

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured **Articles**

The House of God (p. 3)

The Baalbek Megaliths (p. 6)

"Did You Make Those?" (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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The House of God

WHAT DOES THE TITLE make you think of? An ornate church, or a mosque or a temple? You may be surprised at what God Himself says.

The first time the phrase is used in the Bible is by Jacob, the ancestor of the Jews whose name was later changed to Israel. He was fleeing from a domestic crisis, heading east out of Canaan (the land of Israel) where the family were living. He spent the night in the open in the Judean desert, and God gave him a dream in which he saw angels ascending and descending between heaven and earth. God promised to go with him on his journey and bring him back, and renewed to him the promise of blessings which He had made to Jacob's grandfather Abraham. *'Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven"' (Genesis 28:16–17).*

The place became known as Bethel, which means House of God. It became an important location in the later life of Jacob and his family, and a village grew there. Most scholars identify it as the modern Arab

village of Beitin in the West Bank. The physical location is less important than the spiritual significance of what happened to Jacob there—God promised that He would go with him, wherever he went.

The Temple

Jacob's descendants established the nation of Israel, and some 800 years after Jacob's momentous dream, David had established himself as king in Jerusalem. He wanted to make sure God was at the centre of the nation's life, and he determined to build a temple. God said to him, *'Would you build me a house to dwell in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling'* (2 Samuel 7:5–6). God does not need a temple, He is everywhere. As He later said through his prophet, *'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest?'* (Isaiah 66:1).

Nevertheless, He made this promise to David: *'The LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall*

The Judean wilderness

come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever' (2 Samuel 7:11–13).

There was a play on the words here. In Hebrew, as in English, 'house' can mean a building or a family. God said that He was going to build a dynasty for David. David's son was going to build a house for God.

Like many Bible prophecies, this one had two fulfilments. David's son Solomon built the temple on a hill next to the city of Jerusalem (1 Kings 6). But ultimately the promise to David was fulfilled by his greater descendant Jesus Christ. As the angel told Mary, Jesus' mother: *'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).*

The Household

Jesus never built a temple, but he built a 'house'. The community of believers is described in the Bible as God's household:

*So then you are no longer strangers
and aliens, but you are
fellow citizens with
the saints*

and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit (Ephesians 2:19–22).

When the Bible uses the word 'church', it's a translation of the Greek word 'ekklesia' which means 'gathering' or 'assembly'. It refers not to a building, but to the family of believers. (Christadelphians will often use the word 'ecclesia' rather than 'church' to avoid confusion, because the word 'church' has come to be associated with buildings.)

Buildings come and go. Solomon's temple was destroyed (2 Kings 25), and rebuilt (Ezra 3); it was enlarged and enhanced by Herod at the time of Jesus, and destroyed again by the Romans in 70 AD (Matthew 24:2). It was replaced in the 7th Century by the Dome of the Rock, which stands there today. God tells us that in His Kingdom, after Christ's return, the temple will be rebuilt on the site (Isaiah 2:2, Ezekiel 40–48).

For now, Christ's followers are all involved in a construction project. It's a great work, and it requires determination and diligence. *'As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ' (1 Peter 2:4–5).*



Things We Can't Know

"GRAN AND Grandad moved from a lovely country cottage to a poky little house downtown," Susan mused.

"Why?" her daughter asked.

"I've no idea. Something awful must have happened, but your gran would never talk about it. She took the reason to her grave."

There are some things we cannot know. With advances in science and the benefit of Artificial Intelligence we sometimes assume that we will eventually know all the answers to our questions. However, while science can show "what" it can seldom explain "why". The Bible, in contrast, gives many explanations of why life is as it is, and why certain things happen. Nonetheless there remain things that we cannot know.

The Puzzle of Job

The Bible describes a series of catastrophes that happened to a faithful man Job who, convinced that he did not deserve them, was perplexed as to "why". Three friends came to comfort him, offering long explanations about God's character and why He had allowed Job to suffer so badly. While many of their statements about God are true even today, for example that He does correct people (Job 5:17), their conclusions about Job's situation were wrong. God was angry with them as they

had not spoken well of Him (42:7)—they had presumed to attribute (incorrect) motives to Him, which they were not entitled to do. In a supremely majestic speech God says that no one has any right to request explanations from the one and only God who has created and sustains the universe (chapters 38–40).

