

# Glad Tidings

*Of The Kingdom Of God*



## Featured Articles

God's Treasured Possession (p. 3)

That's What it Means to Me (p. 11)

Eternal Truth Over Temporary Noise (p. 16)

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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# God's Treasured Possession

## WHAT IS YOUR VALUE?

What are you worth?

Some will approach that question in terms of how much money they have and the financial value of their assets. Others might think in terms of their value to their family and friends, or the contribution they make to society. And different people will have different opinions on their value—some will rate themselves highly, others will not.

As you'd expect in this magazine, we're not thinking of financial value, or any other value as far as this world is concerned. We're thinking of the measure of our worth that really matters—God's valuation of us.

What is our value to God? There may be different answers to this question. On the one hand, it could be argued that we are inconsequential to the Creator of the universe: *'All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness'* (Isaiah 40:17). Worse than that, we're sinners: *'For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh'* (Romans 7:18).

On the other hand, God loves us—this is a fundamental fact of the Gospel. *'God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us'* (Romans 5:8). This is a fact that might be



so familiar that it almost loses its wonder. But think about it. You are so important, that God gave His Son to die for you. If you respond to what God has done, then you are of immense value to Him.

## God's People

God made a covenant with the nation of Israel, when He brought them out of their slavery in Egypt and led them towards the Promised Land.

*You have declared today that the LORD is your God, and that you will walk in his ways, and keep his statutes and his commandments and his rules, and will obey his voice. And the LORD has declared today that you are a people for his treasured possession, as he has promised you, and that you are to keep all his commandments (Deuteronomy 26:17–18).*

Israel was to be an example of godliness to all other nations, who would see their wise laws and their good way of life, and the blessings they enjoyed, and would glorify God because of it. Israel would be God's 'treasured possession'. That English phrase is a translation of a single Hebrew word which means something like "shut up wealth"—that is, treasure that is highly prized and kept safe. It's also translated 'treasure of kings' (Ecclesiastes 2:8).



Sadly, for the most part Israel did not keep their side of the covenant. They wandered away from God and flouted His laws. Instead of a positive example to other nations, they brought God into disrepute. As one prophet lamented, *‘Continually all the day my name is despised’* (Isaiah 52:5).

Throughout what was for the most part a sad and ignominious history, God did not give up on Israel. In the Old Testament’s last book, Malachi, He is still pleading with them to mend their ways. There was only a small remnant of the nation who were faithful to Him.

*Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name. “They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him”* (Malachi 3:16–17).

Did you notice the phrase? That’s the same Hebrew word. God is gathering His treasure together. The nation for the most part failed to be God’s treasured possession, but He was picking out from them the odd jewel, here and there, who “feared Him and esteemed His name”.

## God’s Temple

King David devoted a large part of his later life to preparing for the Temple of God,

which his son Solomon was to build. He allotted funds from the national exchequer, and such was his enthusiasm for the project that he donated his own personal wealth as well: *‘Moreover, in addition to all that I have provided for the holy house, I have a treasure of my own of gold and silver, and because of my devotion to the house of my God I give it to the house of my God’* (1 Chronicles 29:3). That phrase *‘treasure of my own’* is the same Hebrew word, *‘treasured possession’*.

David probably had no idea that he was illustrating, in a very small way, what God Himself is doing. He is picking out, from Israel and the rest of the world, individuals here and there, and He is using them for a building project. Not an actual building, but a worldwide household:

*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).

In this world, you may be somebody or you may be nobody. It doesn’t matter what you are. But if you are someone who “fears the LORD and esteems His name”, He will pick you out for His great purpose, and count you among His treasures.



# My Home City—Worcester

WORCESTERSHIRE SAUCE; the dark brown savoury condiment that was invented by Lea & Perrin in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and is now exported and loved throughout the world. That's the first thing that comes into my head when I think about this city.

