

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured Articles

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Four Mistakes About God (p. 9)

The Big Bang (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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The Bible Revival

SOME GREAT NEWS! Surveys show that there's been a significant growth in interest in Christianity over the last few years, worldwide. In the UK, for instance, Bible sales doubled in the six years to 2024 and church attendance grew by half.* Interestingly, the biggest growth appears to be among young adults.

Various reasons for this trend have been proposed. One suggestion is that people are searching for community and a sense of belonging—the pandemic years imposed damaging isolation upon us, and seeking community on social media has proved hollow and unfulfilling. Another suggestion is simply that the world is an increasingly frightening place—economic, social and political uncertainty are making people crave comfort, security and spiritual connection, and a logical place to look for these things is in the Christian faith, which has been the bedrock of many societies for many centuries.

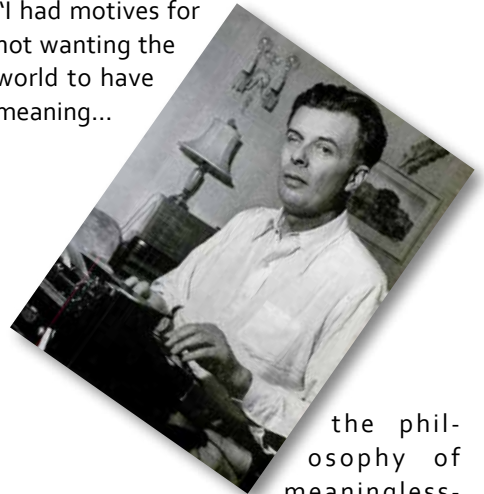
The Philosophy of Meaninglessness

Another suggestion is disillusionment with the alternatives. In the western world, atheism has been in the ascendancy for a long while. In the 19th Century, scientists and philosophers such as Charles Darwin and Karl Marx made atheism respectable and mainstream. In the 20th Century,

* *The Quiet Revival*, report by The Bible Society, April 2025.

social upheavals (especially following the world wars) enabled the abandonment of traditional standards of morality. People were able to turn away from the Christian-based culture that had prevailed throughout most of the western world for many generations, shake off its restrictions, and explore their lives for themselves, on their own terms.

In his essay *Confessions of a Professed Atheist*, the writer Aldous Huxley admitted: "I had motives for not wanting the world to have meaning..."



the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation."

Another century on, we're in a position to look back on the course this liberation has taken. Increasingly, people are admitting that humanity has not progressed in the way that was expected. Technology has

advanced at a bewildering rate, but we are not happier, more fulfilled or more enlightened than our ancestors, and the fabric of our society is unravelling. For many, the “philosophy of meaninglessness” has turned out to be a philosophy of miserable emptiness.

The Alternative

In contrast, the Bible offers a world view which is emotionally and intellectually satisfying, and it provides healthy rules and guidance for a fulfilling life.

It begins with God—the Creator (Genesis 1:1). We can gaze with awe at this wonderful universe. The more we discover about it, the more miraculous it seems. And we don't have to assure ourselves that somehow it just happened—we can accept that it is the work of an inconceivably vast mind with infinite power.

It is focussed on love (John 3:16). The enormity of the love of God, Who gave His Son Jesus Christ to die so that we might have life—and the love of Jesus Christ, who willingly sacrificed himself, is a theme which the Bible explores in detail and which will repay a lifetime of meditation.

It prescribes clear, unambiguous standards of morality and behaviour, and it explains the reasons (Ephesians 5:1–5). Being the instructions of our maker, we have confidence that they provide the best way to enjoy the life He has given us.

It provides community (Ephesians 2:19–22). To be a true Christian is to be a child of God, a brother or sister of the Lord Jesus Christ, and a member of a worldwide family.

It provides confidence that through all of life's troubles, God is on your side (Romans 8:31–35).

And it provides a real hope and confidence for the future—not just for this life, but for eternity (John 6:40).

Coming to the Light

Human nature does not readily seek God—there's that rebellious streak in all of us that makes us want to go our own way. Huxley, with admirable honesty, admitted that his atheism was primarily an “instrument of liberation”. The Bible puts it another way: *'This is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil'* (John 3:19).

There's a lot of darkness in this world. It's encouraging to know that increasing numbers of people are recognising this, and turning towards the light.

