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GLAD TIDINGS

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

FEATURED ARTICLES

Foretelling the Future
Bible Prophecy
What is Worship?

WHAT IS GLAD TIDINGS?

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 mankind; 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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EDITORIAL

FORETELLING THE FUTURE

There's a saying in Britain, "If you don't like the weather, wait ten minutes."

Being a group of islands on the edge of continental Europe with the Gulf Stream passing close by in the Atlantic, Britain's climate is notoriously changeable and unpredictable. The British Meteorological Office is one of the oldest and most sophisticated weather forecasting services in the world—as a Met Office employee reminded me once, when I suggested they might have a better chance of accuracy if they just looked whether a pine cone was open or closed.

The fact is that any kind of forecasting is fraught with difficulty. Whether you're a trader who must anticipate movements in the stock markets, a consumer analyst monitoring trends in spending in order to spot upcoming fashions, or a political pundit trying to predict the outcomes of elections, the problem is that the world is full of variables. Something unexpected can happen and throw out the most careful forecast. And the further into the future you try to forecast, the greater the chance of variables and the less accurate you can be.

Which is one reason why the Bible has stood the test of time as a truly extraordinary book. It is packed with forecasts of the future (we call them prophecies), which often span enormous time periods and which have consistently been proven true. Here are three examples:

The Jews

The Bible was written almost entirely by Jews, largely about Jews. It calls them God's people (Romans 11:2). It's not that the Jews are any better or more virtuous than anyone else—their history, as the Bible records it, shows this very clearly. God often castigated them for their stubbornness and rebellion (for example Deuteronomy 31:27). But their very existence and their remarkable history attests to the fact that God is working with them: “*You are my witnesses,*” declares the LORD, “*and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he*” (Isaiah 43:10).

You can read Deuteronomy 28, which lists the consequences that would befall them for their disobedience, and recognise chilling details of pogroms and holocausts through the ages.

You can wonder at their peculiar history—persecuted minorities scattered throughout the world for

millennia, resisting assimilation into their host societies and somehow always managing to outlive their enemies—and you can recognise the outworking of the prophecy:

‘I am with you to save you, declares the LORD; I will make a full end of all the nations among whom I scattered you, but of you I will not make a full end’ (Jeremiah 30:11).

You can observe the nation of Israel now. Stubborn and rebellious as ever, but their very presence in their ancient homeland is a fulfilment of prophecy (for example Ezekiel 36, Luke 21:24).

Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the Bible's key character—the Son of God who died to save us from our sins and will return to establish God's Kingdom on earth (Luke 1:31–33, Matthew 1:21). His story is in the New Testament. But the Old Testament, which was written hundreds of years before he was born, abounds with prophecies about him. It's reckoned that there are around 300 direct and indirect prophecies, detailing every significant aspect of his life and death.

For example, Isaiah describes his birth to a virgin (7:14), his ancestry (11:1–10), his forerunner John the Baptist (40:1–9), his miracles (35:4–6), the abuse by his enemies

(50:6–7), his destiny to rule the world (9:6–7); and in perhaps Isaiah's most poignant prophecy, his willing death as a sacrifice for the sins of his people (ch. 53).

The Future

And the Bible's prophecies stretch into our own future.

The four Gospel records which commence the New Testament tell how Jesus Christ lived, died and was raised to life again. The next book, Acts, begins with his ascension to heaven. He took his disciples to the Mount of Olives, outside Jerusalem. *‘As they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven”* (Acts 1:9–11).

The prophet Zechariah tells us of Christ's return. Chapter 14 describes a multinational invasion of Israel, which will finally bring the self-confident nation to its knees and to its senses. At last, God will intervene.

‘Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east...’ (vs. 3–4).

Jesus Christ, possessing the power and bearing the name of God Himself, will return in glory to the very place from which he ascended 2000 years ago. If you read on in Zechariah's prophecy you'll see one of the Bible's numerous tantalising pictures of the establishment of the Kingdom of God—the culmination of earth's history, when Christ and his followers will at last restore it to the paradise which God intended.

