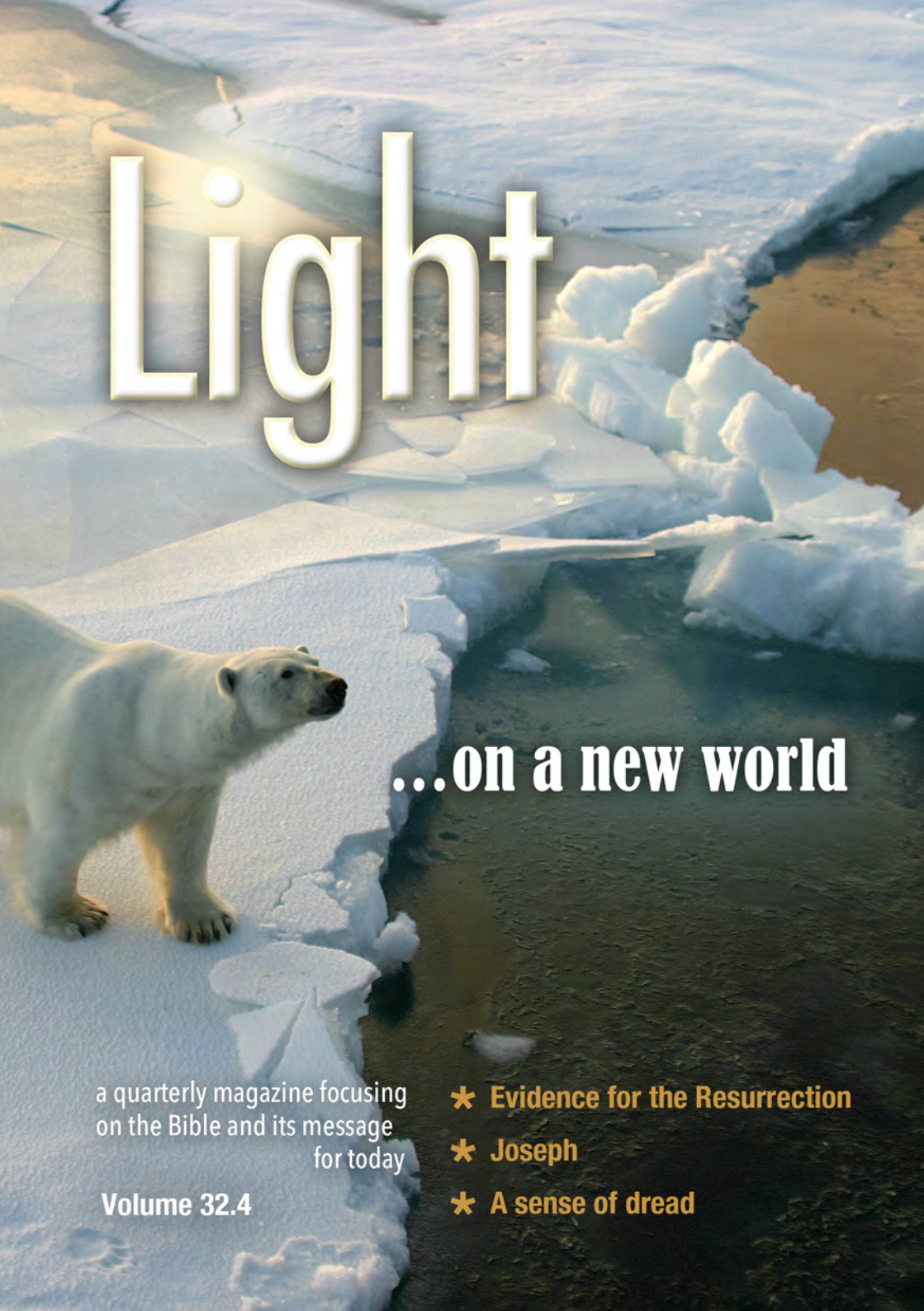




Light

...on a new world

a quarterly magazine focusing
on the Bible and its message
for today

Volume 32.4

- ★ **Evidence for the Resurrection**
- ★ **Joseph**
- ★ **A sense of dread**

in this issue

- 3** **Evidence for the Resurrection**
- 8** **Joseph as a type of Christ**
- 14** **from the editor**
- 16** **Comment –**
from my bookshelf
- 20** **Basic Bible Teaching**
The History of Israel Part 4
- 27** **Signs of the Times**
A sense of dread
- 32** **from our mailbag**
- 34** **Bible Questions and Answers**

cover picture

The existence of the polar bear is under threat as our polar ice caps shrink, one of the many signs of global warming.