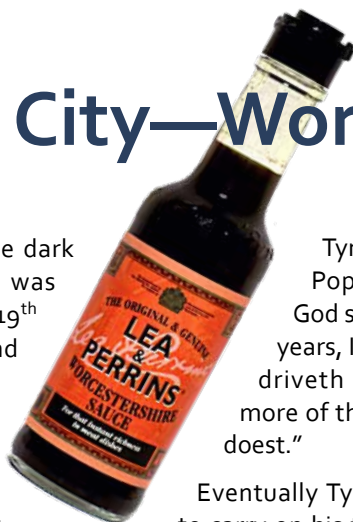
It is also known as the 'faithful city', because twice during the English Civil War (in 1642) it found itself trying to support King Charles I's Royalist army against Oliver Cromwell's Parliamentary Roundheads.

But over a century before that, two seemingly minor events occurred which changed the course not only of English history, but that of Europe and possibly the rest of the world.

## William Tyndale

In 1521 the Chancellor of Worcester Cathedral, John Bell, was reprimanding another man for his behaviour. The clergy of Gloucestershire had complained that this man, William Tyndale, had been teaching the Bible in English, which was against the Pope's law. Tyndale was the brilliant linguist and ardent Bible scholar, who was working on his seminal translation of the Bible into English.

John Bell said, "We had better be without God's Law than the Pope's."



Tyndale replied, "I defy the Pope and all his laws—if God spares my life, ere many years, I will cause the boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scriptures than thou doest."

Eventually Tyndale went to Europe to carry on his translation, and taking advantage of the newly invented printing press he started to distribute the parts of the Bible he had translated. These versions were smuggled into England, and although many were intercepted and burned, many more found their way to the general population. There was a thirst to know what the Bible actually said, as opposed to what the Church said it said.

Before he could finish his work Tyndale was captured and burnt at the stake in 1536, with these words on his lips: "Lord, open thou the King of England's eyes!"

## King Henry VIII

In 1502 Prince Arthur Tudor, heir to the English throne, died suddenly from disease at the age of 16, and was buried in Worcester Cathedral. He had married the Spanish princess Catherine of Aragon a few months earlier, in order to form an alliance between the English and Spanish crowns. Arthur's younger brother Henry became heir to the throne, and in order to preserve the alliance he married Catherine.

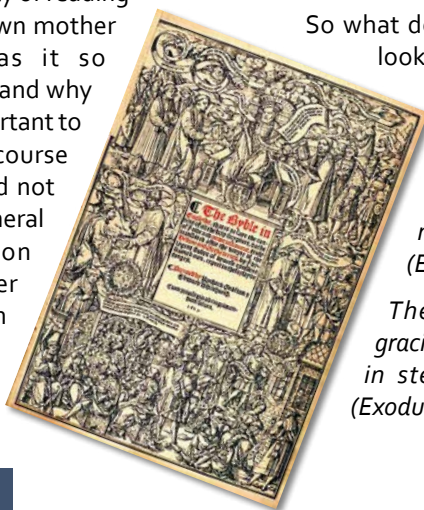
What followed was the “king’s matter”: Henry VIII just did not seem able to have a son and heir. He divorced Catherine, and she was followed by five other wives. During the process he broke away from the Roman Catholic Church. Establishing the Church of England was a political move, made in order to enable Henry’s divorce. But out of this travesty of religion came one positive: in 1543 King Henry ordered that a complete Bible, the Great Bible in English, be placed in every church. Tyndale’s prayer had been answered!

The last Tudor monarch was Elizabeth I. She was succeeded by James Stuart, who became King of England, Scotland and Wales, and in 1611 he commissioned a new translation of the Bible into English. This is known as the King James Version, or Authorized Version, and was largely based on the New Testament translation of William Tyndale. It has been called the foundation book of all printed books in English literature.

## The Bible in English

Tyndale believed that everybody should have the opportunity of reading the Bible in their own mother tongue. Why was it so important to him—and why should it be so important to us? We should of course read it. That should not be difficult—the general levels of education today are far greater than they were in

Title page of Henry VIII’s Great Bible



Tyndale’s day. What he himself realized, however, is that Bible reading is best done as a social exercise—so it is best read aloud with a listening audience and a group in which to properly think and discuss what is intended, without pressure. Why is it though that it is so important?