Don't Challenge God

It is a temptation even for believers to try to "rationalise" why God allows events that seem unfair. For example, He might allow one person to die young (against the medical prognosis) while another survives a disease and lives a long life, defying medical understanding. However, the lesson of Job is that it is quite simply never our place to question why. We cannot know, and it is not our business. Apart from causing great distress to people (as Job's friends did to him), it is the height of disrespect to Almighty God.

Susan's curiosity was probably harmless and would at best waste time. Questioning God is not harmless as it can anger Him. So let us accept that we cannot always know why God does what He does, but submit to Him in humility (James 4:7–10), acknowledging His superiority (Isaiah 55:6–11). One thing we can know as it is repeated throughout the Bible: God '*does no injustice*' (Zephaniah 3:5).

Anna Hart

The Baalbek Megaliths

THE ROMANS, whose empire dominated Europe 2000 years ago, were renowned for their magnificent and ingenious feats of architecture and engineering.

The Temple of Jupiter, in the city of Baalbek in Lebanon, was the largest temple complex they built, and it's still impressive even in its ruined state.



Remains of the Roman Temple

The Temple of Jupiter is actually most famous not for its splendid architecture, but for the platform on which it's built. The platform measures some 88 metres by 48 metres, and is constructed of gigantic limestone blocks known as megaliths. Some of these blocks measure 20 metres long by 5 metres wide by 4 metres high—that is, about the size of four double-decker buses. They're elegantly shaped, perfectly aligned and so flush fitting that there's hardly room to slide a piece of paper between them; their tooled edges are straight and crisp, and despite their immense age some surfaces still have a polished appearance. It would be difficult

to achieve such precision on such a huge scale, even with today's technology.



Megaliths in the platform's west wall

Whose Work?

It's generally assumed that the megaliths were built by the Romans themselves, because no previous civilisation is known that was as technically advanced as them. But many archaeologists are dissatisfied with this assumption.

- The temple is in a relatively remote location, nearly 4000 kilometres from the centre of the empire, suggesting that it was built in this location because it was a previously sacred site.
- The megaliths are manifestly the finest stonework in the entire temple complex, and yet they're largely out of view. And the most ornate megaliths are at the rear of the temple complex, away from the main entrance, which would be odd if they were designed as part of the Roman structure.

- The quality of the megaliths' stonework is far superior to anything in evidence anywhere else among Roman ruins.
- There's no indication that the Romans could work with this size of cut stone. The biggest block in the temple building weighs around 90 tonnes. Engineers are fairly confident they know how it could have been raised into position using the technology available at the time. But some of the megaliths have been calculated to weigh over 800 tonnes, and no one has any idea how they were raised into position.

All these factors strongly indicate that the Romans built their Temple of Jupiter on a ready-made platform. So who made it?

Nobody has any idea. But there's a local legend that the megaliths were the work of people who lived before Noah's Flood. This is an intriguing thought.

The World of Noah

We know very little about the 1500-year history of the world before the Flood, only what we're told in the first six chapters of the Bible's first book, Genesis. We know that people became increasingly wicked, and also that they had immense life spans—approaching a thousand years. It's very plausible that they could have developed the highly sophisticated technology that produced the Baalbek megaliths.

It seems that the megalithic structure was intended to be much more than a platform. The quarry from which the stones were taken is still in existence—it's a huge crater, about a kilometre away. It appears that work was abruptly abandoned. The

quarry contains a number of partly finished megaliths, including one that's inclined as though it was in the process of being moved when work stopped.



Unfinished megalith in the quarry

Whoever built the megaliths, it's difficult to imagine their ancient world, or what kind of gargantuan structure they were setting out to build. But human nature doesn't change: it was no doubt some kind of expression of their pride in themselves.

Jesus Christ taught that we need to be ready for his return. There will be a judgement on our world, and he compared it to the judgement on the world of Noah. When it comes, the brilliance and might of our 21st Century civilisation will be useless to withstand it.

But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man (Matthew 24:36–39).

Doug Potts

A Great Nation?

WHEN ABRAHAM FIRST LEFT Ur of the Chaldees, God made him a promise. He said He would make Abraham's descendants into a great nation. That promise meant a lot to Abraham, because up to then he and his wife had never been able to have any children, although they had been married for many years. If he was to be the father of a great nation, then he would argue Sarah must be going to have a baby after all.

