

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured **Articles**

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The Tower of Babel (p. 5)

Eve—Mother of All Living (p. 14)

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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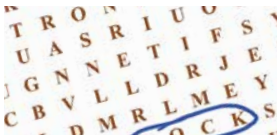
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Glad Tidings Distributors for orders and payments

United Kingdom
Becky Collard, 7 Lindridge Close,
Redditch, Worcs. B98 0QJ, UK
Tel: +44 (0)7521 079 190 (24 hrs)
orders-uk@gladtidingsmagazine.org

Australia
Ruth Morgan, 41 Dimboola Road,
Warracknabeal, VIC 3393, Australia
gladtidingsaustralia@gmail.com

Canada
Vivian Thorp, 5377 Birdcage Walk,
Burlington, ON L7L 3K5, Canada
vivianthorp@bell.net

New Zealand
Jenny Luxmoore, 47 Woodfern Crescent,
Titirangi, Auckland 0604,
New Zealand
delux@xtra.co.nz

U.S.A.
Pat Hemingray, 1244 Pennsylvania
Avenue, Oakmont, PA 15139, USA
orders-usa@gladtidingsmagazine.org

Other Countries
Andrew Johnson, 22 Hazel Drive,
Hollywood, Birmingham B47 5RJ, UK
orders-int@gladtidingsmagazine.org

Editor
Chris Parkin, 7 Thorntree Lane, Newhall,
Swadlincote, Derbyshire DE11 0LP, UK
editor@gladtidingsmagazine.org

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When Life Seems Just Too Hard

THESE ARE NOT the words of someone who has doubts:

'I love you, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold' (Psalm 18:1-2).

See all the ways the Psalmist describes his God, in just these opening lines: He is a rock, a fortress, a deliverer, a shield, a tower. And the Psalm goes on, a magnificent song of faith in God in whom he has absolute trust.

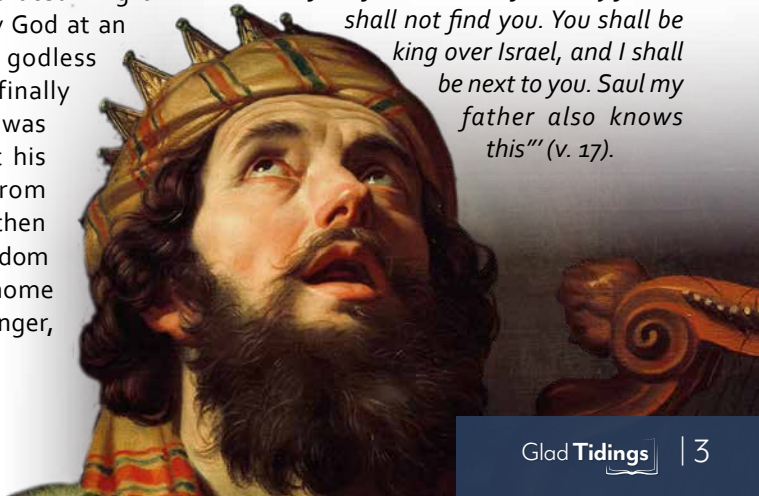
The heading of Psalm 18 tells us when it was written: *'A Psalm of David, the servant of the LORD, who addressed the words of this song to the LORD on the day when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul.'*

David was the most celebrated king of Israel. He was anointed by God at an early age to replace the godless king Saul, and when he finally took the throne his reign was long and prosperous. But his early years, as he fled from Saul's maniacal jealousy, then fought to establish the kingdom against hostility both at home and abroad, were full of danger, difficulty and stress.

Through all the perils and trials, David never gave up. He never gave in to bitterness or despair. His faith in his God brought him a peace of mind that could help him endure anything that life could throw at him.

Strengthened in the LORD

On one occasion David and his band of outlaw followers had fled into the wilderness from Saul's pursuing army. But Saul's son Jonathan was a courageous and faithful man, who was David's ally. God provides encouragement for His servants in some very unlikely ways. *'And Jonathan, Saul's son, rose and went to David at Horesh, and strengthened his hand in God' (1 Samuel 23:16).* How did he strengthen David's hand? By reminding him that God had promised him the kingdom, and God was bigger than Saul. *'And he said to him, "Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Saul my father also knows this"' (v. 17).*



On another occasion David and his men had been obliged to leave Israel altogether and set up their base in the town of Ziklag in Philistia (modern Gaza). The fighting men left their families there while they attended a council of war, but when they returned the town had been attacked and their families taken captive. *'Then David and the people who were with him raised their voices and wept until they had no more strength to weep... And David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because all the people were bitter in soul, each for his sons and daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God'* (1 Samuel 30:4–6).