This is the Bible’s own testimony to itself:

*Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food (Isaiah 55:1–2).*

These are actual Bible words: God is speaking directly to His people. He is telling them—and us, even today—that there is far more to life than food, pleasure and possessions. It expresses a great truth—we spend most of our time providing ourselves and our families with the material basics, and we often chase greater comforts and personal fulfilment in things that have no lasting value.

So what does God represent to us? Let’s look at two other passages and see how He is represented in the Bible.

*I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy (Exodus 33:19).*

*The LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness (Exodus 34:6).*

There is of course more to this and you will find it by reading the whole context. But it is enough for the moment. This describes the great Creator of heaven and earth. What a world it would be if it were full of love, faithfulness and mercy—if these were the number one priorities in the world, rather than scrabbling all the time after material things.

Back in Isaiah 55, we read, *'Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live... Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near'* (vs. 3, 6).

Turn to God! Pray to Him! There is now a clear process for establishing a relationship with Him. Read His word, the Bible; be willing to turn your life toward Him, placing a high value on those qualities that are facets of His character; and pray to Him about those things that are a matter of daily concern.

And we continue: *'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD'* (vs. 7–8),

There is now an assurance: *'As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my*

*word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose'* (vs. 10–11).

Just as God spoke His word and the heaven and the earth were created in the beginning, just as God spoke and raised His Son from the dead to live for ever, so all that God has promised will be fulfilled. God's word will be proved true. It will accomplish all that He has spoken—there is real hope for the present and the future. It enables us to speak with Him, and by faith to live with Him day by day.

It assures us that there is justice in this world: all that is wicked will one day be judged and perish, so that those wonderful qualities of God's character will ultimately fill all things (Numbers 14:21). What is really amazing is that you can be part of His great plan. You can be forgiven for all your sins, and at last your nature will be changed, so that you will be like Jesus Christ himself when he comes again (1 Corinthians 15:51–53).

There is no wonder that Tyndale thought that it was important for all to read and to know the Bible!

The seed has been sown. You have access to the most precious thing this world affords. Because of Tyndale and those like him, bringing the Bible into the "light" all those years ago, you have ready access to it today.

David Nightingale

The city of Worcester



# When Power Meets the Truth

JESUS STOOD BEFORE kings, rulers, synagogue leaders and scholars and never wavered. His truth cut through pretence. His compassion drew the humble. Some hearts softened. Others hardened.

In this article, we look at those with influence—religious, political, and social—who met Jesus. Some quietly recognised who he was; others couldn't let go of position or pride. The choice remains with each of us—to respond to Jesus with open hearts, or to resist his call for fear of what we might have to give up.

## Searching Hearts in High Places

Not every person of standing rejected Jesus. In fact, a few responded with cautious, sincere interest.

- Nicodemus, a Pharisee and teacher of Israel, sought Jesus by night (John 3:1–21). His questions were searching, his curiosity real. Eventually,

he emerged from the shadows, bearing spices fit for royalty to honour Jesus' body in death (John 19:39). That quiet disciple had become bold.

- Joseph of Arimathea, another member of the Jewish council, was a man of wealth and integrity. Though he had kept his faith private, when the moment came, he went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body (v. 38). His allegiance became visible in his act of courage.
- Jairus, a synagogue leader, humbled himself when his daughter was gravely ill (Mark 5:22). Though the religious leaders often opposed Jesus, Jairus came, fell at his feet, and believed. He discovered that power does not grant control over death, but Jesus does.
- A Roman centurion, hardened by duty and stationed in foreign soil, surprised even Jesus. *'Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof,'* he said



Christ and Nicodemus



(Matthew 8:8), yet he trusted Jesus' authority absolutely.

- And at the cross, another centurion declared, *'Truly this was the Son of God'* (Matthew 27:54).

These men had status, but more importantly, they had ears to hear and eyes to see. Their hearts weren't closed by pride or self preservation.

Others weren't so open.