Bible prophecy is fascinating, and exciting. It's also personal: it involves you and me. To be a Christian is to live in preparation for the magnificent future which God has promised to those who are faithful to Him. As Jesus taught his followers to pray, *‘Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven’* (Matthew 6:10).

TWINS!



Rebekah was pregnant. She and Isaac had been married for years, so she was overjoyed to be able to tell him they were going to start a family at last. Unhappily, the pregnancy did not go smoothly. As the months passed, she felt all was not well, and grew troubled and tense. At last, in simple faith, she brought her fears before God, asking for

reassurance. Without the need for ultrasonic scanners, He told her the reason for her discomfort. It was going to be twins, He said. And that is just how it turned out at the birth (Genesis 25:22–24).

Usually when twins arrive, it is vital to tie a marker string to the first born, in case the babies get mixed up. In this case there was no need. The elder son was covered all over with fine red hair. They named him Esau, "the Red". The two boys turned out to be different in other ways than their appearance as they grew up. Esau was tough, athletic, a hunter and lover of outdoor pursuits, while Jacob preferred shepherding. In the words of Genesis, he was *'a quiet man, dwelling in tents'* (v. 27).

A Bowl of Stew

One day, an incident took place which was to have lasting consequences. Esau returned from a hunting expedition exhausted and famished, to find Jacob crouched over the fire cooking himself a tasty stew. The savoury aroma set Esau's gastric juices churning, and the saliva ran in his mouth. *"Let me eat some of that red stew,"* he begged (v. 30). Jacob thought fast. There was a mercenary streak in the family—it

comes out later in the character of his uncle and his own sons. Perhaps he had been waiting for this opportunity for years. His eyes narrowed. *"Sell me your birthright now,"* he said (v. 31).



It was an unequal contract. Esau, though born only minutes before Jacob, was indisputably the elder, and entitled to the privileges of the firstborn. On the death of his father he would normally become head of the clan. He would inherit the major portion of his father's goods, and he would take over the role of family priest. It was worth far more than a steaming bowl of stew. But Esau's hunger was immediate, and the realisation of the birthright was remote. *"I am about to die,"* he cried, *"of what use is a birthright to me?"* (v. 32). Inwardly Jacob exulted, but perhaps he knew that his brother's promises could be empty. *"Swear to me now,"* he urged. He wanted to be sure there could be no going back.

'So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob' (v. 33). The chronicler concludes with the terse comment, *'Thus Esau despised his birthright'* (v. 34).

Later, Esau was to attempt to win back the title he had given away, and complain bitterly that he had been deceived (Genesis 27:36), but there is no doubt that at the time, he gave away his rights quite voluntarily. The New Testament fills out the incident for us. There is a stern warning from the writer to the Hebrews: *'...that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal'* (Hebrews 12:16).

This indictment of Esau shows that he was exchanging more than the right to his father's goods. The family of Abraham had a special privilege. Through their line was to come the offspring who was to bring blessing to all nations (Genesis 22:18). In handing over to Jacob the headship of the family, Esau was despising a precious link with the future, and declaring that he was only concerned about the present. *"I am about to die,"* he had declared. It is an old story, and painfully familiar today. "Eat, drink and be merry" is an almost universal philosophy, and the proverbial birds in the bush held out by the Bible are traded for the bird in the hand, with no regrets until death really does draw near and it is too late to change.

If at first sight, Jacob's action appears mean and unbrotherly, we must note God's declaration through His prophet that '*I have loved Jacob but Esau I have hated*' (Malachi 1:2-3). Jacob may seem a more insipid character than rugged, macho Esau. But Jacob's heart was in the right place. Eventually, chastened by sorrow and tragedy, he became a shining example of faith like his grandfather Abraham, and the great God of the universe chose to call Himself, as he does repeatedly throughout the Bible, '*the God of Jacob*' (for example Exodus 3:6). It was a question of attitude. Jacob was sowing for a future harvest, but Esau turned his seed corn into bread for today.