How did he strengthen himself? By reminding himself that God was bigger even than this catastrophe. God had promised to look after him, and God would not let him down. As he said in another psalm, *'When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?'* (Psalm 56:3–4).

A Shield About Me

Towards the end of his life, David faced perhaps his most grievous trial. His own son Absalom made a treacherous bid for the throne. It was swift and well planned, and while a large section of the royal court and the country's population sided with Absalom,

David was forced to flee from Jerusalem with his loyal followers and head for the hills (the account is in 2 Samuel 15–16).

He wrote Psalm 3 at this time: *'O LORD, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; many are saying of my soul, "There is no salvation for him in God." But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy hill. I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the LORD sustained me* (vs. 1–5).

Even when his own son and his people had turned against him, he would not despair—God was bigger than them. Imagine having such confidence: that God will look after you, whatever life throws at you!

To be a follower of Jesus Christ is to have your life in perspective. He told his followers: *'Do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom'* (Luke 12:29–32). Dangers and hardships are a part of life—but God is bigger than them all, and He is on your side.

Questions? Comments?

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The Tower of Babel



WHEN WE ENTER a room with a crowd of people all talking at once, we might describe it as a Babel of voices. We mean there is so much noise and confusion we cannot make out distinctly what anyone is saying. Not everyone is aware that the expression “Babel” is taken from the Bible. It was the name used for a giant building, constructed after the Flood by the descendants of Noah. The story of the Tower of Babel is contained in the eleventh chapter of Genesis, and it will repay our attention because the circumstances of the building of this great edifice have tended to repeat themselves in the long history of humanity.

When the waters of the Flood had dried away, Noah’s sons went back to their farming and building. Their families grew rapidly, and they spread into the fertile

river plains alongside the Tigris and the Euphrates in the land of Mesopotamia. Soon the Flood would have been only a memory—a horror story that would be recalled with a shudder, but growing yearly more remote and faint. As time went on, and there was no sign of a renewed judgement from God, that stubborn streak of rebellion which taints all human hearts began to revive. God had crushed the old world for ever, but now humankind was growing in numbers again, and they were feeling strong:

As people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there... Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth” (Genesis:11:2, 4).

Making Their Mark

For the first time ever, all the families of the earth combined their forces in a giant building project that would really make a mark on history. It was to be a symbol of humanity's pride and greatness. Plans were drawn up by the best brains of the day, and the materials chosen: *'They said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar (v. 3).* It must have been a major task to organise the vast work teams—a far cry from the lonely work of Noah, building his ark. But the will was there, the difficulties were overcome, and soon the great city and its tower began to creep up into the sky.

Now, we can make some observations straight away. Firstly, Shinar has been the site of human occupation from the very earliest times. It is a flat place, and archaeologists have shown it was once a fertile alluvial plain, lavishly watered from the two great rivers Tigris and Euphrates. The nearest mountains were over 200 miles away. Without easy access to stone, it is not surprising that the builders should turn to brick. Archaeology confirms that clay bricks were the standard building material at Ur and Erech, two other great cities which later dotted this land. The great Ziggurat tower at Ur, one of the oldest man-made structures in the world, and a staggering 1200 feet by 600 feet

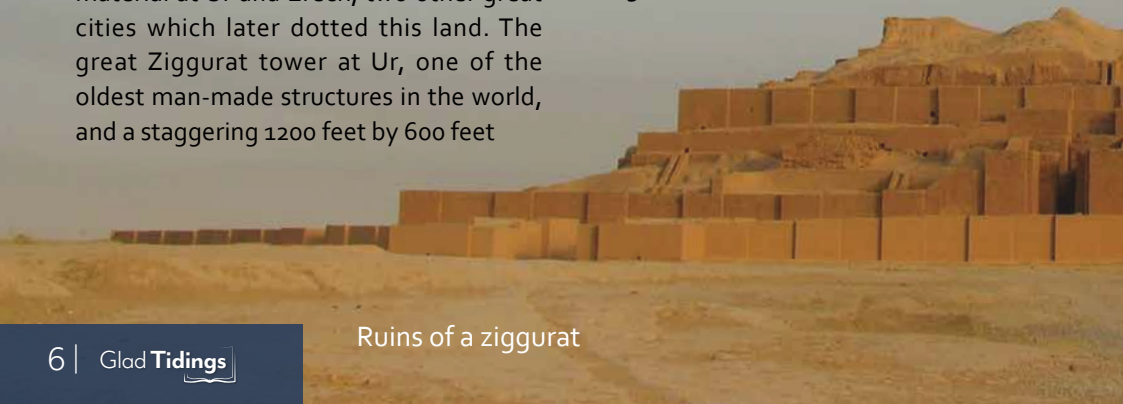
(365 metres by 182 metres) at the base, is constructed entirely of millions of bricks. Clay was universal—even letters and books were made from clay tablets, inscribed with a stylus and baked indelibly hard.