- The Pharisees, scribes, and synagogue rulers had so much to lose: social standing, theological control, the admiration of the people. Jesus challenged their traditions, not with malice but with clarity. He healed on the Sabbath, uplifted the lowly, and exposed hypocrisy. That was too much for them.
- Simon the Pharisee invited Jesus to a meal but withheld even basic hospitality. He judged the sinful woman who wept at Jesus' feet. He couldn't imagine a prophet accepting such devotion from someone so undeserving. Jesus saw it differently and told a parable that revealed

Simon's lack of love (Luke 7:36–50).

- A rich ruler possessed numerous admirable qualities: adherence to commandments, enthusiasm, and a keen spiritual interest. But when Jesus challenged him to sell all and follow him, he walked away sorrowful (Luke 18:18-30). The cost at that moment was too high for him.
- Herod, intrigued by Jesus, hoped for miracles, but never considered repentance. His need to maintain status and face led to Jesus being mocked and dismissed (Luke 23:6–12).
- And then there was the Roman governor Pilate. He saw the innocence of Jesus. He knew it was envy that drove the Jewish leaders. He declared Jesus guiltless four times. But in the end, Pilate handed him over, not because he believed in justice, but because he feared losing his place. *'What is truth?'* he asked (John 18:38), but he didn't want to act on the answer.

## What Jesus Offers

Jesus didn't seek a throne in Jerusalem at that time. He didn't challenge Rome by



Christ before Pilate

force. He offered something more radical: a Kingdom not of this world yet destined to fill the earth. A Kingdom of justice, righteousness, and peace. A Kingdom where status doesn't count, only sincerity.

That Kingdom is coming. Jesus will return to establish it on earth as promised throughout the Bible. Until that day, he calls us to live as its citizens now: humble, just, merciful (Matthew 6:33). To receive him not with lip service but with changed lives.

## Someone Like Me

The people in this article are familiar, because we see them all around us.

Perhaps we even see ourselves in them. We might ask ourselves:

Do I hide my faith like Nicodemus once did, for fear of what others might think? Even a hidden flame can become bold when love outweighs fear.

Have I been like Simon the Pharisee, judging others while blind to my own need for grace? Jesus doesn't look to shame us into change, but invites us with love and truth.

Have I, like Pilate, recognised what is right but lacked the courage to act? Jesus calls not only for belief but for conviction, even when it costs us.

The message of the Gospel is for everyone, regardless of their circumstances. It's for scholars and statesmen, for seekers and sceptics, for powerful and powerless alike.

The challenge Jesus posed still echoes: will you follow me, or walk away?

**Richard Webb**

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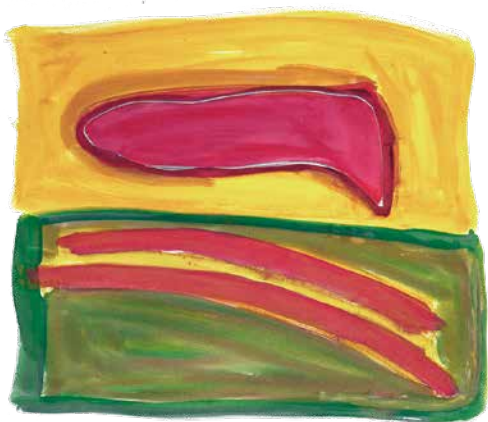
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'Glad Tidings Magazine'



# That's What it Means to Me



MY FRIEND has a large abstract picture, painted by a mutual friend. It is not a style of art that I like. In fact, I can make no sense of it at all. I asked her what it depicted, and she described all sorts of things that I just could not perceive. "Is that what the artist said he had painted?" I asked. "Oh no!" she replied.

The value and meaning of much art and descriptive literature is often a matter of personal opinion. The same is not true of written instructions. The leaflet which accompanies medicine, and which tells us how and when to take it, is not a work of art. Its writers have a specific, important message, and they try to communicate it in an unambiguous manner so that users can understand and follow the instructions.

When it comes to the Bible, I often hear people say, "That's what it means to me." I concede that it is not entirely clear what

they actually mean, but this approach could at best be foolish, and at worst fatal.