Deception

Jacob outwitted his brother a second time. The account is in Genesis 27. He managed to secure his father's solemn deathbed blessing by dressing up in hairy goatskins and pretending to the sightless old man that he was his elder brother. This scoop enraged Esau, and was the cause of Jacob leaving home and embarking on many hardships and adventures. But it illustrates yet again Jacob's determination to win the family's greatest treasure—the blessing of Abraham. Isaac confirmed this to him as Jacob left home. "*God Almighty bless you.*" he pronounced. "*May he give the blessing of Abraham to you and to your offspring with you, that you may take possession of the land of your sojournings that God gave to Abraham*" (28:3-4).

Like Abraham, Jacob never did possess the land in his lifetime. But he assuredly will, when those who,



like Esau, think only of the present, are consigned to eternal oblivion.

Jacob was forced to flee from his angry brother, against all his home-loving instincts. He journeyed northwards to stay with his uncle Laban until Esau's anger died down. In passing, we can prove that although timid by nature, Jacob was no weakling. In his first day's travel he set out from Beersheba and arrived at Bethel by dusk. It was a journey of 40 miles—no mean feat for a traveller on foot! Later on he was to roll a huge stone from the mouth of a well, unaided, and later still, to prove his skill at wrestling. Jacob was not lacking in physical strength. But certainly on this first night away from home he was weary, dispirited and insecure. Years later, he was to remember it as "*the day of my distress*" (Genesis 35:3).

The God of Bethel

How wonderful, then, that at this critical hour God gave him a great vision, which not only helped him face his immediate anxieties, but renewed his faith in the long distant

future. As he lay exhausted on a stone pillow under the blazing stars, there came brilliantly into his mind the picture of a huge ladder or staircase, stretching up into the sky, with God standing at the top, and himself at the bottom. Dazzling angels ascended and descended the shining rungs. Lifted above his worries about Esau and the dangers that lay ahead, Jacob was instantly linked with eternity. God spoke to him:

"I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring... Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you" (Genesis 28:13-15).

"I will not leave you"—what an inspiration that would be to Jacob in years to come. If we envy these patriarchs their age of open visions, when God revealed Himself directly to people, we can be thankful that we have the written record of how God brought them safely through their



pilgrimages. And we have the assurance of the writer to the Hebrews that that same promise can apply to us also, if we are servants of God. The Apostle comforts us with these words: 'He has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"' (Hebrews 13:5–6).

That vision of the ladder bridging between earth and heaven—what did this symbolize? We can see from the New Testament its identification with Jesus Christ, the illustrious descendant of Jacob. He would provide in himself the link between God and us. Through his sacrifice, sinners can be transformed into saints, and made fit for the presence of God. It was probably with Jacob's

vision in mind that Jesus urged his friend Nathaniel, startled into recognising him as the long-promised Messiah, to see in him more than just the King of Israel. He was to be the redeemer of the human race.

"Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree', do you believe? You will see greater things than these," he said to his new disciple. *"Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man"* (John 1:50–51). Like Nathaniel, by the grace of God, we can see the fulfilment of the promises to the patriarchs—the coming of the offspring of Abraham who will open the way for all faithful believers to inherit the earth for ever.

DAVID PEARCE
(to be continued)

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BIBLE SNIPPETS

PRIDE AND HUMILITY

POTENT PARABLES

Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.

Luke 18:10-14

PROFOUND PROVERBS

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor than to divide the spoil with the proud.

Proverbs 16:18-19

LEARNED LETTERS

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

James 4:6

SPIRITUAL SONGS

O LORD, my heart is not lifted up;
my eyes are not raised too high;
I do not occupy myself with things
too great and too marvellous for me.

But I have calmed and quietened my soul,
like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child is my soul within me.
O Israel, hope in the LORD
from this time forth and for evermore.

Psalm 131

TEACHINGS OF JESUS

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Matthew 5:5

BIBLE PROPHECY

I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done' (Isaiah 46:9–10).