Then we must consider the purpose of the city and its tower. In a flat land, an artificial mountain would be a great landmark. The building of huge towers or ziggurats was a feature of the later cities of this region. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon in the 6th Century BC, excelled at it. One of his towers is known to have been eight storeys high.

'Let us make a name for ourselves' was the cry that united the Babel builders. They were going to build a mighty monument to humanity. Perhaps they thought their city would be impregnable against another flood. Perhaps their tower with its top in the heavens was an attempt to defy the God who lived there, as if they were going to climb up and show Him a thing or two.

To Be Like God

This picture of all the families of the earth slaving away to build a tower to reach up to heaven by their own efforts may seem amusing, until we think of the sombre overtones of the message. To be like God, was the earliest craving of humans (Genesis 3:5). Eve tried to get there



Ruins of a ziggurat

the easy way, by eating the forbidden fruit. And millions of hopefuls since have tried to construct their own bridge into God's presence. We can be like God. We can know good and evil, and live for ever. But it can only be on God's terms, and by His grace. As Jesus himself said, *'No one has ascended into heaven'* (John 3:13). Our own efforts are futile. We have to humble ourselves and bend our will to the will of God. It is He who reaches down to lift us up.

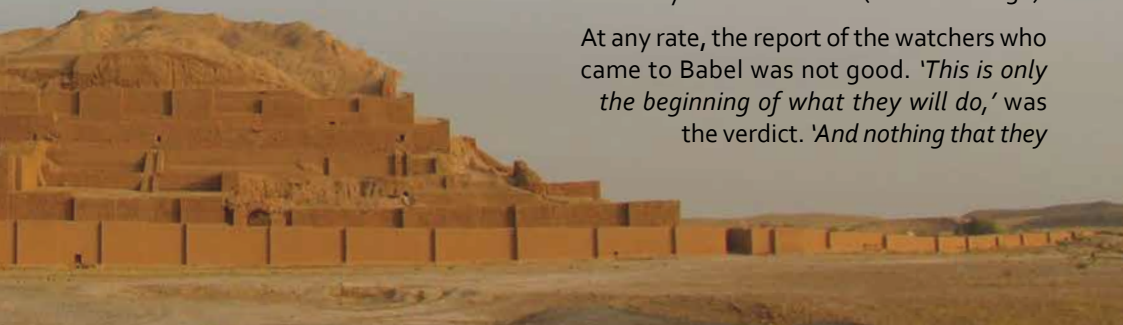
Jacob, the forefather of the Jews, once had a vision of a ladder stretching from heaven to earth, with angelic beings going up and down upon it (Genesis 28:10–22). Jesus, probably referring to this vision, told one of his earliest disciples that the angels would ascend and descend upon the Son of man (John 1:51). He was the bridge from heaven to earth. If we have faith in his sacrifice, God will one day build us into a great and holy city, a temple made without hands, in which He will dwell for eternity (Ephesians 2:19–22). But as Paul insists, it will not be our doing. *'It is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast'* (vs. 8–9). So, the mighty city and tower of which the Babel builders were so proud, had to be brought to nothing, as a lesson for future ages.

God Intervenes

The manner of its fall was most unusual. *'And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built'* (Genesis 11:5). How did God come down? Later in the Genesis account we meet the angels of God, those messengers by which He controls the world in which we live. Three angels were sent to investigate Sodom and Gomorrah, in the time of Abraham. They are called *'the watchers'* in Daniel chapter 4. Zechariah styles them *'the eyes of the LORD, which range through the whole earth'* (Zechariah 4:10).