See articles pages 16 and 27

LIGHT BIBLE PUBLICATIONS

for contact details see inside back cover



Evidence for the Resurrection

of Jesus Christ from the dead

Part 1 Introduction

The Bible is emphatic that the first Christians believed that Jesus rose from the dead in bodily form. This was the basis of the original gospel preached on the day of Pentecost as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles: *'...Whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death... This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses'* (Acts 2:22–32). Belief in the physical resurrection of Jesus was a basic requirement for faith as the Apostle Paul so dramatically puts it in his first letter to the Corinthians chapter 15. He explains that if Jesus hasn't risen from the dead then his preaching of the gospel is vain and a person's faith in that gospel is also vain. In which case he concludes *'... we are of all men the most pitiable'* (I Corinthians 15:19)

'A conjuring trick with bones'

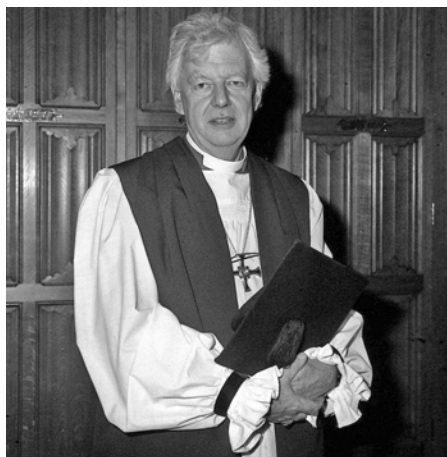
With this background it is therefore somewhat surprising that the late Bishop of Durham, David Jenkins (1925–2016), a leading Anglican theologian, when commenting about the resurrection, dismissed the idea of the empty tomb as:

'just a conjuring trick with bones' saying that he did not believe in the physical resurrection of Jesus. He later tried to clarify his position by saying that he maintained that 'the resurrection is real'. Exactly what he meant by a real resurrection that was not physical he left to the imagination of his audience. Despite his playing with words in this way, David Jenkins' public statements on the topic caused great controversy among his flock. A petition was signed by more than 12,000 people and submitted to the Archbishop of York concerning his suitability to be a bishop.

Why, we may ask, would a bishop and theologian want to make statements that appear to undermine basic biblical teaching on so fundamental a



subject? I venture two suggestions. Firstly, the concerns of bishops and theologians are rarely the stuff of media headlines, but Jenkins' public pronouncements on this topic caught the imagination of copywriters and journalists in the media and produced a great deal of public interest.



David Jenkins, one time Bishop of Durham

Church teaching not based on the Bible

The second and more fundamental reason why he would make such statements is related to his religious background in the Anglican Church. As an upholder of the doctrine of the trinity, like clergymen of all the mainstream churches, his basic position was that Jesus is God the Son and has always been so. This is important to remember in this context because it has a bearing on the idea of a bodily resurrection. The

Anglican Church is founded upon 'The Thirty Nine Articles' first published in 1562. The first of these articles states: 'There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker, and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost'.

The first thing to note about this statement is that it makes no reference to the Bible. Whilst parts of this first article are true, taken overall this statement is objectionable from a biblical point of view. Leaving any objections aside for a moment, and taking the first article of the Anglican Church at face value, we might consider what the implications are for the bodily resurrection of Jesus. If Jesus is God then as such he has no body. If he had a body during the years that he lived as a man what use would he have for such a thing now that he has ascended to heaven? Looking at the question in this way we can see why a theologian might have doubts about the physical and bodily resurrection of Jesus. To put it bluntly, if Jesus is

God why make a fuss about a bodily resurrection?

Bible teaching about the resurrection

The Bible insists that Jesus literally and physically rose from the dead. Our faith is meaningless without it. This is the full quotation from 1 Corinthians 15.12-19:

‘Now if Christ is preached that he has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is vain and your faith is also vain. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ, whom he did not raise up – if in fact the dead do not rise.

For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.’

To make it plain, David Jenkins’ starting point was faulty. According to the Bible, Jesus is not God, contrary to the first of the Thirty

Nine Articles. Furthermore, all existence in the Bible is portrayed as bodily existence. Nowhere do we find the idea of disembodied spirit existence. The idea of an ‘immortal soul’ is derived from paganism and not from the Bible (see note at end of this article). In the Bible all souls are mortal: *‘The soul who sins shall die’*, we read in Ezekiel 18:20.

Deathlessness is never associated with a soul. Not only do souls die but they are always represented as being naturally subject to death. Life after death is only to be hoped for through the resurrection of the body. The Bible teaches that a soul is nothing more than a living, breathing being and this is confirmed in the Genesis record of creation where we are told that *‘man became a living soul’* (Genesis 2:7 KJV). The Hebrew word translated *‘living soul’* in the KJV is more correctly translated *‘living being’* in the NKJV. The death of the soul is just the reversal of that process.

A little further on in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 we have bodily existence and resurrection explained:

‘There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in

glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.'

1 Corinthians 15:41-44

The bodily resurrection of Jesus is a pattern for believers

Natural bodies are weak, subject to corruption and death, but spirit bodies are glorious, incorruptible and not any more subject to death. Those raised from the dead will be given spirit bodies to die no more. It is important to grasp this principle because the death and resurrection of Jesus are portrayed in the Bible as a pattern for the saving of the faithful. Jesus is described as the '*first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep*' (1 Corinthians 15:20). Just as Jesus rose from the dead, so the faithful can hope to be raised: '*For if we have been united together in the likeness of his death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of his resurrection*' (Romans 6:5). If Jesus has not been bodily raised, then we cannot hope to be.

Jesus, from his birth, had a natural body subject to sin disease and death. When raised from the dead his body was changed to a spirit body, glorious, powerful and no longer subject to sin and death. To have a body like that was the hope of the first Christians. To achieve this glorious prospect required a belief in the gospel and, at the very heart of the gospel that was preached, was the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Hence Paul's insistence on a belief in the resurrection of Christ. Thus the true Christianity of the Bible is not just a moral code for life or a framework for doing good works. Whilst of course it is both of these things, it also requires a belief in the historical fact of the resurrection. Belief in the resurrection is the bedrock of Christian faith.