God can do this. People try, but with very much less success. Throughout history there have been people who have claimed to have divine knowledge of the future, and some have made some impressive predictions. What I'd like to do is to look at some of these predictions, and look at some techniques that they use, then compare these predictions with one of the Bible's prophecies. What I think we'll see is that there is actually no comparison—the Bible shows itself to be what it claims to be, the Word of the Eternal God, and it stands completely apart from even the most ingenious human creations.

The Vague Prediction

One technique that people often use when telling the future is to be deliberately ambiguous, in order to maximise their chance of their prediction coming true, whatever the outcome. (Horoscope writers often use this technique.)

The Delphic Oracle was perhaps the most famous future-teller of the ancient world. People from far and wide came to consult the Oracle at the Temple of Apollo at Delphi in Greece.



Around 550 BC, King Croesus of Lydia came to ask the Oracle whether he should go to war against the rising power of Persia. The Oracle replied, "If Croesus goes to war, he will destroy a mighty empire."

Encouraged by this, Croesus attacked the Persians, who roundly defeated him. When he complained to the Oracle, she replied that she'd been right—she just hadn't specified which empire would be destroyed.

The Scattergun Approach

Another technique is to produce lots of predictions, in order to maximise the chances of at least some of them proving right.

Michel de Notredame is better known by his Latin name Nostradamus. Astrology was popular in 16th Century France, and he found he had a knack for it. He achieved fame when the French Queen Catherine de Medici declared that Nostradamus had accurately predicted the death of her husband King Henri II.

Nostradamus's prophecies generally take the form of four-line verses, called "quatrains". This is one of the most famous:

*'At night they will think that they have seen the sun
when they see the pig-like
halfman.
Noise, shouts, battles seen in the
heavens:
Brute beasts will be heard speaking.'*



This sounds like an uncannily prescient description of aerial warfare—over four centuries before aircraft were invented! The sun at night is flashlights and anti-aircraft missiles; the pig-like half-man is a pilot wearing a helmet and oxygen mask, and the brute beasts heard speaking is the garbled sounds of pilots talking over their radios.

It seems very impressive, until you remember that Nostradamus wrote around 1200 quatrains, and the vast majority of them make no sense at all. The law of probability dictates that if you make enough predictions, you're bound to get lucky with one or two.

The Likely Outcome

Many prophecies can be identified as simply perceptive predictions based on evidence.

For example, Joseph Smith is regarded as a prophet by members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (often known as the Mormons). Perhaps his most famous prophecy is his prediction of the American Civil War, which is contained in the Doctrine and Covenants section 87. It reads:

'Verily, thus saith the Lord concerning the wars that will shortly come to pass, beginning at the rebellion of South Carolina, which will eventually terminate in the death and misery of many souls; And the time will come

that war will be poured out upon all nations, beginning at this place. For behold, the Southern States shall be divided against the Northern States...

This prophecy was written in 1832. In 1861, 28 years later, the American Civil War began with an attack on Fort Sumter in South Carolina.



Again, this sounds impressive, until you consider the context. At the time Smith wrote the prophecy, the American states were in turmoil. South Carolina was involved in the "Nullification Crisis", in which it had rebelled against tariffs imposed by the Federal government. Many Americans at that time, including political commentators and newspaper editors, were discussing the very real possibility of a civil war starting in South Carolina. The question arises, was Smith's prophecy divine revelation or simply a bold forecast?

Bible Prophecy

The Bible claims to be the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16). God is eternal, and knows everything (1 John 3:20). A large proportion of the Bible's message is concerned with foretelling the future.* Its prophecies are often precise and detailed. Many of them can be identified as having been fulfilled, years after they were delivered. Excitingly, some of them are obviously still in our future. Let's look at just one prophecy, which I think is one of the most remarkable.

The Israelite prophet Ezekiel had been taken captive in one of the Babylonian invasions of Israel under King Nebuchadnezzar. He foretold the final overthrow of the Israelite kingdom and the destruction of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 21), which happened in 586 BC.