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

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Where Will It All End?

WHAT STARTED AS an enjoyable coffee break suddenly took a darker turn. One of my colleagues had recently had a baby boy. After the usual chat about the child and how she was enjoying the experience as a young mum, inevitably someone asked, "So, when will you have the next one?"

Our colleague burst into tears. We sat in an embarrassed silence. No one knew what to say, but eventually she sobbed the answer. "We were so happy when our baby was born, but then we looked around at the world and saw how much danger there is, how awful people are to each other, and the hopeless state of the world. We're just not sure we should bring another child into this terrible place."

This is a sad story, but true. And many people share her fear. It's very personal, but it's also global. Here's an extract from the United Nations report 2024:

The past year has tested humanity in every way. Crises and challenges have placed the better future people want and need further out of reach. Conflicts, deepening poverty and inequality, hunger and poor economic prospects for developing countries made worse by widening geopolitical divides and mistrust. The climate emergency reached terrifying new heights, 2023 being the hottest on record. Human rights abuses, discrimination against minorities, women and girls, rising

extremism and a surge of hate speech online and in the streets are sowing discord and mistrust across communities, countries and entire regions... Many developing countries are drowning in debt and lack the necessary resources to invest in a sustainable future for their people.*

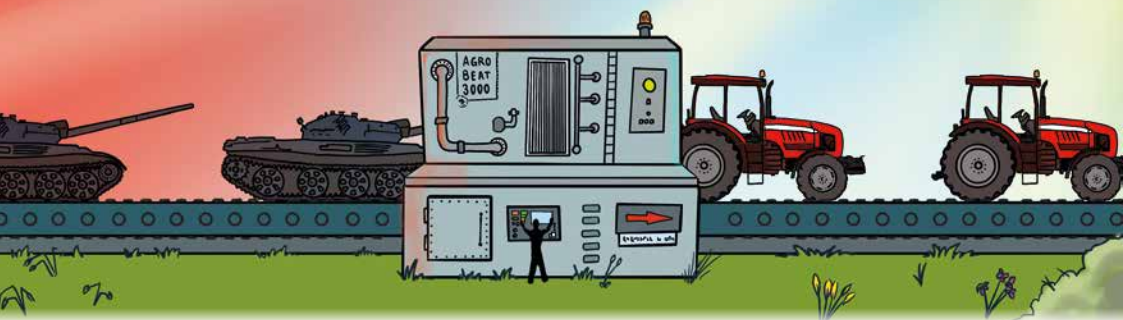
A New World Coming

That's enough depressing news, let's get to the good news, the Glad Tidings. The world is in a terrible state, through war, unrest, climate change and the many other challenges we face. But God has promised a better time and a new world order in a renewed, flourishing earth.

It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it, and

* Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the United Nations in 2024.





many nations shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide disputes for strong nations far away; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore; but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid, for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken (Micah 4:1-4).

The Bible calls this time the Kingdom of God. In this future world order, God's laws will be followed on the earth, and He will rule the world through His appointed King, the Lord Jesus Christ. The result of this will be peace: peace between nations, peace amongst people, living in safety and removing even the ability to make war. It's a wonderful prospect, and to read a full version please look at Psalm 72. Here you will read about justice for everyone, saving those in need, removing oppression, a worldwide kingdom with plenty of food for all, based around the true worship of God.

The prophet Isaiah describes how the world will be cleansed and rejuvenated, even the deserts turned into blossoming gardens and fruitful farms. Everyone will live healthy lives in a healthy world.

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus... then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down, the grass shall become reeds and rushes (Isaiah 35:1, 6-7).

Big Changes Needed

It's fair to say that a lot has to happen, to change today's world into tomorrow's Kingdom of God. The Bible describes the main stages involved:

- Jesus Christ returns to the earth, at a time like ours, where people in the world are fearful and do not know which way to turn. He will come with the power of God to set right all that is wrong. So, whilst we are understandably worried about the state of our world, this is a sign that Jesus will come soon. Read Luke 21:25-31.

- Jesus raises the dead. The people who belong to him, who followed him in their lives, and did their best to please God, will be made immortal. Jesus will rule until all opposition, all sin and death have been removed. Read 1 Corinthians 15:20–28.
- Eventually death is eradicated and there is no more sorrow or mourning in this perfect world—where God eventually can live with men and women. Read Revelation 21:1–7.