People of the modern generation like David Jenkins, have difficulty in accepting the idea of a literal bodily resurrection. After all, it is by no means a natural occurrence and so it requires a belief in miracles. Though many today reject the notion of miracles, it is a fundamental part of the message of the Bible. It is vital, therefore, that we examine the question as to whether in our day it is reasonable to believe that the

bodily resurrection of Jesus actually happened.

We wish to examine this in future articles in this series, looking at evidence from a variety of historical sources, both biblical and secular, and consider their reliability. We then hope to go on to examine the motivations of the various parties involved and see that, though nearly two thousand years have elapsed, there is still good evidence that needs an explanation. We also plan to take a critical look at various explanations that have been attempted to try to explain away what happened in a non-miraculous way.

Ian Giles
Norfolk, UK

NOTE:

Herodotus, the Greek writer and historian (c484 BC–c425 BC) wrote: ‘The Egyptians were the first who asserted the doctrine that the soul of man is immortal’. (The Histories ii 123)

Mosheim, a German Lutheran church historian (1693–1755) referring to the immortal soul wrote: ‘Its first promoters argued from the known doctrine of the platonian school, which was also adopted by Origen and his disciples, that the divine nature was diffused through all of human souls’. (Ecclesiastical History v.1 p86)

Scenes from the Egyptian Book of the Dead: the soul is processed through the judgement hall of Osiris, God of the Dead. The idea of the immortal soul passed to the Greeks and was later incorporated into Christianity, but the original hope of both Old and New Testaments is of bodily resurrection.



Joseph as a type of Christ

In the last issue we considered Isaac as a type of Christ and we started by defining what a 'type' is. Perhaps the best definition we came up with is that of a 'forerunner', someone whose life pointed forward to the life of Jesus. We could also think of it as a 'photo-fit' of a missing person. The Jews were looking for their Messiah, and God provided 'types' so that dedicated searchers would recognise the real Messiah when he came.

We know that 'photo-fits' are built up by selecting the correct colour of eyes and hair, shape of the face etc and, if the witnesses are perceptive, they might end up with a reasonable likeness. But the Bible is not concerned with appearances and we seldom learn much about how people looked. We know David had a ruddy complexion and Absalom was very handsome with long luxuriant hair, but we know nothing about the appearance of Jesus. He may not have been physically attractive as the prophet Isaiah foretold (Isaiah 53:2). God is interested in a person's

character not in what they look like (see for example 1 Samuel 16:7). So the identikit that we can make up from the pages of the Bible will be based on events and actions that both Joseph and the Messiah have in common.

In the previous article, we considered the major events in the life of Isaac and saw clear parallels with the life of Jesus. The main common theme we found was that of sacrifice. So let's think about the life of Joseph. Perhaps there will also be an over-riding theme in this 'type'. It is worth noting that 13 out of the 50 chapters of Genesis give details of Joseph's life, so he was certainly a significant figure. Does this necessarily mean he was a type of Christ? I think the answer will become clear as we review his life.

Joseph's early life

Joseph was one of the sons of Jacob (later named Israel), who in turn was the son of Isaac. Joseph was



especially beloved of his father Jacob and Jesus was too, as Matthew's Gospel record tells us: *'...a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"'* (Matthew 3:17).

Joseph had prophetic visions when he was young, including one about his mother, father and brothers: *'...he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, "Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me"'* (Genesis 37: 9). Needless to say, this did not endear him to his brothers and led to him being sold into slavery in Egypt.

While Joseph was in prison, he interpreted dreams which foretold events that were to happen. Jesus, too, was a prophet, which is easy to overlook because of his primary role as the Saviour. The first task of a prophet is to be the spokesman for God, and there can be little doubt that Jesus was that: *'My teaching is*

not my own. It comes from him who sent me' (John 7:16 NIV).

The second aspect is to foretell events (which is where the parallel with Joseph lies) and Jesus also did this (see Matthew 16:21; Matthew 24 etc). Jesus further alludes to himself as being a prophet (see Mark 6:4).

Joseph was not respected by his half-brothers. They resented his favoured status in the eyes of their father. Though less extreme, the half-brothers of Jesus did not believe in him and were initially very dismissive of his mission (see John 7:3-5). Eventually Joseph's brothers put him into a pit, then sold him to some Midianites, who transported him to Egypt, where he was sold as a slave to Potiphar, the Captain of the Guard (see Genesis 37:23-28).

Joseph as a slave

Joseph rose to become the overseer of the house. Potiphar left him in charge, just as the jailer and Pharaoh

Semitic visitors with their distinctive beards and multi-coloured dress line up to enter Egypt. Archaeology has confirmed the frequent contact between Egypt and the neighbouring semitic peoples like Joseph's family. Painting from the tomb of Khmunhotep II about 1900 BC.



himself would later do. During this time he was wrongly accused of a crime worthy of death. It is interesting that Potiphar did not immediately have Joseph executed. The suggestion is that he knew his wife's nature and conduct and therefore realised that Joseph was probably not guilty of the charge of attempted rape, so instead of execution he put Joseph in prison. As Bible believers, we can see God's hand in saving Joseph from death.