If you have a Bible, take a look at chapter 26. If not, you can find one online.

This is a prophecy which was delivered in the 'eleventh year' (26:1)—that is, the eleventh year of the exile of King Jehoiakim, which is around the date of Jerusalem's destruction. It is a condemnation of Tyre (at that time a Phoenician city, in modern Lebanon), because evidently

*According to J. Barton Payne in *The Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, over 25%.

the Tyreans were gloating over Jerusalem's destruction, expecting that they would profit from Israel's downfall. God declares, *'Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and will bring up many nations against you, as the sea brings up its waves. They shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers, and I will scrape her soil from her and make her a bare rock. She shall be in the midst of the sea a place for the spreading of nets'* (vs. 3–5).

The area of the ancient city of Tyre contains rocky plateaus which, for centuries up until modern times, were handy locations for fishermen to spread their nets to dry.

Ezekiel goes on to detail how this was to happen. Verses 7 to 11 graphically describe the attack and the 13-year siege by King Nebuchadnezzar, which resulted in the complete destruction of the old city, around 573 BC.

This was only a partial fulfilment of the prophecy. Nebuchadnezzar ransacked the city but he did not flatten it.

In verse 12 the pronouns change from 'he'—Nebuchadnezzar—to 'they'.

They will plunder your riches and loot your merchandise. They will break down your walls and destroy your pleasant houses. Your stones and timber and soil they will cast into the midst of the waters (v. 12).

What happened was this—during Nebuchadnezzar's siege many of the Tyreans abandoned the mainland city and retreated to an island fortress, around three quarters of a mile offshore. Nebuchadnezzar was unable to reach them because he didn't have a navy. So the city persisted in its new location for two and a half centuries, and it looked as though they had outsmarted Ezekiel's prophecy.

But God takes His time. Verse 12 was precisely fulfilled by Alexander the Great and his Greek army, aided by the naval forces of the Cypriots, Phoenicians and others, in 332 BC. Realising that it was not going to be possible to capture the Tyrean fortress by ships alone, the Greeks had a brilliantly simple

idea—they scraped away the remains of the old city and used it to construct a gigantic causeway, connecting the mainland with the island. Then they marched across the causeway and captured the fortress.

The causeway has grown over the centuries with silt deposited by the sea. The island city is still there, but it's now a peninsula.

The city was soon resettled by Greeks and others, and rebuilt as a Roman-style colony. There is now a bustling seaside town which covers the peninsular and stretches inland, and includes a large area of Greco-Roman remains which make it an important archaeological site.