What Should We Do About It?

The idea of living in a perfect world is attractive. But what's the catch? Here's more good news—there is no catch! God wants everyone to be there, although the many who ignore or reject Him will not be. He asks that we learn about His plan and what He is like by reading the Bible, believe what He says and be baptised to show it. Then we can live a life of purpose and hope, trying to please God and being forgiven when we fail.

This is summarised in the following verses. They are from the time between Jesus' resurrection from the dead, and his ascension to heaven six weeks later, as he gave his followers the great commission to go out and preach the Gospel.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you (Matthew 28:19–20).

Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned (Mark 16:15–16).

Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things (Luke 24:46–48).

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (John 20:30–31).

What Will You Do?

God has always kept His promises, and the Bible is full of examples of Him doing so. The future is sure: God will intervene in world affairs and send Jesus to establish the Kingdom of God. This will be a perfect world where men and women will live for ever, ultimately with God Himself.

God offers us a place in His family now, and a place in His future Kingdom. He has told us what to do about it. But don't let's waste any time, for in Jesus' last message we read:

Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done (Revelation 22:12).

Andrew Hale

Being Good



WHAT DOES A GOOD PERSON look like? Obviously, it's not about looks at all! When a man came to Jesus and addressed him as 'Good Teacher', the reaction was not what he expected. *'Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone'* (Mark 10:18). Yet the Bible tells us that Jesus spent his life doing only good (Acts 10:38). Perhaps we need to examine what "being good" actually means.

How does one measure goodness? It probably depends on who sets the standard. If somebody gets 70 per cent in an exam and everyone else got below 50 per cent, then 70 per cent is a good result. However, that changes if everyone else got over 80 per cent.

Is being good just a case of being better than somebody else?

That's not what Jesus taught. God sets the standard, and even as God's Son, Jesus was not willing to accept that description of himself. In the Old Testament of the Bible, the word 'goodness' is always used of God. In the New Testament, its use extends to those who are sincerely trying to follow Jesus. Galatians 5:22–23 lists what those who belong to Jesus should aim for: *'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.'*

The man who came to Jesus was asking what he could do to inherit eternal life, as if

it were something he could earn. Jesus reminded him of God's commandments, and when the man said he had kept them from his youth, Jesus could see that he was telling the truth. But he could also see that there was something hindering the man from committing himself completely. He owned a lot of property. It meant so much to him that he couldn't bear to think of selling it, giving the proceeds away and following Jesus (Mark 10:19–22).

Doing something good doesn't make us good people. God asks us to be willing to change and become the sort of people He wants in His kingdom. Some changes are painful; we might need to get rid of an attitude or habit that has become a big part of our life. Jesus reassured his disciples that *'all things are possible with God'* (v. 27).

Jesus lived out the example of putting God first in every part of his life. Even so, he didn't regard himself as good. He was still mortal when the man called him 'Good Teacher', and could still have chosen to do wrong. When he was raised from the dead and God made him immortal, he was no longer having to struggle against temptation to sin. If we focus on being the people God wants us to be, He will work with us: *'He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ'* (Philippians 1:6).

Rachel Leah

Four Mistakes About God

IT IS POSSIBLE that the title may annoy you. It may sound as though I'm saying that you are wrong about God, whereas I know all the answers and will put you right. If that is how it sounds, I want to tell you that that's not how it is. I wish only to proclaim, as faithfully as I can, what I understand to be true. You would not expect me to approve of error, merely for the sake of being popular.

The revelation which I have received from God is very special indeed. But it is not made especially to me—it is made to you and everyone else in the same way. The Bible is God's revelation about Himself and His purpose. There are ideas about God which I judge to be mistaken, because they are out of harmony with the truth which is in the Bible.

It seems to me that what some people have done is this: instead of coming to the Bible to learn there about God and His purpose, they have for themselves invented ideas as to what God is like, in accordance with what they would wish Him to be. The tragedy is this: false ideas about God and His purpose lead to false hopes and false ideals.

Ultimately, a self invented God is no God, judged by the real standard of God's truth. The matter therefore is not one merely of theological argument or academic disputation: it affects the very fundamentals of your life and mine. A false God of our own invention cannot

answer when we are in jeopardy, and can offer no solace in the agony of our soul or in loneliness. A self invented God has no influence in this world and has no power to give life in the world to come. That is why therefore it seems right to me as best I can to draw attention to those ideas about God which, though they may be popular, are nevertheless contrary to what God has revealed.