We are used nowadays to the satellites which pass miles overhead, photographing in detail the buildings and people of the countries beneath them. But from the beginning of the world, God has been watching men, weighing up their actions, and noting their motives and their plans. Even the darkness is no cloak from his scrutiny, as the Psalmist had to confess (Psalm 139:12). It is a sobering thought that the stranger we pass in the street could be an angel of the Lord, sent to check on the moral condition of our town. What does he think of us? What does God think of you and me? If we are wise, we shall live so that we shall not be ashamed when He does *'come down'*, in the Day of Judgement that will really shake our world (Matthew 12:36).

At any rate, the report of the watchers who came to Babel was not good. *'This is only the beginning of what they will do,'* was the verdict. *'And nothing that they*



propose to do will now be impossible for them' (Genesis 11:6). The rebellion had to be nipped in the bud. See how easily the messengers of the Lord coped with the emergency. The descendants of Noah had kept together up to now, and all spoke the same language. 'Come, let us go down,' said the angels, 'and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech' (v. 7).

In an instant, that power which was to be used in New Testament times to give Galilean fishermen the ability to speak many languages (Acts 2:4–11) was used to separate out the families of humankind. They began to speak in different languages, and so were unable to coordinate

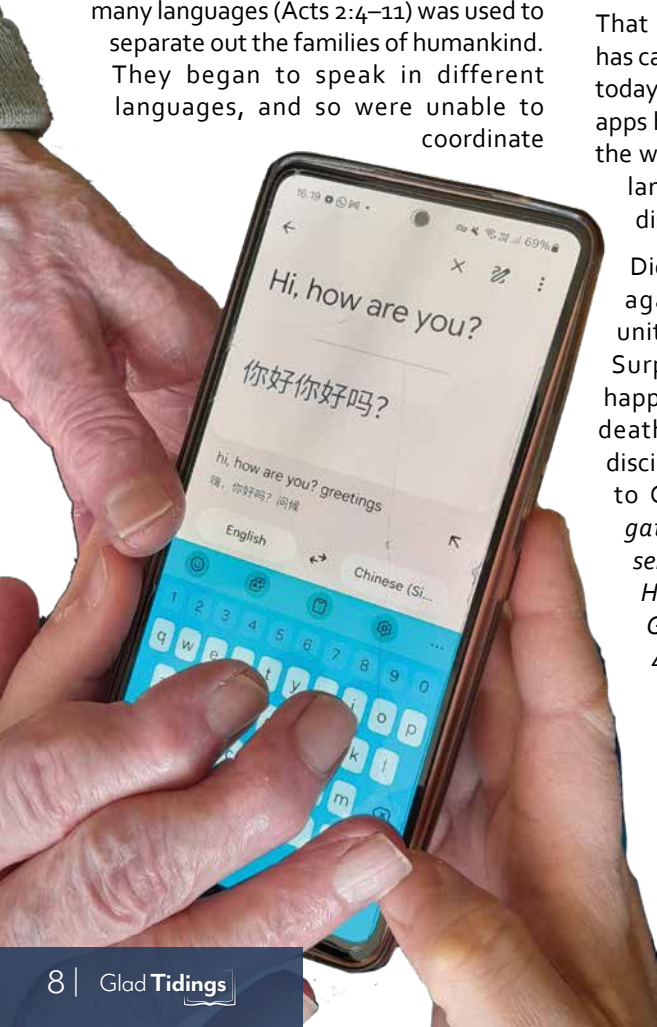
the building work. They left off building the city. 'Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth' (Genesis 11:9).

The Language Barrier

Gradually the families drifted apart. The Semites, the Hamites and the descendants of Japheth moved away and gave rise to the multitude of nations and languages that now fill the earth. Slowly the half-finished tower crumbled into ruins and was forgotten.

That slender natural barrier of language has caused lasting strife and mistrust. Even today, when swift transport and translation apps help us to understand how the rest of the world lives, the absence of a universal language hampers trade and fosters disagreements.

Did nations ever sink their differences again and work together on one united project like they did at Babel? Surprisingly, the answer is "Yes". It happened nearly 2000 years ago at the death of Jesus of Nazareth. As Jesus' disciples in Jerusalem said in their prayer to God, 'Truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel' (Acts 4:27). They combined forces to get rid of the Son of God. Their hostility was so strong it broke down the barriers of language and culture. They wrote the accusation over Jesus' cross in three languages (John 19:20) so that despite Babel, everyone would understand.