The Bible claims to be the inspired message from God to us. It contains instructions on how to please Him. It is therefore supremely important, and not open to "personal interpretation".

*No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20–21).*

Even the prophets themselves, who penned the words of God, often did not fully understand them. But they tried to understand what they actually meant (1 Peter 1:10–11). They '*searched and inquired carefully*', rather than relying on their personal feelings, impressions and preferences. The words were too precious and too important to be wrongly understood.

## Words for All Seasons

Admittedly, Bible words of encouragement and comfort may help people in differing circumstances. One believer may be enduring bereavement, and another facing adversity. Then Bible messages will mean slightly different things to them. This is right as long as the original words are being correctly applied. For we can only have faith in what has been promised. Believing

something does not, in itself, make it true. There is no point in trusting that God will do something He has not promised. For example, believing that we all go to heaven after death is a great comfort to many people. That does not mean that God has made such a promise. In fact, He has said nothing of the sort.

There are examples in the Bible of people failing to follow God's instructions. Some of these had dire consequences. The Jewish nation is a classic example. God made very special promises to the father of the Jews, Abraham. The Jewish nation was chosen by God to be special and to serve Him. He promised great blessings if they believed and obeyed Him. Tragically, they failed to grasp or fully accept the conditional nature of these blessings and divine protection. They were clearly spelt out in the Law of Moses, especially Deuteronomy 28, and reiterated to kings including Solomon (1 Kings 6:12–13, 9:6–7), and by a host of prophets.

But the Jews chose to read the words to mean that they had the unconditional protection of God. They thought that they were special simply because they were the physical descendants of Abraham. John the Baptist and Jesus himself tried (with little success) to disabuse the religious leaders of this idea (Matthew 3:7–11; John 8:31–40). The Jews doubtless took great comfort in what they believed, leading to confidence and contentment. That is what the promises to Abraham "meant to them". But their meaning was not God's intended meaning, and they were judged

accordingly. Jerusalem was ransacked and the nation was removed from the land they believed to be theirs by right. This happened in Old Testament times (2 Kings 25: 1–12) and then again in 70 AD as prophesied by Jesus (Luke 21:20–24).

## What God Really Means

We need to read carefully in order to determine what God actually said and actually meant by His words. So, if people are saying "This is what I think God is saying", then that can be a sound basis for fruitful discussion and Bible study. But if they really mean "That is what it means to me, and it's just fine if it means something completely different to you; my view is what is important to me," then that is very dangerous. It robs the Bible of its ultimate authority and influence, and is disrespectful to God Himself. God's words are not "all things to all men", and we must not put "our spin" on them.

I can choose which types of art I like, and how I interpret them is not important. While many parts of the Bible are sublime, the Bible is not just a "work of art". True, sections of it are difficult to understand, especially prophecy. But the overall message is quite clear. It is the message of life from God, and I cannot afford to pick and choose either the parts I like, or interpretations that appeal to my personal feelings. We need to determine what God meant by it, not what we think He ought to have meant, or what we would like Him to have meant.

**Anna Hart**



# A Bride for Isaac



ABRAHAM WAS GROWING OLD. His beloved Sarah had died three years ago, and Isaac, their long-awaited son, was now in his late thirties. One of the most treasured promises God had made to Abraham was that through Isaac he would become a mighty nation. The patriarch now became increasingly occupied with a great obstacle to that blessing. In order to have many descendants, Isaac urgently needed to find a wife.

It was Abraham's duty, by the custom of the time, to obtain a suitable bride for his son; and yet, because Isaac was born so late in life, Abraham was now too old to take an active part in the necessary preliminaries. It is quite likely he could have solved the problem by negotiating with one of his wealthy Canaanite neighbours to pay the dowry for a well-bred daughter.

However, this did not appeal to Abraham. He wanted Isaac to marry into his own God-fearing stock. The problem was, his nearest relatives were over 400 miles away in Mesopotamia, and he could not face the journey.

After much deliberation, the old man decided to send the steward of his household on a wife-finding mission in his place:

*Swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell, but will go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac (Genesis 24:3–4).*

The steward is not named, but he was probably Abraham's chief servant Eliezer (Genesis 15:2).