Whilst in prison, Joseph proved himself again to be a competent organiser and administrator. These were skills that he would find useful in later life. He was also able to interpret dreams for the baker and the butler. Both these servants of Pharaoh had incurred his displeasure. As Joseph had foretold, the butler (or cup-bearer) was reinstated in Pharaoh's service and the baker was executed (see Genesis 40).

Joseph as a ruler

Two years later, when Pharaoh had a dream that no-one in the palace could interpret, the butler belatedly remembered Joseph and he was promptly sent for. Joseph was able, with God's help and guidance, to interpret Pharaoh's dream concerning seven fat and seven thin cows (Genesis 41). These cows represented seven prosperous years, followed by

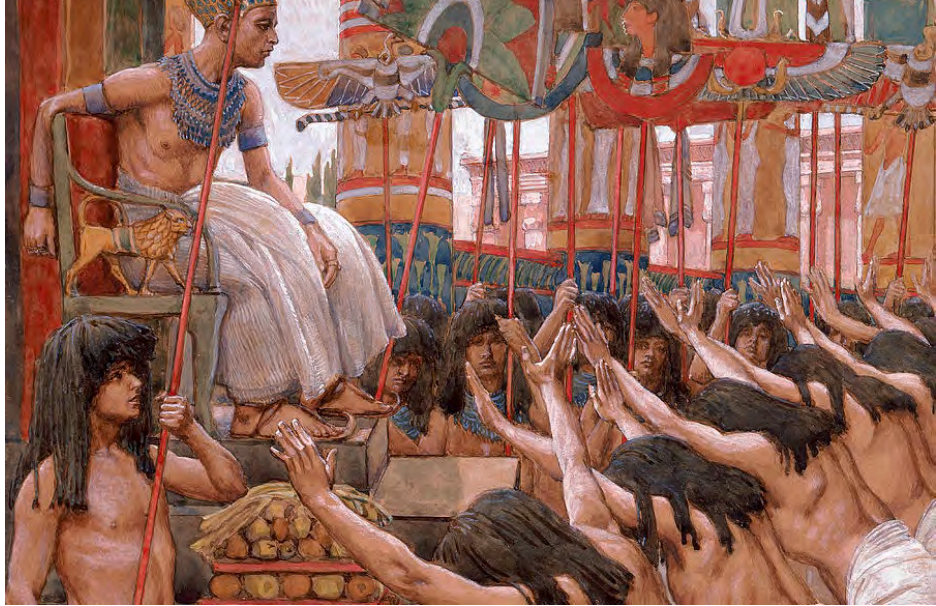
seven years of famine. This was followed by a similar dream, concerning heads of grain instead of cows. On waking, Pharaoh had sent for the 'professional' magicians and wise men to interpret the dream, but they were unable to do so. Only Joseph could provide the answers: *'...Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has shown to Pharaoh what he is about to do"'* (Genesis 41:25).

Joseph cannily suggested to Pharaoh that he should look for a *'discerning and wise man'*, and set him over the land of Egypt (Genesis 41:33). This suggestion sounded good to Pharaoh and who better for the role than the competent organiser in front of him; the one man who was in touch with Yahweh, the God of Israel and able to interpret the dreams?

'Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you. You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you."'

Genesis 41:39-40

This is the clearest example of Joseph as a type of Jesus, who has been put in charge of all Creation and all things are subject to him, except of course Almighty God (see 1 Corinthians 15:27-28).



Joseph rules over Egypt. Painting by James Tissot 1836–1902

Pharaoh gave Joseph the Egyptian name of Zaphnath-Paaneah, which translates as ‘treasury of the glorious rest’. Perhaps this referred to the rest that Pharaoh was able to enjoy, now that Joseph was taking care of everything, but we also have the idea of the granaries being like a treasury and the grain being of great value, once the famine took hold. This reminds us of the words of Jesus: *‘Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in and steal’* (Matthew 6:19–20 NIV).

Pharaoh also clothed Joseph in **‘garments of fine linen’** and gave him Asenath (a name which means

‘belonging to the goddess Neith’) who was the daughter of a priest, to be his wife. What lessons can we draw from this? Apparently, even the second highest person in the kingdom was not permitted to select his own wife! There is a further parallel here with Jesus, although he did not marry. God calls men and women to become the spiritual bride of Christ at his coming. This was revealed to the Apostle John in a vision: *‘Let us be glad and rejoice and give him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be **arrayed in fine linen**, clean and bright, for the fine linen represents the righteous acts of saints’* (Revelation 19:7–8).

Joseph reunited with his family

During the years of famine, Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to buy grain. They did not recognize him, but that was hardly surprising; a number of years had passed. Joseph was no longer a boy. Instead of a humble shepherd (even with an ornate coat!) he was now to all intents and purposes an Egyptian prince. This reminds us of Joseph's dreams, particularly the one where Joseph and his brothers were represented as sheaves of grain – a very appropriate symbol in the circumstances.

We are reminded that Jesus was not recognised, even by his closest friends, after his resurrection and transformation. Like Joseph, the one they thought was dead, was proved to be alive. Further, the Bible also tells us that the Jews would not recognize Jesus until after he returns to earth: *'And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for him as one grieves for a first-born'* (Zechariah 12:10). We know this reference concerns Jesus, because it is referred to in the New Testament: *'... another Scripture says, "They shall look on him whom they pierced"'* (John 19: 37).