1. God's Severity



The first mistake I wish to bring to your attention is the belief that because God is a God of love, He cannot therefore be a God of judgement. This idea conceives God (if I may say it without being irreverent) not as a father but as a grandfather—benevolent and indulgent, not wishing to hinder what His children want to do, and not making inconvenient demands upon

them. His ultimate concern is to bring all His creatures to Himself and overlook all their sins, and so make the world into one big happy family.

Those who think thus are mistaken about what the love of God is. The love of God is the love of that which is good and true—and to love good intensely is to hate evil and falsehood. The love of God is not some sweet sentiment which pretends everything is all right when it is not.

There are some who suggest that the God of the Bible's New Testament is a different God from the one revealed in the Old Testament: in some way He has evolved from a God Who used to hate sin, to a God Who now merely overlooks it. But when God is confronted with irretrievable wickedness He destroys it. It is an act of His love. It was so at the flood (Genesis 6-9); it was so at Sodom (Genesis 19). It is to be so in the day of the world's doom, when Christ returns (Acts 17:31).

God may be invisible but He is not indifferent. *'Whatever one sows, that will he also reap'* (Galatians 6:7). That principle is indestructible. It was so with Israel: confronted with Jesus their rightful King they chose Caesar (John 19:15), and 40 years later Caesar came to them and destroyed their city and took them to himself as slaves.

There is a moral element in the nature of God with which all things ultimately must square. Every cause of wickedness will eventually be destroyed. It will be an act of love. If you can conceive of a God who will allow someone to go on sinning until they are irrecoverably wicked, and then let them

go into eternity, you can conceive of a God Who is not really a God of love.

Jesus Christ told a parable (Luke 13:6-9) in which the owner of a garden comes seeking fruit on a tree, and finding none he declares that the tree is useless and must be cut down. The gardener persuades him to let him work on the tree for one more year—then, the gardener says, if it still is barren then it shall be cut down. This story reveals there is no disagreement between God and Jesus Christ about the fate of that which is incurably barren. Jesus came to save us from our sins (John 3:16). But that man or woman who insists on being a failure will not benefit from his salvation. He told another parable about the two classes of people at the judgement: *'And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life'* (Matthew 25:46).

2. God's Interest in the Earth



The next mistake about God conceives of Him as being a God Who has no real interest in the earth. To think of God as being especially interested in this little

planet, when there are millions of systems like our solar system in the universe, is to make Him into a small God—too small for those who hold this view. But the Bible says that God is vitally interested in the earth. There is a declaration of divine policy, which was uttered by God to Moses when God's people had refused to carry His glory into the Promised Land: *'Truly, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD' (Numbers 14:21).*

That is the pole star of all the prophets, as they tell out their message of the day which is coming when peace and joy and singing and gladness and security and life in its fullness shall be established, not in some unknown abode in the heavens, but right here on earth, where at present sighing and sorrow and death abound. That has been the hope of all people of faith down the ages, who have not been mistaken about the purpose of God. Not that they might pass from the earth and ascend to heaven, but that they might see upon the earth the Kingdom of the Living God.

That is what Jesus meant when he prayed the pattern prayer: *'Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven' (Matthew 6:10).* And when he said, *'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth' (5:5).* They do not at present, but the promise is dependable. The Psalmist had proclaimed it before: *'Evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land' (Psalm 37:9).*

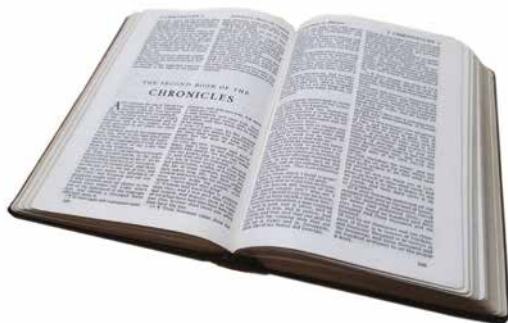
To those who have mistaken God's purpose this is all clotted nonsense, but to those who have understood the Bible's revelation of God it is the great hope of the Christian faith. God's promises all concern the earth.

