She had two sons, Armoni and Mephibosheth. Saul was now dead. In 2 Samuel 21 we read the disturbing account of how God brought a famine on the land of Israel because of the 'bloodguilt' of Saul (v. 1), who had persecuted the people of Gibeon. Saul's successor David delivered Rizpah's sons, together with five of Saul's grandsons, to be executed by the people of Gibeon in reparation for their persecution. The seven men were hanged, and their bodies left hanging, denied burial.

Can we imagine what Rizpah must have felt? Saul had filled her life, but now he was dead. Her sons would have been a great comfort to her—and now they too were dead. Helpless in her grief, there remained only one thing she could do.

*Then Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth and spread it for herself on the rock, from the beginning of harvest until rain fell upon them from the heavens. And she did not allow the birds of the air to come upon them by day, or the beasts of the field by night (v. 10).*

Two months passed, then three, then four. That period from the beginning of harvest to the start of the rains is around five or six months. Rizpah kept her watch through the heat of the day and the cold and danger of the night, perhaps sleeping fitfully, always alert for the approach of scavengers. Perhaps she recalled her life of luxury and glamour in Saul's household, the joys of her family life. Now the days and nights were welded together by sorrow, tears and fatigue.

At last the rains came. Someone told King David of Rizpah's vigil. He had the corpses taken down and gave them a burial.

## Hope in Sorrow

In this sad world, there will always be those who have no course of action available to them but to wait and watch, with only their sorrow for companionship—their

sorrow, and God. What is the answer for the human heart distraught with grief? What can we say to those whose lives have been overturned by bereavement or illness or tragedy? There is nothing easy to say.

But there is a way of making sense of grief and sorrow, because God exists. Because Jesus came, to give hope of everlasting life.

*I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die (John 11:25–26).*

Sometimes we may see a reason for what happens in our lives. Rizpah suffered for her husband's sin. Sometimes we may feel responsible ourselves. I heard a report of a young woman, who had stayed up till the early hours preparing for the family holiday. In the morning they set off, but she was so tired she fell asleep at the wheel, their car crashed and her husband and all but one of her children were killed. Can you imagine that poor woman's grief? Then again, sometimes things happen to us and we can simply see no reason. But whether or not we think there is a reason, and whatever that reason may be, it's natural to ask the question, "Why?"

If we let Him, God will break through our doubt. He has anticipated our question. On

his cross, Jesus cried, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Matthew 27:46). He was not forsaken. He knew the prophecy, 'You will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption' (Acts 2:27). But he has cried 'Why?' for us. He cried, as he laid down his life, that we might have life.

If we belong to Christ, if we are part of God's family, we will know that everything that happens to us is for our benefit, in God's purpose, somehow (Romans 8:28). With this knowledge, it is for us to cooperate with Him in making creative use of our sorrow and grief. God is a redeeming God. He wastes nothing.

There are still Rizpahs in our world. Perhaps you know one. Perhaps you are one. God reminds us in Jesus Christ that where He is, there is always hope.

Rizpah did the only thing she could do for her sons. She gave. Giving unlocks our hearts to God's comfort, and to His plans for our lives after tragedy and grief have done their worst.

God is a redeeming God. He wants us to waste nothing—not even our tears.

**Jenny Ingham**

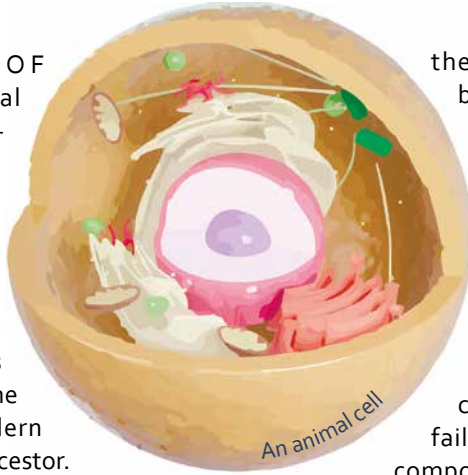


# Irreducible Complexity

THE THEORY OF evolution by natural selection was popularised by Charles Darwin in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century. He observed that living organisms have the natural ability to adapt, and suggested that this ability accounts for the development of modern life from a primitive ancestor.

In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, genetic mutation was proposed as the mechanism for evolution by natural selection. This brought about the theory we commonly refer to as Neo-Darwinism, which today is generally regarded and taught as fact. Over the last 150 years, the belief in the God of heaven as the Almighty Creator has greatly diminished.