As they journeyed towards the land of Canaan, they must often have talked over this promise. They knew that when God says He will do something, He always does it. He had warned Noah about the coming of the Flood, and that had happened, in spite of the sceptics. He had said He would bring Abraham to another country, and now they were nearly there. How soon, they must have asked themselves, would the baby be born? They were quietly excited, but patient, and as the months sped by, they kept thinking the great event would be just round the corner. However, nothing happened, and Abraham would

wish he could be given a little reassurance from the Lord.

His opportunity came one evening, shortly after his great victory over the armies from the East in which he had rescued Lot. That night, God appeared to him in a vision. *'Fear not, Abram,' He said, 'I am your shield; your reward shall be very great' (Genesis 15:1).* At once Abraham seized his opportunity: *'O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless?' (v. 2).*

God's answer was unmistakable. He made Abraham stand outside his tent door and look up at the cobalt sky, blazing with myriads of stars. *'Look toward heaven,' He said, 'and number the stars, if you are able to number them... So shall your offspring be' (v. 5).*

That night the ageing couple slept peacefully. Now they knew God meant what He said.

A Broken Promise?

However, the years continued to slip by, and Abraham and Sarah regretfully realised that they were middle aged. Still no baby came along. At last Sarah passed the time of life when childbearing is normally possible. Her heart ached, and she was inconsolable. One day she persuaded Abraham to take her Egyptian servant girl as a concubine, perhaps hoping that might jolt her own womb into activity (16:1–2). But the only result was





He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised (Romans 4:19–21).

to increase her bitterness when Hagar flaunted her obvious fertility before her jealous mistress. Her baby was Ishmael, and though Abraham loved his little son, Sarah made life hard for his mother.

Eventually, Abraham was 99 years old and Sarah 89. They had heard nothing from the Lord for many years. Suddenly, one day, the heavenly voice came again to Abraham. *'I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly' (17:1–2).* Abraham could hardly believe his ears. But God was insistent. He even gave the child-to-be a name: *'Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac... I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year' (vs. 19–21).* Nothing could be more definite than that!

To have a baby at that age—it was ludicrous. It certainly took some believing. But the next part of the story is the most impressive of all. Abraham and his wife did believe, in spite of the difficulties. They believed, because God had said it would happen. This is what the Apostle Paul says about Abraham's side of the triangle:

Sarah, too, decided that if God said it was possible, it must be so. *'By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised' (Hebrews 11:11).* A wonderful thing now happened to them both. They were rejuvenated, so that their physical powers returned. In fact, Sarah became so attractive that the king of the region where they were staying took her into his harem, causing Abraham great distress until she was released, and this at the age of 90 (Genesis 20). Abraham himself also continued to father children for many years after the birth of Isaac—a man whose body had been as good as dead! It was a miracle, and faith in God's promise made it possible.

At last, on time, to the joy of Abraham and Sarah, a perfect baby was born—a boy, just as God had said. The happiness that filled the camp on that wonderful day was commemorated in the name God had chosen, for Isaac means "laughter". Many a smile he brought to his adoring mother; her longing fulfilled in that tiny bundle of joy.

A Lesson in Faith

There is a great lesson to be brought out from this episode in the chronicle of

Abraham. It teaches us a lot more about the great Bible quality of faith, without which, the writer of the Hebrews insists, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6).

We noticed in an earlier article a practical faith at work when Noah constructed the ark. Believing the Flood would come, he took steps to be ready. He spent all he had, and laboured with his own hands on the project, in order to save his family. We also saw Abraham leave Ur without a backward glance at the command of God, travelling a huge distance to the land God had promised him. It took great courage, in both cases, to run the risk of failure. If God proved wrong, there could be no putting the clock back and starting over again.

But in some ways this kind of faith, the sort that demands we get up and go, is easier than the kind we have just been considering in the life of Abraham and Sarah. Just to go on waiting, passively, for God to do what He said, when the evidence suggested He had forgotten all about His promise, was a great test of the human spirit. In such circumstances, confidence crumbles, and black doubt gnaws at the heart. It is to Abraham's eternal credit that he never lost his trust in God. This passive, waiting-for-God faith is often picked out in the Bible as a quality to be commended.