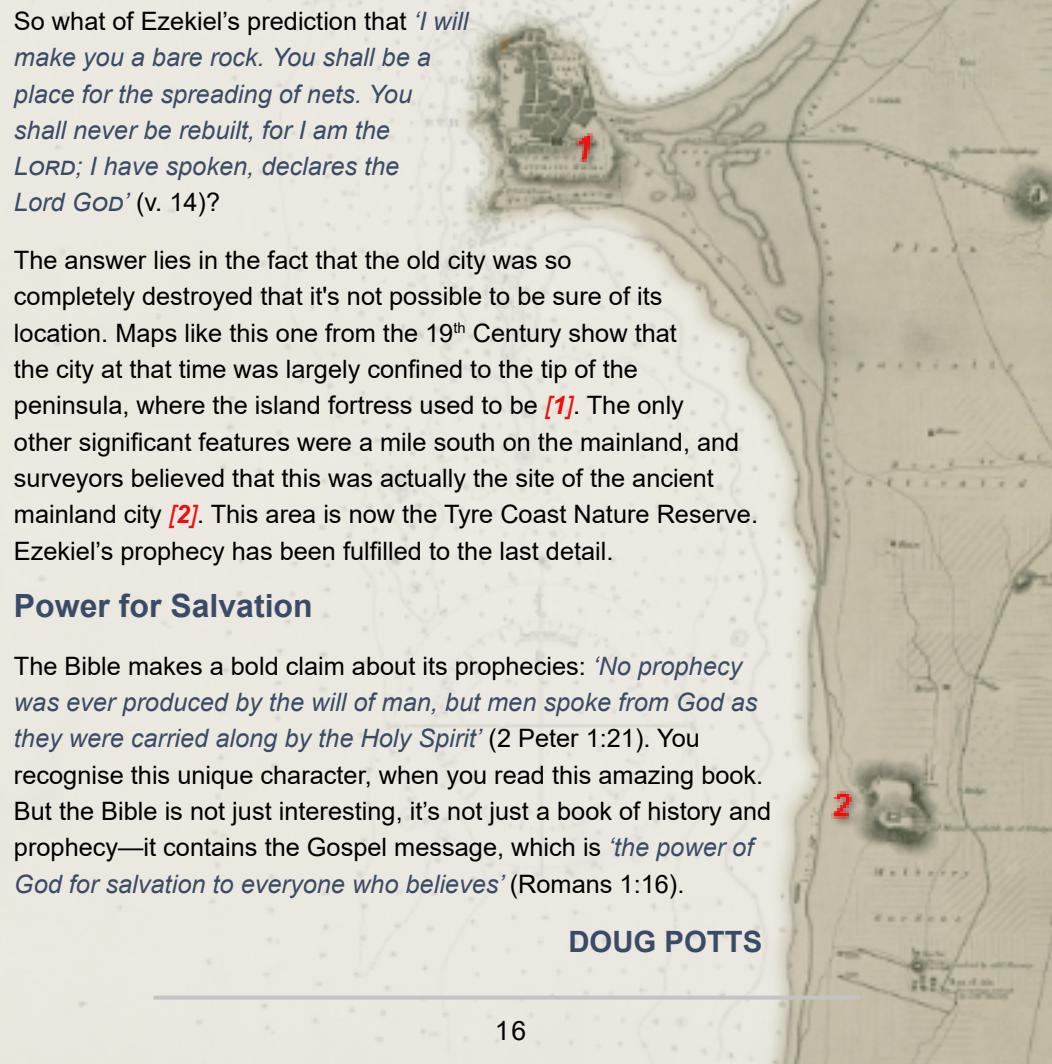
So what of Ezekiel's prediction that '*I will make you a bare rock. You shall be a place for the spreading of nets. You shall never be rebuilt, for I am the LORD; I have spoken, declares the Lord God*' (v. 14)?

The answer lies in the fact that the old city was so completely destroyed that it's not possible to be sure of its location. Maps like this one from the 19th Century show that the city at that time was largely confined to the tip of the peninsula, where the island fortress used to be [1]. The only other significant features were a mile south on the mainland, and surveyors believed that this was actually the site of the ancient mainland city [2]. This area is now the Tyre Coast Nature Reserve. Ezekiel's prophecy has been fulfilled to the last detail.

Power for Salvation

The Bible makes a bold claim about its prophecies: '*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 1:21). You recognise this unique character, when you read this amazing book. But the Bible is not just interesting, it's not just a book of history and prophecy—it contains the Gospel message, which is '*the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes*' (Romans 1:16).

DOUG POTTS



PSALM 1

The Psalms are the Bible's song book. They are always a source of comfort, encouragement and exhortation.

There are 150 Psalms, and Psalm 1 can be seen as an introduction to them. It is a guide that shows us how to live our lives. It shows us the two alternative ways we can live. They are both clearly and positively described, so we're left in no doubt which is the right way.

The Way of Death

The Psalm begins by describing three positive steps—or rather, three negative steps to avoid: '*Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers*' (v. 1). We see the progression of a life that is slipping into godlessness—first the man walks (the Hebrew word means "to be conversant") with people who don't want to know God, then he stands ("lingers") with people who are disobedient to God, then he sits ("settles down") with people who are actively opposed to God.