The Great Rebellion

That is not quite the end of the story. The Bible shows that yet once more the nations will join hands in common cause. They will join together against Christ at his second coming, just like they did at the first. *'The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed,'* prophesied the Psalmist (Psalm 2:2). But this time he will *'break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel'* (v. 9). A multitude of nations will surround Jerusalem, God's holy city, and for a while they will feel they are just as strong as the Lord himself (Zechariah 14:1–2). The prophet Isaiah described the attitude of God's enemies when he condemned the King of Babylon for boasting about his prowess (Babylon was built in the same region as Babel): *'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High'* (Isaiah 14:13–14).

The outcome is certain—the Kingdom of God. When those who refuse to have

Christ as their king have been punished, and his enemies have been *'put under his feet'* (Psalm 8:6), Jesus will reign over the earth as king. Then at last the confusion of Babel will be ended for ever, and people will worship God in unity and peace. *'My decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them my indignation,'* writes the prophet Zephaniah. He concludes, *'For at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the LORD and serve him with one accord'* (Zephaniah 3:8–9).

David Pearce
(to be continued)

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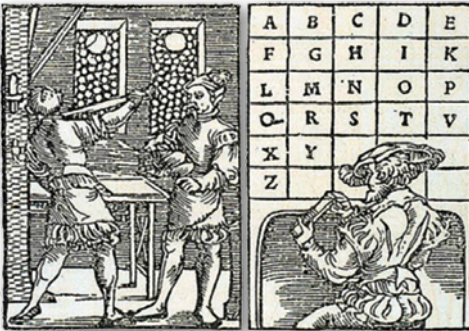
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'Glad Tidings Magazine'

The English Bible

FIVE HUNDRED YEARS AGO a few brave men defied the authorities, and at the risk of capture and execution they began to use the new technology of the printing press to publish the Bible in English.



Early printing press

The Bible was written originally in three languages: the Old Testament was written mainly in Hebrew with some parts in Aramaic, and the New Testament entirely in Greek.

In 405 AD the priest and scholar Jerome finished his translation of the Bible into Latin. This became known as the Vulgate, or common version. It was the only Bible version permitted throughout much of Europe for many years. But after the fall of the Roman empire few people could speak Latin. In time the desire arose for the Bible in other languages, including English.

The English language had evolved substantially. Prior to the Norman invasion of 1066 there had been in England several

regional languages, such as Mercian and Anglo-Saxon, which developed into Early English. Following the Norman conquest, French was the official language until 1362. Afterwards the language which had developed mainly outside official circles came into its own, as Middle English.

Wycliffe

The first English translation of the Bible was made by the Leicestershire clergyman John Wycliffe and his associates, and completed shortly after Wycliffe's death in 1384. It was translated into Middle English from the Latin Vulgate.

Wycliffe's translation was banned in England, and possession of it was punishable by death. Despite this, such was the desire to read the Bible that copies were made commercially. More manuscript copies of Wycliffe's Bible translations survive than copies of the works of his contemporary, the great English poet and author Geoffrey Chaucer—not bad for a forbidden book!

Tyndale

By the 15th Century, the English language had resolved into what is sometimes called Early Modern English. Most native English speakers today would be able to understand it. This was the language of the scholar and linguist William Tyndale. Whereas Wycliffe had translated from the Latin, Tyndale set himself the task of

translating the entire Bible into English from the original languages. He was well suited to the task. He was said to be master of eight languages, and to speak each as a native. He was especially sensitive in his use of English, and where the language lacked an exact word, he invented it. For example, the words 'beautiful' and 'scapegoat' both originate from Tyndale's Bible.

At that time the Catholic Church dominated the Christian world, and its teachings were given more prominence than the Bible itself. A clergyman once told Tyndale: "We had better be without God's laws than the Pope's!" Tyndale responded: "I defy the Pope and all his laws; and if God spares my life, ere many years, I will cause the boy that driveth the plow to know more of the Scriptures than thou dost!"

Threatened with execution in England, he moved to Germany. His translation of the New Testament was published in 1525—it was the first English translation from the original Greek, and the first to be printed.



Tyndale's execution

He continued his work, turning his attention to the Old Testament which he translated from the Hebrew and Aramaic. He published the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament) in 1530, and the book of Jonah in 1531. He also published a revision of his New Testament in 1534. He started working through the rest of the Old Testament, but he only got as far as 2 Chronicles before he was ensnared, arrested and imprisoned. He was executed in 1536 by strangulation and then burning. His last shouted words were, "Lord! Open the King of England's eyes."