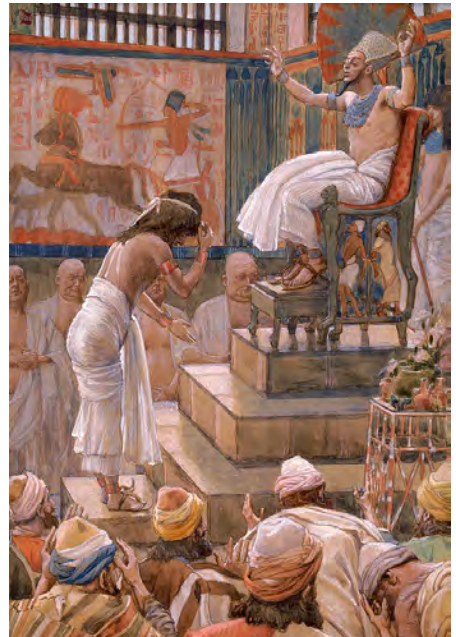
Joseph's brothers are introduced to Pharaoh. Painting by Tissot

Perhaps Joseph can be forgiven for toying with his brothers for some period of time, sending them back with the gold in their sacks, contriving things so that Benjamin, his only full brother, is brought to him, etc. This is not a parallel with Jesus' nature, but very much an example of Joseph's human nature!

Once Joseph was reconciled with his brothers, the whole extended family was invited to come from Canaan and live in Egypt for the duration of the famine. This reminds us of the role Jesus will have in leading his spiritual family to the Promised Land.

The parallels between Joseph and Jesus

In the table opposite we have the principal parallels between Joseph and Jesus, although there may be others we touched on:



Joseph	Jesus
His father's favoured son	His Father's only begotten Son
Interpreted prophetic dreams about what would happen in the future	Prophesied forthcoming events
Lowered into a pit	Placed in a tomb
Sold as a slave	God's suffering servant (Isaiah 53.3)
Wrongly accused by Potiphar's wife	Wrongly accused by the Jewish leaders
Released from prison	Released from death
Became the second highest ruler in the kingdom	Became the second highest ruler in heaven
Pharaoh gave Joseph a wife	God has given Jesus a 'bride' (Revelation 19.7)
Joseph's brothers did not recognise him	Jesus' disciples did not recognise him
Saved his people from death (starvation)	Saving his people from death (sin and mortality)

Conclusion

So we can see that just as Isaac was a primary type of Christ with regards to being a sacrifice, Joseph also had a main role of being a ruler. Some of the parallels might not always be exact, but there can be no doubt that Joseph's rule as the second highest under Pharaoh in Egypt fits perfectly with the position of Jesus as second only to His Father in heaven. Just as Joseph saved his family from death,

and led them to a land of plenty, Jesus is saving his spiritual family from death and leading them to the Promised Land. His true followers, who he called brothers and sisters (see Matthew 12:50), eagerly wait for the culmination of this work, when Jesus returns to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

Andrew Longman
Milton Keynes, UK



from the editor

In the last editorial, I referred to a biblical phrase which often occurs in the pages of Light magazine and for a very good reason. I referred to ‘the race for eternal life’ (see Light vol 32.3 page 25).

A recent UK national newspaper included an article entitled: **‘Jeff Bezos’s billionaire health club – why Silicon Valley’s new obsession is living forever’** (Daily Telegraph 3 October 2021). The article starts with these words:

‘What price immortality?’

It is the grand irony of the human condition that while the young yearn for wealth, the wealthy yearn for youth. So. If you happen to be Jeff Bezos, the founder of Amazon, who is claimed to be the richest man on Earth, how much would you spend on a chance to live forever?’

Founded earlier this year, Altos Labs is an organisation backed by at least \$270 million of investor cash, including an undisclosed sum from Jeff Bezos, recruiting scientists and

others with one task in mind, as the writer of the article puts it, ‘to find the elixir of life’. What Bezos and so many like him fail to understand is that no amount of funding will be able to solve the problem of mortality because it has been decreed by God. The Book of Genesis chapter three tells us how this came about, and the New Testament comment by the Apostle Paul confirms this:

‘... just as sin entered the world through one man (Adam), and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.’
Romans 5:12 NIV

No man or woman, not even Jesus was exempt for, although he was sinless, he shared our human nature (see Hebrews 2:14–15). This divinely decreed human condition is described in one of the Psalms:

‘You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass... though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered... The length of our

days is seventy years—or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away’

Psalm 90:5,6,10 NIV

Death is clearly the greatest enemy to be feared and those words of the Psalm, written thousands of years ago, still hold good for the majority of us. There have been great strides forward in the development of cures for many ailments and diseases. Modern medical treatments can save and prolong people’s lives, which would not have been possible even 100 years ago. However, the ageing process will never be cured by huge investment in medical research as Jeff Bezos and others like him would like to believe. And, in any case, who wants to live for ever in a broken world – a world devastated by human greed and mismanagement, a world filled with mistrust, and a world heading for disaster?