The Wilderness Journey

Take the people of Israel, for example. Two months into the journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, they came to a dry barren wilderness. The supplies of food they had brought with them were exhausted, and they could find nothing to eat. They began to curse Moses for having brought them out of Egypt to starve in the desert. But God was cross because they grumbled (Exodus 16:8).

Was not that a bit unreasonable, you might ask, in view of the circumstances? Well, look at the full story. God had promised that He would bring them to Canaan, upon His honour (Exodus 3:17). He had already worked great miracles in delivering them from the Egyptians. He therefore considered they should have had enough faith in Him to believe He would see them over this temporary difficulty, even though humanly speaking there was no obvious solution. He gave them food from heaven. *'He humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know,'* Moses wrote, *'that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD'* (Deuteronomy 8:3). As in the case of Abraham, to believe in those

Sinai desert

circumstances meant to wait, and trust in God.

The Storm on the Lake

Take another example from the ministry of Jesus—twelve disciples, out in a fishing boat in the middle of the night. A great storm blew up. Tough and experienced sailors, they soon realised the peril they were in. The Lake of Galilee is subject to violent storms that lash the surface into deep, choppy waves that sink good ships in broad daylight, and this was inky night. The foaming water surged over the bulwarks. They baled faster and faster. Still the water gained on them. The motion was sickening. Exhausted, they began to panic.



They grabbed Jesus, asleep in the stern, and shook him awake. *'Master, Master, we are perishing!'* they shrieked into his ear (Luke 8:24). Unperturbed, Jesus stood up and spoke to the raging waves. Within minutes the wind fell, the waves died down, and there was a great calm. Then Jesus rebuked the disciples. *'Where is your faith?'* he said (v. 25).

Again, you might query whether this was not a bit hard on them, faced with such danger. But the fact is, they had heard

the testimony that Jesus was the Messiah (Luke 4:41). They knew, from his life of love, his words of compelling, refreshing truth, and his power to heal, that he was none other than the Son of God. Therefore, they could have reasoned, Jesus was not going to be allowed to drown in a little storm on a lake, with his work still undone. In his company, they were really quite safe.

Faith is demanding. It insists on believing all will be well, in spite of appearances, when God's word is at stake. This is the faith that lifts disciples out of the ordinary run of humankind, and enables them to face suffering, persecution, or disaster with courage and hope. It is just such a faith which keeps us believing that Jesus will come again to reign on the earth as a king, because God said he will (Luke 1:32).

Like Abraham's baby, the Kingdom has been a long time coming, and we cannot make it happen ourselves. But one day, the waiting will be over. The prophet Jeremiah sums it up: *'The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD'* (Lamentations 3:25–26).

David Pearce
(to be continued)

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

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or write to the Editor—address inside front cover

"Did You Make Those?"



I WAS SITTING at my stall at the makers' market, small smocked dresses laid out in front of me. Time and again I was asked, "Did you make those?"

Imagine the response if I'd said, "No, they developed gradually over billions of years—small random changes ended up with these finely crafted clothes." Would anyone believe me? So why is there instant recognition that someone must have sewn an embroidered dress, but no recognition that so many, many other, far more complex things must have been made by some being?

In Psalm 19:1–4 the Bible says:

*'The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his
handiwork.*

*Day to day pours out speech,
and night to night reveals knowledge.*

*There is no speech, nor are there words,
whose voice is not heard.*

*Their voice goes out through all the earth,
And their words to the end of the world.'*

On a starlit night, look up! What a glorious sight. The Psalmist says that the heavens do not speak, yet their voice goes out into all the world. The stars don't call out, "Look at us, we were made by God!", but it is as obvious as such a voice that they didn't just happen by chance.

The apostle Paul writes:

'For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made' (Romans 1:20). God's creative power should be obvious. One look around should be enough to tell us that someone great made all we see. Even the "simple" things like single-celled amoebas have been found to be much more complex than scientists ever thought. In contrast, my stitchery is really very, very simple. It takes me a long time and requires care and skill—but it is nothing compared to what we see around us. Have you ever marvelled at a peacock's train of feathers, its iridescent blues and greens shining in the sunshine? The change of caterpillar into butterfly? The leaping of dolphins out of water? A cup of water? The list could go on and on.