After suitable preparation he set off with provisions for the double journey and rich gifts for the father of the bride-to-be, while an anxious Abraham and his son settled down to await the expedition's outcome.

## Eliezer Seeks a Sign

The tale of Eliezer's arrival at the city of Haran, and the remarkable way he was guided to the household of Abraham's nephew Bethuel, is deeply moving. After a weary journey, he arrived at the gates of Haran, where he knew his master had relatives. But how would he find the right

girl in this foreign city he had never visited before? His master had taught him what to do in a situation like this. He said a prayer. He asked God for guidance.

*Behold, I am standing by the spring of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. Let the young woman to whom I shall say, 'Please let down your jar that I may drink,' and who shall say, 'Drink, and I will water your camels'—let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac (Genesis 24:13–14).*



To his amazement, while he was still speaking silently to God, a beautiful woman came to the well to draw water. He asked her for a drink, and she not only gave him, a complete stranger, all he needed but offered to water his camels as well. She was generous, because a thirsty camel can easily drink 40 gallons (200 litres) of water in five minutes. With beating heart, he asked her what family she came from. When she told him she was the daughter of Bethuel, Abraham's nephew, he knew his prayer had been answered. She was not only a kind woman, but related to his master, and so from a God-fearing family. Next morning she said farewell to her family and set off for the south. Rebekah

was to become one of the ancestors of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## Finding a Marriage Partner

In many parts of the world, marriage is regarded with very much less respect nowadays than previously. Yet marriage is regarded in the Bible as a serious undertaking. It is considered a contract lasting for life, and a marriage between disciples of Christ is one which will only be entered after much prayer and self-examination. There is no liberty for the Christian to “try out” marriage, and divorce their partner if it is found unsatisfactory. *'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her,' declared Jesus, 'and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery' (Mark 10: 11–12).* The Apostle Paul in his beautiful chapter on marriage, Ephesians 5, instructs that followers of Christ should model their marriages on the love between Christ and his church. It is a patient, fault-forgiving, self-denying love, much deeper than the commercialised emotion of today's lyric writers. But he also advises that the choice of a marriage partner needs great care. *'Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers,'* he says elsewhere (2 Corinthians 6:14). Tolerance and self-sacrifice may save a marriage, but life will be easier if both partners at least start out with the same ideals.

Abraham, to return to our story, did not want his son paired off with a local Canaanite whose moral code would be depravity and her religion the licentious worship of images. On the other hand, he could see dangers in Isaac setting off by himself for Mesopotamia, and being

tempted back to the life Abraham had left behind. *'You must not take my son back there,'* he warned Eliezer (Genesis 24:8). Abraham told his steward that God *'will send his angel before you'* (v. 7). There is a lesson in the faith of the old man. In all our ways, God will lead us if we seek His aid.

## A Failed Promise?

This is the last detailed episode in the adventures of faithful Abraham, who died peacefully some years later and was buried by his sons. But it is certainly not the end of his story. There is still one great mystery about him we have left unsolved. What happened to that great promise God made to him, that He would give him the land of the Canaanites for his very own? *'I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess,'* He had sworn (Genesis 15:7). *'O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?'* Abraham had countered (v. 8). God responded with a solemn blood-sealed covenant that it would be so (v. 18). For years Abraham camped in the land, declining to settle down, purchasing only a field in which to bury his wife. He was waiting for God to act. But nothing happened, and he died without his inheritance. *'He gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot's length,'* Stephen declared (Acts 7:5). What extraordinary treatment, you might protest, at the hands of a God who epitomises truth and faithfulness!

The solution to the enigma is staggering. The Bible insists that God did mean what He said. Abraham will yet inherit the promise, even though he is dead! Jesus decreed that so far as God is concerned, Abraham is not deleted from his plan.

Hundreds of years after Abraham had died, God introduced Himself to Moses as *'the God of Abraham'* (Exodus 3:6). This means, Jesus said, that Abraham will live again at the resurrection of the dead (Matthew 22:32).