It is however significant that when Darwinism and Neo-Darwinism were conceived there was no knowledge of the biochemical mechanisms by which life operates. For example, in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the enthusiastic Darwinian philosopher and naturalist Ernst Haeckel believed that a cell was a “simple little lump of albuminous combination of carbon”. Since that time, inventions such as the electron microscope have revealed the cell to be a chemical factory of phenomenal complexity. And



the study of molecular biology, which was only just beginning when Neo-Darwinism was launched, has since revealed the amazing complexity of the chemistry of life.

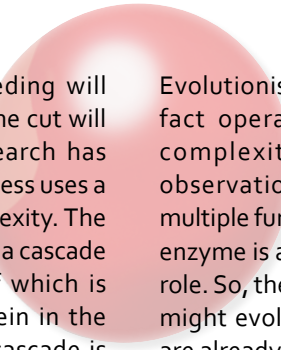
Suppose it turns out that an organism is so complex that it would fail to operate if any key components were missing. If this should be the case, it stands to reason that it could not have evolved—it must have appeared fully assembled and functioning, therefore it must have been designed. This is the argument of ‘irreducible complexity’.

Darwin himself admitted: “If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down.” It’s interesting to remember that back in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Darwin had no idea how breathtakingly complex living organisms actually are.

## Blood Clotting

A notable example of irreducible complexity is the process by which blood clots. We take it for granted (if our blood functions properly) that if we cut ourselves,





within a few minutes the bleeding will stop and within a week or two the cut will have healed. Biochemical research has revealed that this automatic process uses a mechanism of staggering complexity. The wound triggers the production of a cascade of around 13 proteins, each of which is activated by the previous protein in the chain. The culmination of this cascade is the production of thrombin, which causes a meshwork of fibrin proteins to trap the blood molecules and seal over the wound. Then another set of proteins is released to stop the clotting process before it spreads too far, and to dissolve the clot once the healing process is complete.

It's clear just how critical are the many steps of the clotting process. If any step of the cascade did not work, your blood clot would not form. If the controlling proteins did not work, all the blood in your body would solidify. In order to work, the whole system of proteins must be precisely balanced and complete. How did this amazing mechanism come into existence in small evolutionary steps, and while it was still developing why did our ancestors not bleed to death whenever they cut themselves?

## Evolutionary Explanations

The mechanism of blood clotting is just one of many systems which appear to be irreducibly complex, requiring the presence of many biochemical components, each of which is essential to the system's correct functioning. Although these systems have been thoroughly described, very few attempts have been made to show how they could have evolved.

Evolutionists often claim that nature in fact operates a system of 'redundant complexity'. This is based on the observation that many enzymes have multiple functions, and in some cases if one enzyme is absent another will take over its role. So, the theory goes, new mechanisms might evolve by co-opting enzymes that are already being used for other pathways. But a more likely explanation for redundant complexity is that it has been deliberately built in. Just as a human engineer might include back-up systems when designing a critical piece of equipment, so God, the Great Designer, has built redundant complexity into biochemical systems in order to make them more robust. Redundant complexity is not a satisfactory explanation for evolution.

At the end of the day, evolutionists are forced to maintain that such complexity indeed arose in small steps, even though there is no rational explanation as to how this could have happened. It is simply a position of faith.

An alternative to faith in evolution as the explanation for life, is faith in the living God, Who made heaven and earth and has revealed Himself to us in the Bible. The wonders of the living world which are being revealed by molecular biology only serve to increase our sense of awe at His genius. The Bible invites us to '*stop and consider the wondrous works of God*' (*Job 37:14*).

**David Burges**

Adapted from *Wonders of Creation*  
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# The Restoration of All Things

AFTER JESUS CHRIST HAD been raised to life and taken to heaven, the Apostle Peter was preaching to the people in Jerusalem.

*Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago (Acts 3:19–21).*

## The Things to Be Restored

What were the ‘things’ Peter spoke about, that are to be restored when Christ comes again?

It was the establishment of the Kingdom of God, under the reign of the Messiah—this was what the Jews of Peter’s day understood to be the message of the holy prophets.

We see this earlier in the Acts record, before Jesus ascended to heaven, when his disciples asked him, ‘Lord, will you at

*this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’ (Acts 1:6).*

The disciples were especially keen to see the fulfilment of this promise, because Jesus had told them: ‘Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel’ (Matthew 19:28). We know that this was on their minds, because on another occasion they were arguing amongst themselves about who was the greatest (Luke 9:46)!