The outcome of that life is to be blown away like chaff (v. 4). The picture is of the farmer winnowing grain—he crushes the ears of wheat, then in order to separate the grain from the dust and husks he throws

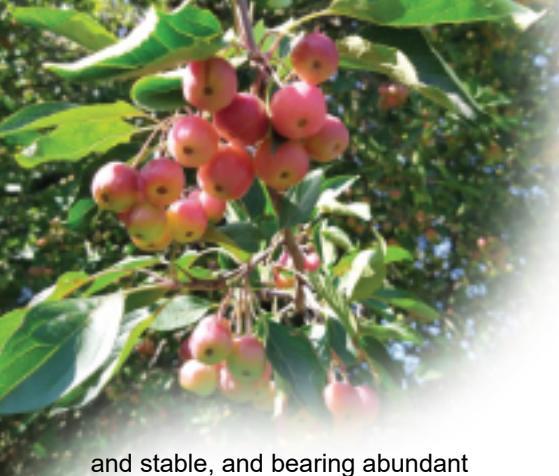
them all in the air. The grain falls to the ground, and the chaff is blown away.

The Way of Life

By contrast, this is the man who walks in the way of life: '*His delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night* (v. 2). Rather than wasting his time with vain companions, he takes delight in the Bible—he reads it and thinks upon it.

The Psalm presents a delightful picture of this man as a tree planted by a flowing stream, strong, healthy





and stable, and bearing abundant fruit (see Galatians 5:22–23).

In contrast to the way of the wicked, which leads to being blown away, the way of the righteous leads to life: *'Walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God'* (Colossians 1:10).

The way of life leads to the Kingdom of God. Those who follow it will stand in the gates of Jerusalem when Christ returns to make it his glorious capital city (Psalm 122:2). They will stand fast in the faith, brave and strong (1 Corinthians 16:13). Their ultimate blessing will be as promised by their Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ: *"The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne"* (Revelation 3:21).

Who Is the Man?

In a discussion, someone asked who it was the Psalmist was describing? There were various suggestions. Was it Abraham—a great man of faith, but he lied about his wife (Genesis 20:5).

Was it Moses, the leader of God's people? But he cursed at the waters of Meribah (Numbers 20:10). Was it great King David? He was an adulterer and murderer (2 Samuel 11). Then a Jew, who had been reading the Bible's New Testament, said that it obviously refers to Jesus of Nazareth.

The more we come to know Jesus Christ, the more we recognise him as the perfect man, the example of all that is good that we should follow. In whatever circumstances of life we find ourselves, especially in these most difficult times, we must keep our roots firmly planted in God's word, so that we can bear fruit for Him.

As we read through the rest of the Psalms, we see more and more encouragement, warnings, instructions about how we should live, more pictures of the Kingdom to come, and very often we see the Lord Jesus Christ in the pictures painted by them.

TOM INGHAM

Questions? [Comments?](#)

We'd love to hear from you!

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Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgement, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Psalm 1

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

Oh come, let us worship and bow down;
let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!
For he is our God,
and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand.'

(Psalm 95:6–7)

For faithful believers whose lives are God-centred, their worship will be Bible based. That means that whatever and however the Bible describes worship, that is how they will practise it. After all, the Bible is the God-breathed word (that is the meaning of ‘inspired’), revealed by inspired apostles and prophets, and is a revelation of God’s mind. The worship and praise offered to Him, and which is required by Him, is just one of the many aspects of the Bible’s message.

The Bible describes worship in several ways. It defines what it is, and it gives instructions on how worshippers should express their reverence. Worship is fundamentally an act of homage and humility before God, Who has revealed His character and His beautiful attributes to those who believe and accept His invitation

to salvation. Worship is a thanksgiving for the wonderful and generous gift of salvation that is made possible by the giving and ultimate sacrifice of God’s Son the Lord Jesus Christ, who was raised from the dead, glorified by resurrection, and received up into heaven, to await the time of his return (Acts 3:19–21).

Faithful Worship

True worship is based upon an understanding and an unshakeable faith in the God who is the all-wise Creator of all things, and for Whom nothing is impossible.