Of course, you still need faith to believe that it was God Who created the world. The Bible acknowledges this: *'By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible' (Hebrews 11:3).* What many people seem to overlook is that it also takes faith to believe that the amazing array of plants and animals, sea and land, sun, moon and stars all happened by chance!

Job was a godly man who suffered greatly. He struggled to understand why all these things were happening to him. Finally, God spoke to him and showed him how little he understood (Job chapters 38–41). God spoke of his own creative acts and asked Job if he knew how these things worked—the formation of rain, the patterns of the stars, the life of mountain goats and wild asses, of ostriches and horses. How does an eagle soar? God knows, because He made them all:

*It is he who made the earth by his power,
who established the world by his
wisdom,
and by his understanding stretched out
the heavens (Jeremiah 10:12).*

Who made the dresses? I did. Who made the world and all that fills it? God did.

The Bible is full of verses about creation—starting from the very beginning. Genesis 1 is the account of the creation of the universe and all that fills it. The chapter concludes with: *'And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good'* (v. 31). It is very good. Much better than a little smocked dress, but equally showing that it had a maker, a Creator.

A few other verses (there are many to choose from!) include:

*By the word of the LORD the heavens
were made,
and by the breath of his mouth all their
host (Psalm 33:6).*

*Have you not known? Have you not
heard?*

*The LORD is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary;*

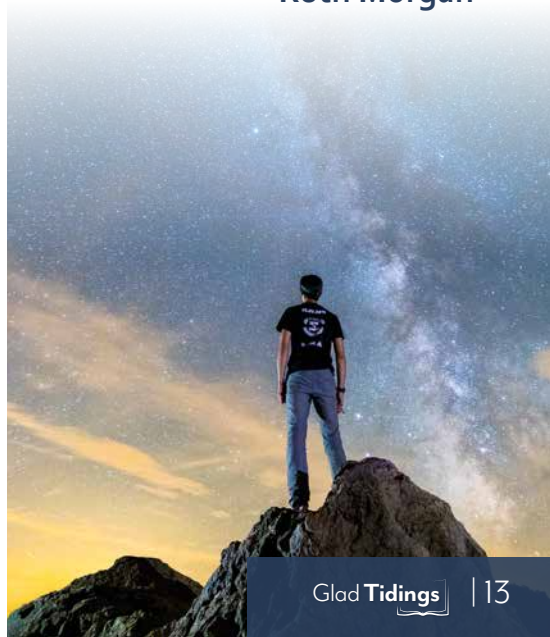
*his understanding is unsearchable
(Isaiah 40:28).*

*You are the LORD, you alone. You have
made heaven, the heaven of heavens,
with all their host, the earth and all
that is on it, the seas and all that is in
them; and you preserve all of them;
and the host of heaven worships you
(Nehemiah 9:6).*

*For thus says the LORD,
who created the heavens
(he is God!),
who formed the earth and made it
(he established it;
he did not create it empty,
he formed it to be inhabited!):
"I am the LORD, and there is no other"
(Isaiah 45:18).*

*Worthy are you, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were
created (Revelation 4:11).*

Ruth Morgan



Decisions

OUR LIVES are from an early age a never-ending process of decision making. Changing circumstances often mean that decisions may have to be changed. The reality is that there are always decisions, and not always easy ones, for us to make in life. What I have to say about making decisions falls into three parts:

- the first concerns one man
- the second concerns a nation
- and the third concerns you and me.

The Big Decision

Although we might not realise it there is a fundamental decision that affects our whole attitude to decision making. We can put it like this: the big decision we all have to make is what direction is our life going to take? In turn, the answer to that depends on how we see the beginning of things. If we decide, as many people do, that we are all here as a result of blind chance, then there is no God. But I suggest that if we look objectively at the complexity and interdependence of the natural world we can only conclude, "This could not have happened by chance, there must be an intelligence behind it."

We are now immediately faced with another question. Science might be able to furnish us with some knowledge of "How?" But if there is a Creator behind

this wonderful world then we must ask ourselves, "Why?" That is a question that science cannot answer. If the universe was created by a God then surely He must have an interest in what He created. Many people, looking at the problems that confront us today, might well think that there is not much evidence for that. That, I suggest, is because they have not properly understood what God has revealed to us of His plan and purpose.