But Jesus told them that the Kingdom was not going to happen there and then. In fact, he did not know when it would be—only God knew (Acts 1:7). The Gospel had to be preached to all nations first, in order to prepare a people who will live in the Kingdom. Before he went to heaven, Jesus commanded his disciples, ‘Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned’ (Mark 16:15–16).



## The First Kingdom of God

When the nation of Israel first arrived in the Promised Land of Canaan, they had no monarchy. They were governed by their leader Joshua, and after him, a series of Judges. One of these was Gideon, who led the people to victory over an occupying enemy. The people wanted to make Gideon their king.

*Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us, you and your son and your grandson also, for you have saved us from the hand of Midian." Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the LORD will rule over you" (Judges 8:22–23).*

This was the first time the people of Israel asked for a king, so that they would be like the nations around them. But Gideon was clear—God was their King. They were to be a theocracy, not a monarchy.

The last Judge was the prophet Samuel. Again the people asked him to give them a king so they could be like the nations around them (1 Samuel 8:4–5). Samuel was not happy with this request and he prayed to God about it. *'And the LORD said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them"' (v. 7).*

Their first king was Saul. He proved to be a failure and fell out of favour

with God because of his disobedience (1 Samuel 15:22–28). Then God selected a better king, David (1 Samuel 16:1). He was a godly man and ruled Israel as a good king. He wrote many songs which we find in the Bible in the Book of Psalms. He was succeeded by his son Solomon. All this while, we are told that this was not the kingdom of men but God's Kingdom:

*Then Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king in place of David his father. And he prospered, and all Israel obeyed him (1 Chronicles 29:23).*

When he had achieved peace in the kingdom, David wanted to build a temple for God in Jerusalem. God told him that it was his son who would build the temple (2 Samuel 7). The temple was built by Solomon. But God's promise in 2 Samuel 7 extends further forward into the future. He told David, *'Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever' (v. 16).* This did not happen in Solomon's time.

The kingdom was ruled by human kings. Many of them were godless and the kingdom went into decline. Eventually the kingdom and God's temple were destroyed by the Babylonians, and many Israelites were taken into captivity, including their last king Zedekiah. The prophet Ezekiel told Zedekiah:

*And you, O profane wicked one, prince of Israel, whose day has come, the time of your*



*final punishment, thus says the Lord GOD: Remove the turban and take off the crown. Things shall not remain as they are. Exalt that which is low, and bring low that which is exalted. A ruin, ruin, ruin I will make it. This also shall not be, until he comes, the one to whom judgment belongs, and I will give it to him (Ezekiel 21:25–27).*

## Waiting For the King

King Zedekiah was removed and the land of Israel lay desolate for 70 years, as foretold by the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 25:11–12). Then in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah a remnant of Jews returned from Babylonian captivity to rebuild the temple and the city of Jerusalem.

Ezekiel told Zedekiah that there would be no king again *'until he comes, the one to whom judgment belongs'*. There never has been a king of Israel since. (In the time of Jesus, Herod was called king, but he was not a Jew and he only ruled a part of the land under the Roman domination).

Who was the one of whom Ezekiel spoke, *'the one to whom judgment belongs, and I will give it to him'*? It was of course Jesus Christ. As the angel Gabriel said to Jesus' mother Mary, *'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'* (Luke 1:32).

But as we have seen, Christ's mission the first time he was on earth was not to set up the Kingdom. It was to tell people that it was coming: *'I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God... for I was sent for this purpose'* (Luke 4:43). His mission was to preach righteousness, the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation to God, through faith in his name; and to offer himself as a perfect sacrifice to God, to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

We have seen that the disciples expected Jesus to *'restore the kingdom to Israel'* (Acts 1:6). There was more than the kingdom of Israel to be restored, as we shall see.

## The Cleansing of the Earth

Jesus told several parables that described the judgement that will happen on his return, when he comes to establish God's Kingdom and restore the world.

The parable of the weeds was one such parable (Matthew 13:24–30 and 36–43). A farmer sowed good seed in his field, but his enemy secretly sowed weeds in among the seed. At the harvest, the crop was gathered in but the weeds were burnt. The weeds are the wicked (v. 38) who will be rejected from the Kingdom (v. 42). *'Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father'* (v. 43). Another parable of the judgement is the parable of the sheep and goats (Matthew 25:31–46).