The book of Hebrews also spends some time on this glorious theme. Speaking of Abraham and his family, it states, *'These all died in faith, not having received the things promised'* (Hebrews 11:13). They wait in the grave for the day of resurrection. The interval allows us an opportunity of sharing in the same promise. *'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'* (vs. 39–40). The perfection of immortality they will receive, in that morning of joy, will enable them to inherit the land not just for a few brief mortal years, but for ever. And we have the opportunity to be with them.

*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ... And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise* (Galatians 3:27,29).

Abraham never gave up believing God, even on his deathbed. If we share his faith, we too will be rewarded in the age to come. *'I tell you, many will come from east and west,'* said Jesus, *'and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven'* (Matthew 8:11).

**David Pearce**  
(to be continued)

# Eternal Truth Over Temporary Noise

IN TODAY'S WORLD, "free speech" is often invoked in defence of political commentary or cultural criticism. Social media gives millions a platform to share their views—many of which stir strong emotions, outrage, and even legal consequences. But while society debates the limits of expression, the example of Jesus Christ and the early church calls us to something higher: to speak not just freely, but eternally.



In 2024 a horrific stabbing in Southport, UK left three little girls dead. There was an outcry from politicians, community leaders and opinion formers. One woman, clearly in an agitated emotional state, posted on social media a tirade against asylum seekers (the murderer had been mistakenly assumed to be an asylum seeker). Though she later deleted the post and apologised, she was sentenced to 31 months in prison for inciting racial hatred. The case sparked national debate: was she a victim of speech

policing, or was hers an outburst that simply could not be tolerated?

Whatever the legal discussion, that moment reminds us how powerful and dangerous words can be. But what about speech that isn't driven by fear or anger—speech that speaks to something deeper, something eternal?

## The Example of Jesus

Jesus Christ didn't speak to win popularity or political influence. He spoke with divine authority, calling people to repentance, truth, and life. Jesus didn't speak to provoke outrage or to secure followers. He spoke eternal truth, not for reaction but for redemption. His message didn't flatter the powerful or echo public opinion. It confronted sin and revealed the character of God.

*My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me (John 7:16).*

His words carried the weight of heaven and eternity. They were not reactions to news cycles—they were proclamations of God's eternal reality. While modern speech debates often focus on the right to speak, Jesus focused on the truth that must be spoken, regardless of personal consequences. On one occasion he confronted the religious elite who held authority and controlled the spiritual



narrative of the day: *'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness' (Matthew 23:27).*

Jesus didn't hold back, even when standing before Pilate, the Roman governor who held the power to condemn him to death: *'You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above' (John 19:11).*

He clearly laid out his mission: *'For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth' (John 18:37).*



## The Apostles

This mission of bold, eternal truth-telling didn't stop with Jesus. It carried into the lives of his followers in the early church. The Apostles Peter and John were arrested for preaching that Jesus had risen from the dead. When commanded to stop, they replied:

*We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard (Acts 4:20).*

The ruling council strictly forbade them from teaching about Jesus any further.

They replied, *'We must obey God rather than men' (Acts 5:29).*

In Acts 7, Stephen stood before the religious council and preached a powerful message convicting them of betraying the Messiah. He was stoned to death for his words.

These men weren't speaking their personal opinions. They were proclaiming God's truth, often at great personal cost.

## Preach the Word

In contrast to modern free speech debates—which often focus on personal rights—Bible truth-telling is a matter of responsibility to God. As the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: *'Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season...' (2 Timothy 4:2).*

Our world doesn't need more noise. It needs voices like Christ's—full of love, courage, and eternal clarity.

So let us not be distracted by the temporary. Let us listen to the eternal truth, and be prepared to speak it, boldly and humbly, no matter the cost. Like Peter. Like Stephen. Like Jesus Christ himself.

May God give us that kind of courage.

**Joanna Wale**

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

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**MG** *Jesus wasn't afraid to stand up and publicly denounce false believers. Why don't you do the same?*

**Ed** **JESUS' PREACHING** was always constructive, not destructive: *'The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost' (Luke 19:10)*. His approach was gentle—it was written of him, *'a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench' (Matthew 12:20)*.