Coverdale

The previous year, the church reformer Miles Coverdale had published the first complete printed English Bible, probably in Antwerp. He incorporated Tyndale's work, and translated the missing parts himself.

As Tyndale had prayed, the King of England's eyes were opened. King Henry VIII approved the English translation, and only a year after Tyndale's death Coverdale's second edition of his Bible was dedicated to the king.

Tyndale's work influenced translations into English for many years afterwards, including the seminal King James Version of 1611 which is still perhaps the most well known and loved Bible translation. There are probably now more translations of the Bible into English than any other language.

Wycliffe, Tyndale and others like them devoted their lives and risked everything to bring us the Bible in our language. Don't you think you ought to read it?

Peter Banyard

The Word Made Flesh

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

SO THE APOSTLE John wrote in the first chapter of his Gospel record, but what exactly did he mean? It is a fact that there are matters connected with God's ways which are 'too wonderful' for us, things we 'cannot attain' (Psalm 139:6).

Indeed, if we look closely at life and deal honestly with its problems, we are bound to confess that even the most ordinary happenings—things we see and hear about every day—can be incomprehensible. We may accumulate facts and classify them, and we may discover some of the laws which God has fixed in the substance of the universe. We may perceive the relationship between one fact and another, but we cannot understand the essence of everything, by any means.

So, it should come as no surprise if the greatest of all the Creator's works excites our sense of wonder and causes us to marvel at what was accomplished, when 'the Word became flesh'.

The Son of God

Here are just some of the ways in which Jesus Christ is described in the Bible:

- the only Son from the Father (John 1:14)

- the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation (Colossians 1:15)
- the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5).

Such was the Lord Jesus Christ, and surely he should excite our sense of wonder and appreciation even more than the incomprehensible facts of ordinary life.

But, while we cannot reasonably expect to have an understanding of Christ and his mission other than by means of what is shown to us in the Bible by God, we must certainly not surround the subject with humanly devised mystery.

The proper course is to observe and keep in mind all that is revealed in the Bible, trying to find the proper place for every fact. Then the subject will gradually take shape until, at last, it becomes possible—even easy—to accept all parts of it as we accept the familiar but marvellous facts of our everyday experience.

Why 'Son of God'?

We need to remember that, according to the Bible, Jesus Christ was conceived by means of the Holy Spirit. As the angel Gabriel said to Mary, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God' (Luke 1:35).

Jesus:

- was born a human baby (Luke 2:7)
- increased in wisdom as he increased in stature (v. 52)
- was acknowledged as the beloved Son of God at his baptism (3:22); and
- was given the power of the Spirit without measure (John 3: 34).

He performed works which were far beyond the power of all others, and spoke words such as no other could. Repeatedly, however, Jesus insisted that he could do nothing of himself (John 5:19). It was the Father who had sent him who did the works. Even when Jesus gave expression to his most astonishing claims, he made it clear that his power and authority all came from the Father. He once declared, *'For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.'* But immediately he added, *'This charge I have received from my Father'* (John 10:17–18).

Repeatedly he spoke of the Father who had sent him and whose will must always be done. Never once did he claim an equality with God, his Father; quite the contrary. The Bible writers confirm this in their descriptions of Christ's power. *'In Christ,'* the apostle Paul wrote, *'God was reconciling the world to himself'* (2 Corinthians 5:19). And, looking beyond his mortal life to his glory and power, the apostle Peter said that God would send Jesus Christ at *'the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago'* (Acts 3:21).

All these wonderful attributes of Jesus Christ are comprehended in the apostle John's remarkable statement that *'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us'*.

God's Creative Power

The idea of the Word of God as the expression of His creative power is presented in many parts of the Bible, not just in John. In the letter to the Hebrews the apostle declares that *'The universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible'* (11:3).

This is a reference back to the first chapter of the Bible—the first move in the establishment of order—when *'God said, "Let there be light," and there was light'* (Genesis 1:3).

Such was the power of God's Word. *'He spoke, and it came to be'* (Psalm 33:9). The descriptions of the Spirit of God in many passages of the Bible sustain this great thought.

- The Spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters in the work of creation (Genesis 1:2).
- God sends forth His Spirit, and life is created. When He takes away their breath, they die (Psalm 104:29-30).

By this emanating power, God knows all things and accomplishes everything according to His will. His Word is His source of expression. It is cause to wonder and marvel, that God made His Word flesh when He sent His Son to the world.