The solution has already been provided by our Maker, the One who brought about the human condition in the first place. Eternal life is available freely, not just for the rich but the poor also. The Bible tells us that it is not only offered to those entering middle age or beyond, but to those who are young too.

Sin separates us from our Maker and unless sin is dealt with and the

relationship mended, it will continue to demand the ultimate punishment. But God has provided a way for the relationship to be restored. Perhaps the most well-known passage in the Bible tells us in a few words how this has been achieved: *‘For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life’* (John 3:16).

God’s demonstration of His love for us is far above any other that will ever be seen in this world. You and I have a God-given opportunity now, to share in a future untainted by human failures, in a world that will be filled with the glory of God. If we show a genuine desire to repent of our sins, be baptised into the saving name of Jesus, and demonstrate in our lives our faith in God and His Son Jesus, the benefits are immeasurable. As Paul reminded the believers at Rome, God will be pleased to forgive our human weakness and give us eternal life.

‘But now you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.’

Romans 6:22–23 NIV

From my bookshelf

COMMENT

I have quite a large collection of books.

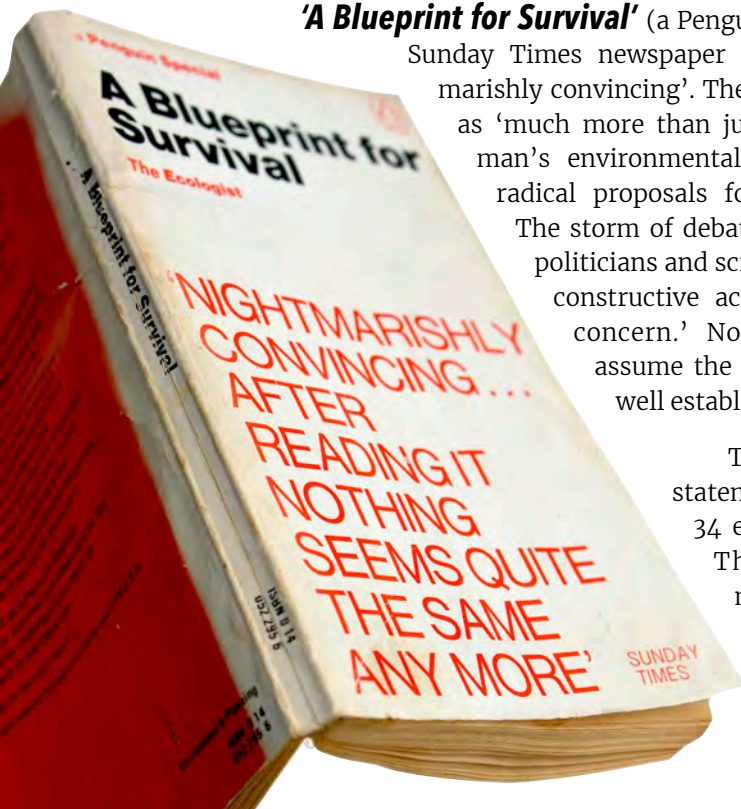
I wish I could claim to have read them all, but I haven't. I have never really been a bookworm, and I tend to 'dip into' books in a rather disorganised way. Even so, over the years I have built up quite a collection, some going back to my schooldays. Many have been 'purged' over the years in the occasional house move, visits to the recycling bin or the local charity shop.

But many have survived, and it's interesting now and again to look back over them to see how much has changed, and maybe just as important, how much has stayed the same.

I am looking at two seemingly insignificant paperbacks, both published fifty years ago, both relevant to the theme of this magazine and the situation we find ourselves in today. In 1972 the 'Ecologist' magazine published this book :

'A Blueprint for Survival' (a Penguin Special) which the Sunday Times newspaper described as 'nightmarishly convincing'. The book describes itself as 'much more than just another review of man's environmental problems: it offers radical proposals for immediate action. The storm of debate it provoked among politicians and scientists has generated constructive action and widespread concern.' Note that the writers assume the problems are already well established.

The book includes a statement of support from 34 experts of every kind. They say: 'Governments are either refusing to face the relevant facts, or



are briefing their scientists in such a way that their seriousness is played down... Our industrial way of life, with its ethos of expansion, is not sustainable...' Unless we take action, 'we shall inevitably face the ... collapse of society as we know it'.

So the message is clear and unmistakable. The problems identified in this report are basically the ones familiar to us today, except that some of the current buzzwords are missing. But the message is there: our present way of life is unsustainable, and a fundamental change of direction is required if our planet is to survive the pressures we are placing upon it.

Published in the same year (1972) was another book on the same theme:

'Only One Earth - the Care and Maintenance of a Small Planet'

(Barbara Ward and Rene Dubois, Pelican Books).