When he was pleading with God to spare the condemned cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham said, “*Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?*” (Genesis 18:25). He understood the principle which the Apostle Paul later spelled out: ‘*Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity towards those who have fallen, but God’s kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness*’ (Romans 11:22).



Worship comes from the heart. It is an expression of devotion and love. A personal recognition of the greatness and power of the God we worship. How God is approached is important. The worshipper cannot be casual, or treat the occasion as something to be rushed through. When we offer worship, we realise that we are in the very presence of God (Ecclesiastes 5:2).

*‘Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;
bring an offering, and come into his courts!
Worship the Lord in the splendour of holiness;
tremble before him, all the earth!’*
(Psalm 96:8–9)

Offering Sacrifice

Worship of God is a personal sacrifice. ‘*Let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name*’ (Hebrews 13:15.) But this is only one aspect, and the Bible broadens the scope of this personal sacrifice to include the sacrifice of righteousness (Psalm 4:5), of thanksgiving (Psalm 116:17), of joy (Psalm 27:6), of sharing (Philippians 4:18) and of good deeds (Romans 12:13). The Bible also refers to spiritual sacrifices (1 Peter 2:5) and the sacrifice of obedience (Micah 6:8).

In the prophetic language of Psalm 40, we are introduced to the Lord Jesus Christ, and he shows us what worship and faith consist of. He opened his ears and listened intently to the words of his Father. He knew what his response was to be: ‘*Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart*’ (vs. 7–8). He faithfully fulfilled his vow, even to the death of the cross. This was worship offered to perfection, the giving of self.

VIC AUCOTT

(to be continued)

YOUR QUESTIONS

Is it wrong to get a girlfriend who isn't a Christian?

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Ed

No it's not wrong. You need to be aware, though. If you form a deep emotional tie with someone who doesn't share your faith there's a risk that it will cloud your judgement and cause you to compromise your faith. A follower of Christ has entirely different values, standards and behaviours from people who do not have the same faith.

Jesus Christ gave his followers a rule for living: "*Abide in my love*" (John 15:9). Of course this is easier to do if the person you're dating shares your faith, but it's not impossible if they don't.

It's important that a follower of Christ declares from the start of any relationship who they are, and what they are. Jesus Christ is their first love and their first loyalty (Matthew 10:37). Their way of life (1 Peter 1:16), the way they spend their time (Luke 2:49), their commitment to their Lord and their brothers and sisters (John 14:15), make them different from other people. In particular, their moral standards are different from what is normal in most societies today (Ephesians 5:11), and they will not engage in behaviours that might seem normal to people who do not share their faith.

If you make this clear and stick to your principles, there is likely to be one of two outcomes. One is that the relationship ends; the other is that your girlfriend will want to know more about what makes you the way you are. Experience shows that people have been brought to God by being first attracted to His people—which has always been God's intention (Deuteronomy 4:6).

There may come a time when you're thinking of marriage, and that is the time to make a serious choice: '*Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?*' (2 Corinthians 6:14.) Jesus Christ loves us and gave himself for us (Ephesians 5:2), and he wants us to return his love. '*Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me*' (Matthew 10:37). If a disciple of Christ chooses to give themselves in the most intimate human union to someone who does not share their love for Christ, what does that say about their discipleship?

WORDSEARCH



Words

seminee
oftostolo
adnh
ym
hirtg
adis
tis

Bonus words

vdadi
cbsiesr

Psalm 110 is a prophecy about Jesus Christ, and is the most quoted Psalm in the New Testament. Jesus himself used it to challenge the Pharisees in the temple, in order to show that he, the promised Christ or Messiah, was the son of God (Luke 20:41-44, also recorded in Matthew and Mark).

Insert the words below to complete verse 1 of this Psalm, as quoted by Jesus.

The LORD ____ to ____
Lord, * ____ at my
_____, until I make
your ____ your ____."

The wordsearch contains these seven words together with name of the prophet who wrote the words, and the religious group (some of whom were Pharisees) whom Jesus subsequently criticized.

ANNA HART



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