1. Abraham

What God has revealed of His purpose is revealed in His book, our Bible. We could pick up the story from many points, but we will begin with Abram (who later became Abraham). Here was a man in whom God

saw a lot of potential. In the article on page 8 we considered his wonderful faith in God's promise to give him descendants. Now, we'll see what that means to you and me.

Abram was asked to do something that sounds incredible to us: *'Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed' (Genesis 12:1–3).*

Well, aren't you and I part of *'all families'*? So how are we going to be blessed? We'll come to that later. Imagine how you would feel if you were suddenly asked to leave your home with all its comforts—your neighbourhood and surroundings with all its facilities—and wander around living the life of a traveller until you were told when and where to stop! Would you be able to do that? It needed a great deal of faith to take such a step. But Abram did it.

Later, he had a vision from God concerning his future. He had been given the promise of becoming a great nation, but he had no children. God assured him that he would have an heir, and many more (15:1–6). The essential thing I want us to note is that here was a man who was faced with having to make immense decisions: should he believe God, or not? *'And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness' (v. 6).*

We shall see later how vital this was. Belief and righteousness are two intertwining

themes that run through the Bible from cover to cover. You see, Abram wasn't naturally righteous in himself. You have only to read his life story to see that. But his faith in God made a crucial difference.



2. Israel

We will return to Abram later, but let's turn now to the second part of our consideration, to the time when his family had grown. From a community of some 70 people making a living as herdsmen and then, because of famine, migrating to Egypt, they grew into a multitude whose very size was seen by Egypt's rulers as a potential threat.

The book of Exodus begins at a time when life had become well-nigh intolerable for them, for they had been forced into slavery. Abraham's family were worshippers of God like him, and it was to God that their descendants now turned in their misery. God heard them and gave them a leader, one Moses. His story is an interesting one on its own, but we must ignore most of it for now. What I will say is that Moses had an exceptional upbringing, but when he became of age he made a decision—to work for the freeing of the Israelites (Hebrews 11:24–25).

He and his brother Aaron, acting on God's instructions, went to confront Pharaoh:

'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, "Let my people go"' (Exodus 5:1).

Notice that phrase. God was claiming the descendants of Abraham as His particular people.

Moses' repeated requests were met by Pharaoh's repeated refusals. Each one of these refusals was followed by a plague. Now, the Egyptians were worshippers of many gods and each plague was directed at one or more of these idols. You can follow the sequence at your leisure in Exodus chapters 7 to 12, but you only have to look down the list to see that cumulatively they amounted to a systematic spoiling of the entire Egyptian economy.

It is not then surprising to find that when eventually the Israelites left, some of the more perceptive Egyptians saw there was no future in staying behind and left with them. *'And the people of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. A mixed multitude also went up with them, and very much livestock, both flocks and herds' (Exodus 12:37–38).*

We are not told specifically who this *'mixed multitude'* were. It seems likely that they were Egyptians. Remember that these people had seen the havoc that had been made of Egypt. They had realised that their gods were as nothing compared with the God of the Israelites, and they wanted to be part of that deliverance.

Later on we read more about this, in Deuteronomy 4:34–39. The people made a decision based on their experience of what they had seen in Egypt.



3. You and Me

The third part of our consideration concerns each of us individually. It is another and very important decision that we all have to make. This concerns our attitude to the Lord Jesus Christ. Before his birth, the angel of God appeared to his step-father Joseph and said, *'Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins' (Matthew 1:20–21).* That raises three questions:

1. *What is a sinner?*
2. *How will his people be saved from their sins?*
3. *Who are his people?*

What is a sinner? We could say, anyone who thinks that rules are made for other people. I had an uncle who never broke the legal speed limit on the road. If you drive a car, do you do the same? Do you ever lose your temper? You and I may not commit big sins (as far as we're concerned)—but we cannot pretend to be perfect. Only one person in the whole of the world's history can claim that distinction: the Lord Jesus Christ!

Throughout his ministry, Jesus went about healing the sick, teaching about forgiveness of sins, and preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God. What happened to him? The rulers of the day didn't want their position and authority threatened. They wanted this troublesome teacher out of the way, so they crucified him. But this was not the end.