It is destined to become a paradise again for the dwelling of His people. The second coming of Jesus Christ is the hope of the world, the coming of the divine King who will rule the earth in equity and with divine authority (Psalm 72).

Long before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, God had spoken of His Son, and through the psalmist had made this promise: *'Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession' (Psalm 2:8).* The Apostle John saw a vision of the fulfilment of that promise: *'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever' (Revelation 11:15).*

Such is the wonder of God's justice and truth. To the place where Jesus was once rejected, he is coming again to reign invincible. So spoke the angels when he ascended from the earth: *'This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven' (Acts 1:11).* So shall the ancient declaration of God be fulfilled, that one day the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord.

3. God's Truth



The third mistake about God which I want to address is that conception of Him which allows people to think that God is unconcerned with how they regard His word and His will.

The outcome of this mistake is to think that we can come to God on our own terms, and can prescribe our own conditions. From this comes a conclusion (not always expressed but certainly implied) that it does not matter what God has said. He is the kind of God Who, although perhaps He has spoken, is always prepared to modify His words so as to accommodate people's desires.

People who think like this may proceed to worship God and call themselves His children, without having taken the trouble to see what He has said about how we should come to Him. How He said, and His Son Jesus confirmed, *'In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men'* (Mark 7:7). Now Jesus said that in order to be his friend, we need to show it: *'You are my friends if you do what I command you'* (John 15:14). *'Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven'* (Matthew 7:21).

Obedience to God's will is the secret of success. Noah obeyed God and was saved from the flood (Genesis 6). Lot was saved out of Sodom because he did the word of God (Genesis 19). Naaman the Syrian was cured of his leprosy because he did what God prescribed (2 Kings 5). Whilst he refused and insisted he knew better than God, he remained a leper. So God says, *'This is the one to whom I will look: he who is*

humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word' (Isaiah 66:2).

I say with sorrow, but I must testify I believe it to be true, that the world abounds with people who will not even bother to look at God's word, let alone tremble in His presence. They imagine that they will come to salvation because their own conscience tells them so.

If they were not mistaken about God, they would know that no one can come to God on the testimonial of their own goodness. They must come on God's terms, else it is no good coming at all.

4. How to Come to God



Jesus said, *'Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved'* (Mark 16:16). Take notice of the imperative tone in the Lord's voice. That word *'whoever'* discriminates between those who will and those who will not. *'Whoever believes and is baptized'*—believing is not believing anything, but believing that which is true. To believe that which is false or self invented is not faith, it is superstition. And the Bible says,

'Without faith it is impossible to please him'
(Hebrews 11:6).

Baptism means being immersed in water as an act of obedience arising out of faith. That which makes baptism valid is not the water, nor the person who administers it, but the spirit of the person who submits to it. It must be an act of obedience. It is not just a matter of getting wet. It is not a bath, but a baptism.

There are many people who, because they have made a mistake about God, will not heed this commandment. They are indifferent to it because they believe it does not matter. They perhaps reassure themselves that God has modified His demands and compromised His requirements so that all they need do to please Him is to follow their own judgement and obey their own will.

I am afraid that Jesus calls these people fools. He says they're like a man who builds a house upon the sand, which while the sun is shining seems safe enough, but when the storm comes crumbles and falls with a great crash (Matthew 7:24–27).

'Seek, and You Will Find'

I have pointed out four mistakes about God, all four of which are quite possible to make, but have disastrous consequences. It is not for me to sit on a throne of judgement—that is not my prerogative. But no preacher is worth his salt if, identifying a mistake, he shrinks away from saying so for the sake of being amiable. If you have been disturbed by what I have said, it is my hope that you will not rest until you have satisfied yourself of God's word in the Bible.



Jesus said, *'Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you'* (Matthew 7:7). We must seek God where He is to be found—in His own word. And when we find Him, we must come to Him in the way that He requires.

Dennis Gillett

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Famine

FAMINES ARE AN ever-present danger in some parts of the world. As Jesus Christ foretold, they appear to be increasing in frequency (Matthew 24:7).

They were common in Bible times. Usually they were the result of widespread and prolonged drought. They are mentioned several times in both Old and New Testaments, and always with fear.