However, there were two perfectly complementary aspects to his character—kindness and severity, grace and truth. The same two aspects that we see in God's character. *'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)*. He was gracious and non-judgemental to those who came to God with open hearts, but he would not tolerate corruption and hypocrisy, and he consistently called it out.

In this, as in all matters, he provides the example his disciples should follow.

In the Gospel records we see frequent clashes between the Lord and the self-righteous religious leaders of his day (for example Mark 3:5, Matthew 15:7–8, Luke 11:42–52). There were two occasions on which he forcibly ejected the marketeers from the temple in Jerusalem (John 2:15, Matthew 21:12–13).

The time came, in the last week of his ministry, when the clashes became suddenly more intense. His enemies collaborated in a campaign against him

in which they tried to trip him up with his words. When they'd finally admitted defeat, he launched a blistering public attack on them (Matthew 23). There are probably two reasons for this extraordinary vehemence—first, there were some important home truths that the leaders themselves, and also Christ's disciples, needed to know about the perils of their toxic attitude, and which needed to be spelled out publicly and forcefully. Second, he knew that he must be crucified at the approaching Passover (Matthew 26:2), and he was calculatedly provoking his enemies to arrange it (Luke 19:47).

So should his followers be firebrands, publicly railing at their opponents?

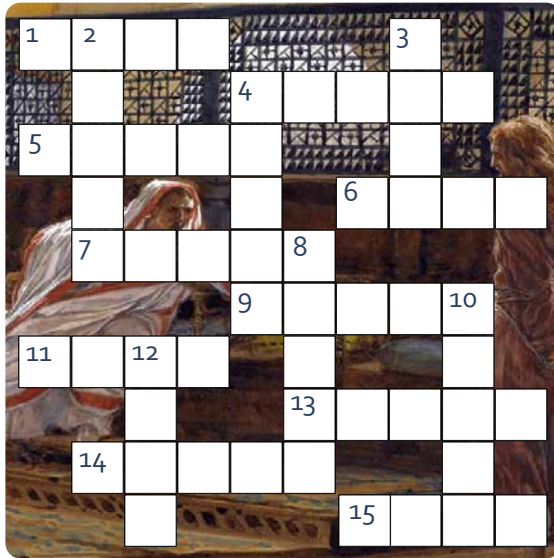
Jesus was perfect and sinless—he thought his Father's thoughts and spoke His words (John 8:38). Even in the heat of his final verbal onslaught, he was saying what was precisely right and no one could answer him. Which of us can have such confidence? We do well to heed the Bible's instructions:

*Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God (James 1:19–20).*

*The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth (2 Timothy 2:24–25).*

Across

- 1 *Jesus told the rich ruler to do this to his possessions* (Luke 18:22)
- 4 He asked the rich ruler why he called him good (Luke 18:19)
- 5 Pontius Pilate was governor here (Luke 3:1)



Down

- 6 Nicodemus was a ruler of these people (John 3:1)
- 7 Joseph of Arimathea wrapped Jesus' body in a shroud made of this (Matthew 27:59)
- 9 Jesus reprimanded him for giving him no water for his feet (Luke 7:44)
- 11 He witnessed the raising of Jairus's daughter (Mark 5:37)
- 13 Jairus asked Jesus to lay these on his daughter (Mark 5:23)
- 14 Pilate said he did not find this in Jesus (Luke 23:4)
- 15 Jesus told 9 across a parable of a man who cancelled this (Luke 7:42)

- 2 Those who are given immortality will be \_\_\_\_\_ to the angels (Luke 20:36)
- 3 To heal (Luke 9:1)
- 4 He witnessed the raising of Jairus's daughter (Mark 5:37)

- 8 Nicodemus visited Jesus at this time of day (John 3:2)
- 10 He died because he had offered unauthorized fire (Numbers 3:4)
- 12 Jesus was crucified at the third one (Mark 15:25)

(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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