Jesus said, *'Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment'* (John 5:25–29).

The prophet Daniel spoke of the same thing (Daniel 12:2).

## Restoration of the Natural World

There is also the promise in the Bible that the natural world will be restored to how it was when God created it. When Adam and Eve brought the curse upon themselves and their descendants, the world itself was cursed as well (Genesis 3:17–19). In the Kingdom, the curse upon humans will be lifted and also the curse on the earth:

*For the LORD comforts Zion; he comforts all her waste places and makes her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song* (Isaiah 51:3).

The animal kingdom will be transformed: *'The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them'* (Isaiah 11:6).

There will be no more war: *'He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore'* (Isaiah 2:4).

These are some details we are given. The wonders of God's glorious Kingdom will be beyond anything we can imagine. The Apostle Paul said about this time, *'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him'* (1 Corinthians 2:9).

The time is coming when all things will be restored. Do you want to be there?

**Grahame A Cooper**

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*Is it true that Saint Peter and Saint Paul didn't like each other?*

Ed

**ACADEMICS LIKE THEORIES.** A favourite theory of historians of First Century Christianity is that the Bible's account indicates a rivalry between the apostles Peter and Paul: Peter wanted to keep the new faith true to its Jewish roots, whereas Paul was a libertarian who wanted to make it more accessible to a wider Gentile audience. Those who hold theories like this tend to regard the Bible as just the work of men, rather than inspired by God.

When you accept the Bible as what it claims to be—the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16–17)—it's not hard to see that this theory is baseless, and that both apostles were preaching the same message.

Peter and Paul were both Jews. Peter was a fisherman from the disreputable province of Galilee (Matthew 4:18, Acts 4:13); Paul was a privileged and highly educated member of the elite (Acts 22:3, 28, Philippians 3:5). Peter started as a disciple of John the Baptist, then followed Jesus; he was with him till the end of his ministry and became his close friend (Matthew 10:2, Mark 14:33). There are indications that Paul knew Jesus during his ministry (2 Corinthians 5:16), but he started off as a vehement enemy of Jesus and his followers and was only converted after Jesus' death and ascension to heaven

(1 Corinthians 15:9). In the Gospels Peter is presented as the leader and spokesman for the disciples—he was evidently a big, charismatic personality; Paul was not (2 Corinthians 10:10). It's not difficult to imagine that there may have been personal tensions between these very different men—they were sinful humans, like you and me. But there's no evidence of a lack of respect for each other.

Paul related an occasion when he gave Peter a public telling-off, because he was behaving badly (Galatians 2:11). But they were both spiritually mature men, and there's no need to think that this strained their friendship (Proverbs 27:6). Peter was highly respectful of Paul's writings, and called them 'scriptures' (2 Peter 3:15–16).

Both men were given particular responsibilities by the Lord. Peter was to spearhead the preaching to the Jews, and Paul the preaching to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:8). They both participated in each other's mission—Paul always made a practice of preaching to Jews first when he arrived in a new town; Peter was the first Jew to baptise Gentile converts (Acts 10).

Their style of preaching, as recorded in the book of Acts and in their respective letters, is different, as you'd expect. But they both recognised themselves and each other as servants of Christ, whose vocation was to preach the consistent, unchanging message of salvation for all to the glory of God.

# The Flood

THE FLOOD in the time of Noah was colossal. Here are some numbers from the account in Genesis chapters 6 to 8.

2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 40, 50

The numbers are hidden in the grid as words (for example 8 is EIGHT).

Find the numbers and insert them into the statements about the flood.

T	O	E	I	G	H	T
P	H	J	T	W	O	F
N	X	R	H	C	K	I
E	G	I	E	U	P	F
V	R	W	S	E	K	T
E	Y	T	R	O	F	Y
S	M	Y	J	M	U	F

God told Noah to build an ark. It had to be \_\_\_\_\_ hundred cubits long.\*  
Noah obeyed.

Then God said, "Come into the ark. Take animals including \_\_\_\_\_ of every unclean animal and seven pairs of every clean animal with you."

There were \_\_\_\_\_ people in the ark.

After \_\_\_\_\_ days the rain came and it rained for \_\_\_\_\_ days.

The flood waters covered the earth for one hundred and \_\_\_\_\_ days.

Noah was \_\_\_\_\_ hundred years old when the flood came.

\* At least 138 metres or 450 ft

Anna Hart



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