So we come to our second question, ***how will his people be saved from their sins?***

We have good evidence in the Bible that Jesus was raised from the dead. There is the fact that after his resurrection a group of frightened, bitterly disappointed followers who thought of going back to their old occupations became enthusiastic preachers of his teaching; they travelled the then known world, making his teaching known to everyone who would listen.

One of them was Peter who, talking to the crowds after Jesus had been raised to life and then ascended to heaven, said, *'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'* (Acts 2:38). Then to another

crowd, *'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. Moses said, "The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you"'* (Acts 3:19–22).

I mentioned Moses earlier. Peter was showing that his preaching was a continuation of something that had been going on for centuries. In fact it is still going on now, and it reaches far into the future. The greatest thing of all is that we are able to take advantage of that offer of forgiveness if we want to. The writer to the Hebrews puts it very attractively when, after listing many of the great faithful and admirable characters who have gone before, he wrote, *'All these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect'* (Hebrews 11:39–40).

What a prospect that is. Imagine being made perfect. No longer making mistakes; no longer doing things we regret and having to say sorry. Imagine too, quoting Peter's words, living in *'the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets'* (Acts 3:21): living in the company of all the great characters about whom we read in the Bible. Compared to anything this world can offer, how wonderful is that?

Finally, our third question: *who are his people?* I said we would return to Abraham. The Apostle Paul explains this very simply and clearly:

In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise (Galatians 3:26–29).



When you believe and are baptised, you enter God's family. Christ died for your sins. The way of salvation is open before you.

Making the Right Decision

We have been reading about people who have made decisions. Now the default position is that naturally we are unrelated to these promises. We have a lot of thinking to do. We have seen that there is a great future for this world. We have seen how we can become one of God's people and have a part in His plan for this earth. We all

have a decision to make. With that decision comes a wonderful privilege but equally a big responsibility and commitment. It is not something to be entered into lightly.

When we leave home and start to make our own way, our own decisions, we must be careful who we choose for our friends. We must make every effort never to do anything that would be displeasing to our Lord Jesus or his Father. Our hope and prayer is that all who read these words will consider the greatness of this offer, and join the thousands through the ages who have accepted it, waiting for the great day of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Michael Buckler

“As for me and
my house,
we will serve
the LORD.”

Joshua 24:15

Visit us online for:

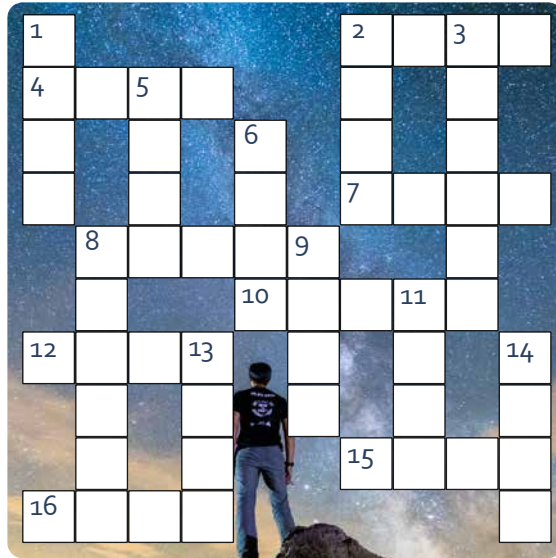
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Across

- 2 God was told that Job would curse him to this (Job 1:11)
- 4 Job shaved this (Job 1:20)
- 7 Job was the greatest of all the people here (Job 1:3)
- 8 Job was struck with these from head to foot (Job 2:7)
- 10 A description of God's wisdom (Job 12:16)
- 12 To be aware of (Job 8:9)
- 15 When Job's three friends saw him, they did this (Job 2:12)
- 16 Job's servants were slain with the ____ of the sword (Job 1:15)

Down

- 1 To demonstrate (Job 2:11)
- 2 That of God burned up the sheep and consumed them (Job 1:16)
- 3 Job wondered whether his children had ____ God (Job 1:5)
- 5 In addition (Job 5:25)
- 6 God asked Job whether he observed the calving of these (Job 39:1)
- 8 Job wondered whether his children had done this (Job 1:5)
- 9 Job had seven of these (Job 1:2)
- 11 Job blessed that of God (Job 1:21)
- 13 Job's sons and daughters drank this in their oldest brother's house (Job 1:13)
- 14 The entrance to a city (Job 29:7)

(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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