One of the earliest famines on record occurred in the days of Isaac. Like his father Abraham, Isaac was a tent dweller and farmer, and his fortunes very much linked to the weather. If there was no rain, the grass failed and his animals died. If food became impossibly scarce, his family's whole future was at stake.

When this particular famine settled over the land, the obvious thing for Isaac to do was to move down to Egypt. With his nomadic mode of living, this would have been no great hardship. It was a straightforward business decision, to strike tents and set off for that green ribbon of land, watered by the ever-flowing Nile

where corn still grew in plenty. As he was contemplating the move, Isaac had a visitor. It was the angel of the Lord, who appeared to him with a message. '*Do not go down to Egypt,*' he said (Genesis 26:2).

'So,' the record continues, '*Isaac settled in Gerar*' (v. 6). Gerar is in the land of the Philistines, modern Gaza. We are not told why he was warned away from Egypt. Perhaps that land of civilisation and splendour might have been so tempting that he would have been loath to come back when the famine was over. The important thing is, Isaac did what he was asked. He went against his judgement and stayed where he was, because God commanded it.

Harvest

Observe now what followed. '*Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold*' (v. 12). There is not much recorded about the life of Isaac, but this little cameo that has been preserved is full of instruction. Suppose you had been



in his position, with hundreds of mouths to feed. Once your reserves of dried meat and grain were exhausted, to stay on in that gaunt, parched land would be suicide. You would be under tremendous pressure to move on. Think of the reproachful looks of the hungry animals, and the growing resentment of the servants as they questioned your dallying in the face of danger. Yet Isaac stayed where he was. More puzzling than that, he actually used up even more of the precious corn by sowing seeds in the ground.

Isaac had been doing some thinking. If God had asked him to give up the security of Egypt, he would argue, He must surely intend to provide for the family if they stayed behind. So he sowed as usual, and waited, and when the harvest came, he reaped a tremendous crop. It was enough to keep them supplied for years—in fact, he became rich on the proceeds (v. 13).

Isaac's faith is another example of the kind we have met before in these articles. The instinct for self-preservation pulled him one way, but duty to God another. He obeyed God, and God saw that he did not suffer for it. It is a classic illustration of the teaching of Jesus in the New Testament, that we should not be anxious about our life, 'saying, "What shall we eat?" or

"What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you' (Matthew 6:31–33).

Some of us know what it's like to live from day to day, with the ever-present danger of a failed harvest or some other catastrophe. In other countries we may be cushioned from such catastrophes by a welfare system or insurance. But for all of us, life is still fragile and uncertain. Our bodies can go irreparably wrong. An economic crisis can destroy our savings. War could wreck our lives overnight.

In fact, as Isaac found, the only real security in life comes from God Who gave it. If we yield ourselves to His care, and seek wholeheartedly to do His will, He will not let us down.

'I have been young,' wrote the Psalmist, 'and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread' (Psalm 37:25).

David Pearce
(to be continued)



The Big Bang

THERE ARE TWO POSSIBLE ideas about the origin of the universe. One is that it came into existence as the result of a creation event. This was dubbed “The Big Bang Theory” by an atheist cosmologist who disagreed with it. The alternative is the “Steady State Theory”, which asserts that the universe was not created, but has always existed and is thus eternal.

The evidence in favour of some version of the Big Bang Theory is very strong. It begins with the observation that the sky is dark at night, with a sprinkling of stars. In an infinite universe the sky would not be dark. No matter in what direction one looked, sooner or later the line of sight would end at a star, and the night sky would be as bright as the surface of a star. The fact that the night sky is dark shows that the universe is not infinite.

This is where gravity comes in. Because of gravity, a finite universe would be expected to collapse; the fact that it has not yet done so shows that the universe is not infinitely old. It must have had a moment of creation.

There is plenty of additional evidence for this. In 1915 the celebrated physicist Albert Einstein produced an equation which described the structure of the universe, which indicated that the universe must either be expanding or contracting. In the 1920s, observations of distant galaxies confirmed that the universe is expanding; if one ran the process

backwards, this shows that at some time in the past the universe would have had no size at all, and before this it could not have existed. This conclusion was supported further when it was discovered that the abundance of hydrogen, helium and other light elements was what was predicted by the Big Bang Theory, and the discovery of the cosmic microwave background radiation put the matter beyond doubt. The universe had a beginning.