Islip Collyer

Eve—Mother of All Living

*The man called his wife's name Eve,
because she was the mother of all living
(Genesis 3:20).*

THE FIRST CHAPTERS of the Bible describe the creation of the universe, including the first man, Adam. *'The LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature' (Genesis 2:7).* God made his wife from one of Adam's ribs. *'Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man' (v. 23).*

They lived together in the idyllic garden of Eden, in joyous fellowship with God. (The word translated 'God' in our Bibles is Elohim, which is a plural Hebrew word, and no doubt refers to God's angels.) How long they lived like this we don't know, but it was presumably long enough for them to be taught God's ways.

The Serpent's Lie

Their blissful life was rudely interrupted by the intervention of the serpent.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, "You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (3:1–5).

This was a lie. Suddenly, temptation

was introduced into the godly atmosphere of the garden. Our first parents succumbed and ate the forbidden fruit, and sin followed temptation. They now had a different awareness of their surroundings. They realised they were naked, and they were ashamed. They made futile attempts to cover themselves with fig leaves and then hid amongst the foliage of the garden. But they could not hide from God.

Judgement

The reality of their new situation was explained, to the man and woman and to the serpent. They heard the curses and explicit punishments that were to be imposed on them, as well as the earth itself, because of their disobedience. But amongst all that sorrow and hurt was the promise of redemption. God showed them the way the tragedy was to be overcome. He said to the serpent, *'I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel'* (v. 15).

The serpent's offspring represents everything in the world that is against God. But there would be an offspring of the woman, who would deal the serpent's offspring a fatal blow, and undo the catastrophe which the serpent had created.

The force of the divine pronouncement that they would surely die, was reinforced when God told them, *'You are dust, and to dust you shall return'* (v. 19).



Their miserable situation was compounded by their imminent expulsion from the garden. Their enjoyment of the peaceful life in the beauty of the garden had ended abruptly, with their foolish yielding to the serpent's lie and the immediate imposition of the punishment about which they had been warned. It is at this point that Adam called his wife's name Eve. The account gives the explanation: *'because she was the mother of all living'* (v. 20).

In place of the fig leaves they had sewed together, which would fade and perish in time and need frequently renewing, God made garments of skins for their clothing (v. 21). This necessitated the death of an animal, which would have been truly shocking for Adam and Eve. Their covering and protection was only possible because another creature had suffered and made the ultimate sacrifice.

God knew that the newly acquired knowledge and experiences of Adam and Eve would have serious repercussions, both for themselves and ultimately for God's purpose. Consequently, they were driven out of the garden for the sake of their learning and instruction, as well as for the preservation of the way of the tree of life (v. 24).

If you read God's sentence on the man and woman in verses 16–19 you'll notice how the roles of husband and wife were defined. The woman was to be the child bearer and homemaker, and the husband was to work and provide for the family.

The Woman's Name

Why did Adam call Eve *'the mother of all living'*, when at that point there were no

children? Eve had rebelled against the commandment of God, been judged and found wanting, and sentenced to return to the dust. In this difficult moment she could have been better described as *'the mother of all dying'*. Their sin had involved the whole of humanity in the problem of sin and death: *'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).

So why did Adam make this remarkable statement? He was quite right. He had not made a mistake, but what did he mean? Where did this information come from? Was it an instinct because he loved Eve? Or was it a flash of inspiration? No—it was evidently because of what God had said.

Remember God's condemnation of the serpent: *'I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel'* (v. 15). (That word 'offspring' literally means "seed".)

Adam and Eve did not know when the promise of the "seed" would be accomplished. They had heard God's declaration, but the timing of its fulfilment was not mentioned or even hinted at. All they knew was that it would be some time in the future. But how far into the future? They had no children at this stage, but

there is a hint that they expected their first-born son would satisfy the promise: *'Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD"'* (4:1). Then after Cain's failure, their third son: *'And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, "God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him"'* (v. 25).

Clearly Adam and Eve were thinking that the craftiness of the serpent would be undone in the short term. This did not turn out as they hoped, as each generation produced children *'in his own likeness, after his image'* (5:3), with all the faults and foibles of their parents. There was nothing special about their children, and the enmity with the serpent's offspring continued. It became evident that the promise of Genesis 3:15 stretched out far into the future.

Revelation

Adam knew what to call his wife, because it had been revealed by God. Adam's insight into divine ways had been nurtured during his time in the garden by his contact with the angels. He now realised that the ways and thoughts of God were much higher than his own, which had been tested by the fig leaves when they first rebelled by breaking the commandment not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Their attempt at a covering had been set aside by the offering and death of an animal, which provided a blood sacrifice.