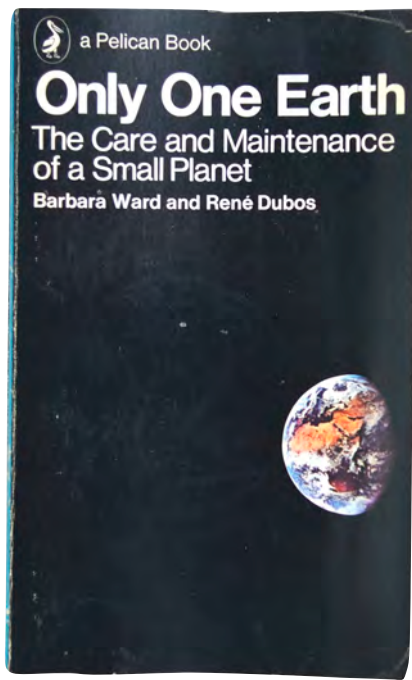
This was published to set the key agenda items for the United Nations Conference of the Human Environment at Stockholm in 1972. This is how the book is described:

'This extraordinary document is a Domesday Book of the kingdom of man... Here is earth's swelling population; here are its measurable resources; here are the knowledge, industry and commerce that forms man's potential; and here, too, in the squalid details of technology's impact on soil, sea and air, is man's record in fouling his own nest...

What must he do to be saved?'

150 consultants from many different countries and fields attached their names to the report.

So there we have it. Two rather tatty little paperbacks from the shelf in my study tell us that fifty years ago the problems facing life on our



planet had already been clearly identified by a whole range of experts, and radical and positive proposals had been advanced to deal with those problems, and these had been widely publicised.

Fifty years. Much has happened in those fifty years – and a lot hasn't happened. For many of us, our lives don't seem to have changed that much. So how are we doing so far? How much impact have these two books had, if any? Perhaps for the moment I can leave you to answer that for yourself whilst I move on to another book on my shelf.

The Bible

I was surprised to find I have about twenty different copies of the Bible! Various editions and formats, different states of repair, some handed down and of sentimental value, various translations old and new, some into different languages for special projects including Hindi, Telugu and Western Armenian. This book is connected to the first two in a quite remarkable way, in spite of being two or three thousand years older.

The huge environmental problems which face humanity today are referred to by our contributor David Gamble in his '**Signs of the times**' series. Why do we call them 'signs of the times'? Because that is how the New Testament describes them – intractable, perplexing problems which would bring mankind to its knees, and would signal the imminent return of Jesus to take control of the world (see Luke 21: 24–36).

In his article this month David quotes the ominous words of Revelation chapter 11, where God promises '*to destroy them who destroy* (meaning corrupt) *the earth*' [see page 30]. Sadly, today some Christian groups deny the reality of climate change, not for biblical reasons but because they are committed to a particular political agenda. So, they disregard one of the great signs of the end of our age. And life goes on: more reports, more debate, more conferences, and a growing suspicion that it is all too little, too late.

The Bible puts our present predicament in its true historical perspective. The account in the first chapter of Genesis describes how God created Adam as the pinnacle of creation and gave him '**dominion**' over it. '**Dominion**' sounds a rather old-fashioned word, but its meaning is

clear – rulership and mastery, the exercise of power in the care and stewardship of all created things (see Genesis 1:28).

Adam failed, as have all his descendants. He failed as an individual, and today we are seeing the collective failure of man's stewardship, due to his greed and his denial of his Creator.

But God has appointed a second Adam, Jesus Christ (see Romans 5:14). He is the first of a 'new creation'. He will perfectly exercise righteous and godly **dominion** over the earth and all its inhabitants, and realise God's intentions from the beginning. The inspired writer of Psalm 8 not only looks backward to the creation account, but also forward to Jesus – his words are quoted by the Apostle Paul (see 1 Corinthians 15:27) with reference to Jesus:

'You have made him to have dominion over the works of your hands: you have put all things under his feet...'

Psalm 8: 6–8

On our own we can do little to save the planet, but its future is bound up with our personal salvation. The Bible alone has the answer demanded by the earliest Christians (see Acts 3:19–21; 16:30–31) – the question echoed by the writers of 'Only One Earth' fifty years ago.

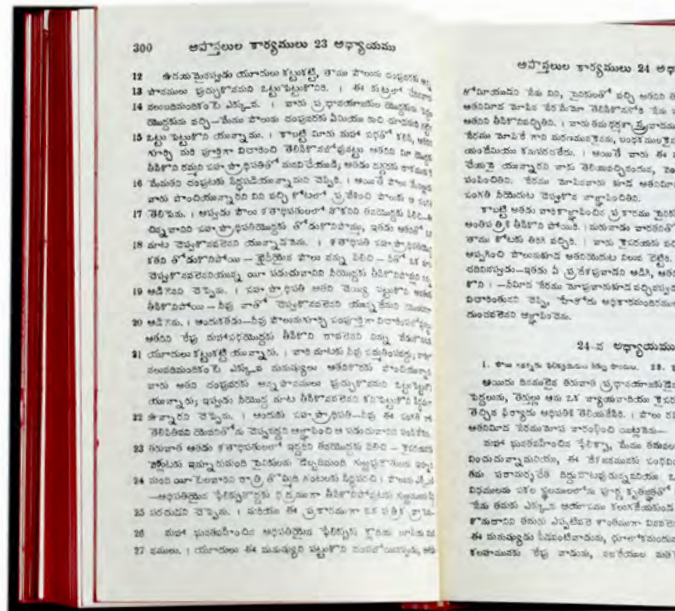
It is even more pressing today.

'What must we do to be saved?'

Roy Toms
Norfolk, UK

The Bible in Telugu, a language spoken in parts of southern India. The Bible has been translated into over 700 different languages – its message has gone out across the world.

But will we listen?