This conclusion was resisted by atheists for a considerable length of time. As one atheist put it, “Many people do not like the idea that time had a beginning; probably because it smacks of divine intervention.”* This opposition carried on into the 1990s, but effectively the fact that the universe came into existence at some moment in the past has been proved beyond reasonable doubt.

* Stephen Hawking (1988):
A Brief History of Time p. 46

The Implications of the Big Bang

The important point is to think what this means. The fact that the universe came into existence means that there is a theoretical possibility that the universe would not exist.

All entities can be divided into two classes. There are entities which could be different from what they are; these are called "contingent entities".

A contingent entity requires some other entity (or entities) to explain why it is as it is. The other class of entities is those which can only be as they are:

these must exist and cannot be different. Such entities are called "necessary entities"; they do not need any other entity to cause them or to explain why they are as they are.

It is possible that the universe could not exist. After all, there could have been a time before which the universe did not exist. Thus, the universe, and everything in it, is contingent. This means that it needs an entity outside itself to cause it, and to explain why it is as it is. If this entity is contingent, it requires another entity to cause it, and so on. In the end, the chain must stop at a necessary entity. This necessary entity must have properties which we would associate with God.

The entity is eternal, it needs no creator, it is immensely powerful, and there is no other entity which can limit it or change it. These are some of the attributes of God.

John Thorpe

Praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD from the heavens;
praise him in the heights!
Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his hosts!

Praise him, sun and moon,
praise him, all you shining stars!
Praise him, you highest heavens,
and you waters above the heavens!

Let them praise the name of the LORD!
For he commanded and they were
created.
And he established them forever and
ever;
he gave a decree, and it shall not
pass away.

Praise the LORD from the earth,
you great sea creatures and all deeps,
fire and hail, snow and mist,
stormy wind fulfilling his word!

Mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars!
Beasts and all livestock,
creeping things and flying birds!

Kings of the earth and all peoples,
princes and all rulers of the earth!
Young men and maidens together,
old men and children!

Let them praise the name of the LORD,
for his name alone is exalted;
his majesty is above earth and
heaven.
He has raised up a horn for his people,
praise for all his saints,
for the people of Israel who are near
to him.
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 148

AP

Jesus said, 'Everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!' (Luke 11:10–13). What exactly are we to ask for?

Ed

A COMMON SUGGESTION is that Jesus was referring to the 'spiritual gifts'—miraculous powers, which were given to believers in the First Century to assist with the spread of the Gospel and the cultivation of the community (1 Corinthians 12).

In the early church, different believers were given different gifts, such as healing, prophecy, teaching and miracles. It's not certain whether all believers had them. The apostles, to whom Jesus was speaking in Luke 11, had already received the power of healing (Luke 9).

Only God Himself and the apostles were able to give people these gifts (Acts 8:14). They appear to have been discontinued when the community was established and the New Testament text completed around the end of the First Century (1 Corinthians 13:8). So it seems as though, when the Lord told us we must ask for the Holy Spirit, he was

referring to something more than the spiritual gifts.

The Holy Spirit is God's power. In the Bible it is used for many things, including inspiring people to write the Bible: *'The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you' (John 14:26)*. The Bible is sometimes referred to as the "spirit word".

There are two ways of life—the way of God, and the way without God. These two ways are called the ways of the flesh and the spirit: *'You... are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him... If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you' (Romans 8:9–11)*. The way to obtain God's spirit is by reading and absorbing His word in the Bible. As Jesus said, *'It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life' (John 6:63)*.

If we're followers of Christ, it's essential that we have the Holy Spirit at the centre of our lives. It's our guide, it leads us to life. But it doesn't come naturally to us, we need to seek it prayerfully. *'If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him' (James 1:5)*.

The One God

JESUS SAID that only God is 'good'.

God is described as the almighty Creator and Sustainer of all life, who is everywhere present and all-knowing: a King, Judge, Shepherd, and Saviour.

He is the only God and therefore UNIQUE.

The word UNIQUE is in the wordsearch, together with 11 other words describing the awesome God. Solve the anagrams and find the 12 words.

UETR EVOL MITRLMOA LPFOERWU FFLUIHTA
YLOH IEOUSTRHG TNSCPMSOOASIE
GGFFOLNRENUIS FLMRCEIU EISW

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

Anna Hart

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