Adam's appreciation of God's promise had taught him that



whenever it was to be fulfilled it would concern a very special offspring, who would be able by his own sacrifice and death to destroy the power of the serpent. The New Testament reveals that this offspring was Jesus Christ:

God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3).

When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, (Galatians 4:4); and

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil (Hebrews 2:14).

The fulness of life, immortal life, unending life, as Adam observed in the angels in the garden, would be revealed by the woman's offspring for the benefit of all. He saw in Eve, as a representative woman, one who would produce the seed which would grapple with the issues of sin and death, and in the end be victorious over the serpent power, by bruising its head—permanently. So he named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all living. In doing so, he expressed great faith in God's first promise of salvation, and he became the first of a line of faithful believers, that climaxed in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Vic Aucott



g l ea n ing s

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TT *In Jesus' parable of the wheat and the weeds, who is the devil and who are his children?*

Ed THE PARABLE is recorded in Matthew 13:24–30. A man sowed good seed in his field, but his enemy came by night and sowed the field with weeds. (The word Jesus used probably refers to darnel, sometimes called “false wheat”, a plant that looks like wheat when it’s growing but is actually toxic.) The man told his servants to let the weeds grow so as not to disrupt the wheat, then at the harvest the wheat would be gathered into the barn and the weeds burnt. Jesus interpreted the parable in verses 36–43. The farmer is Jesus himself, the enemy is the devil, the good seed are the ‘*sons of the kingdom*’ and the weeds are the ‘*sons of the evil one*’; the harvest is the judgement at the end of the age when the angels will gather the faithful into the Kingdom but throw the weeds into a fiery furnace.

The ‘*sons of the evil one*’ can be identified from various other parts of the Bible. For example the Apostle John urges his readers to follow Christ in their lives: ‘*By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother*’ (1 John 3:10). Children of the devil are followers of Christ who fail to allow their faith to transform their lives.

The Bible contains many warnings about false believers infiltrating the

Christian community, in the way the weeds were sown in the parable. The Apostle Paul warned the elders of the Ephesian congregation, ‘*I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them*’ (Acts 20:29–30). And he warned about ‘*false brothers secretly brought in*’ (Galatians 2:4).

The fiery furnace into which the ‘*sons of the evil one*’ are thrown can also be identified. Jesus said that there will be a judgement when he returns, which will divide those who have been faithful from those who have been unfaithful: ‘*Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels’’* (Matthew 25:41). Prophecies such as Isaiah 66:24 indicate that the destruction of the wicked will involve a literal fire.

So the ‘*sons of the evil one*’ are followers of Christ who will turn out to have been unfaithful. It’s not easy to tell them apart from those who are faithful. It’s possible to change from being one to being another. That’s the sobering message of this parable: it’s not about a special class of devilish people, it’s about the need for Christ’s followers to watch ourselves—*are we wheat or are we weeds?* And the devil therefore is not a supernatural being who is waging a campaign against God—the Bible devil is nothing other than our sinful human nature, which will turn us from wheat into weeds if we let it.

God in the Psalms



IN PSALM 18:2 David praises God as his deliverer and his source of safety in times of trouble. Various translations use different words in this passage. Here is a selection of eight of them: they are all related to protection. Unscramble them and find them in the Wordsearch.

**EORTW KORC TORFRESS
OTNSGHLDR KULCERB EHLSID
UEGRFE LHTSEER**

There are other words which are used metaphorically of God in the Psalms. Two of them are also in the Wordsearch. One (eight letters) is a type of farm worker, the other (three letters) is something essential for our life. Both are also used in the Bible to describe Jesus.

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

Answers: TOWER, ROCK, FORTRESS, STRONGHOLD,
BUCKLER, SHIELD, REFUGE, SHELTER.

Other two words in: Psalm 23:1 and Psalm 84:11.

The words are: SHEPHERD, SUN.

Anna Hart

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requests@cbm.org.uk

The Americas

CBMA, 567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley,
CA 93065, USA
cbma.treasurer@gmail.com

Caribbean

CBMC, Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280,
101 Avenue, Surrey, BC, Canada V3R 0J7
philsnobelen@shaw.ca

India

T Galbraith, GPO Box 159, Hyderabad,
500001, India
tim@galbraithmail.com

South and East Asia

ACBM, PO Box 152 Cobbitty NSW,
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