The History of Israel part 4

Introduction

This article in our series concludes the four-part section on the history of Israel. Let's first of all recap on this important section of the Bible.

Readers following this series will already recognise that the nation of Israel, sometimes referred to as the Hebrews or the Jews, are significant people in the Bible narrative. It is necessary to understand the importance of Israel in the sight of God in this context. In the book of Deuteronomy we read:

'When the Most High (God) divided their inheritance to the nations, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel. For the LORD's portion is his people; Jacob is the place of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land... he encircled him, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.'

Deuteronomy 32:8-10

Having looked at the forefathers of the nation of Israel – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (whose name was changed to Israel), Joseph and the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel, we then looked at the period where the descendants of Abraham were becoming a large nation. Jacob's family moved to Egypt from the land of Canaan during a seven-year famine. From that point onwards, over a period of about 200 years, the family of Jacob became a great nation. As they multiplied in number, they became slaves to the Egyptians. But we have to bear in mind when reading about these things that God's irrevocable covenant with Abraham still stood firm.

We examined the development of the nation of Israel; from the time of Abraham and Isaac through Egyptian enslavement, the period of the Book of Exodus, the receipt of the Mosaic Law at Mt Sinai, Israel's disbelief and their subsequent wandering in the wilderness for 40 years as God's punishment. We then reviewed their conquest of Canaan directed by God and led by Joshua. This was followed by the period of the Judges, the

appointment of Israel's first earthly king, and the accession of David, the second king, to the throne of Israel.

History of the kings of Israel – David

David was chosen by God to replace the errant king Saul. David became known, and is referred to in the Bible, as 'a man after God's own heart'. Whilst David made some big mistakes in his life he was humble and God-fearing from a young man, and was chosen by God to be king over Israel.

Read: 1 Samuel chapters 16.

Once on the throne of Israel, David set about correcting mistakes Israel had made over the years. The Ark of the Covenant had been captured by the Philistines and returned to Jerusalem, but was left in a temporary place. David recognised during his reign that there needed to be a permanent place of worship of Almighty God, rather than the ageing tabernacle tent that had been used in the wilderness wanderings. During his reign David planned and made preparations for the construction of a temple in Jerusalem.

Read: 2 Samuel 6; 1 Chronicles 28, and 29:1–5.

David concluded the subjugation of Israel's enemies, extending the borders of Israel. He completed the occupation of the land of Canaan and established a time of peace that extended into his son Solomon's reign.

Read: 2 Samuel 8.

God's promise to David

We now come to an important point in David's life and the history of Israel. God made great promises to King David that included and enlarged on the promises that had been made to Abraham. David was promised a 'seed' or descendant who would have a spectacular role to play in God's plan and purpose. This descendant would:

- ❖ reign on the throne of David in Jerusalem forever.
- ❖ build the temple.
- ❖ be the Son of God.

It is crucial to developing an understanding of God's plan through King David to digest the following passages.

Read: 2 Samuel 7; 1 Chronicles 17; 2 Samuel 23:1-5; Luke 1:31-33.

David recognised that the fulfilment of this promise lay far in the future, and was not speaking about his immediate son Solomon or the physical temple, because of the way it was described. David was told: *'...your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever'* (2 Samuel 7:16). The implications of this are twofold: this king who would sit on David's throne would be greater than David; and of really crucial importance, David would be raised from the dead and live forever to see it. If you have read 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 28 you will recognise how humbly David responded to this covenant God made with him (see also his words in Psalm 72).

These things were prophetic of the coming Kingdom of God on Earth, to be ruled over by Jesus Christ whose ancestry can be traced within the Bible, back to King David. But we should note that Jesus was also the Son of God. The details of this fundamental doctrine will, God willing, be a future topic covered in this series.

The following references show how the Kingdom of Israel was the Kingdom of God in the past, and how it will be restored in the future over the whole earth.

Read: Psalm 89:1-4, 20-29, 33-37; Psalm 132:11-18; Psalm 2; Acts 2: 29-36; Acts 17:31; Isaiah 2:1-4.

History of the kings of Israel - Solomon

King David died and his son Solomon became king. This is also a period of Israel's history that is worth taking time to digest. Solomon was given great riches and wisdom by God. The story of how the Queen of Sheba came to visit Solomon to see the wealth of Israel is well known in popular history. But most importantly Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem that David had planned. Take the time to read about these events.

Read: 1 Chronicles 29:23; 1 Kings 3:5-15; 1 Kings 4; 1 Kings 9 and 10.

Sadly, Solomon turned away from God. He established a large harem which included wives and concubines from other nations. Many of them led him to establish in Israel the worship of pagan idols. This was completely against God's commandments (see Deuteronomy 17:14–17). This tragedy is summarised in 1 Kings 11:1–13.

This narrative is a clear lesson that those who seek to be God's people should keep themselves separate from worldly influences which can only lead us away from God, as it did Israel in the past.

History of the kings of Israel – a divided kingdom

Because of this idolatry, God saw Solomon's behaviour as wickedness and stated unequivocally that the kingdom would be divided after Solomon's death. The First Book of Kings chapter 12 onwards, and the corresponding chapters in the Second Book of Chronicles, record the sad history of how Israel fell deeper and deeper into idolatry. They turned their backs on God and lost the privilege of being God's protected people, suffering great punishments as a consequence.

This was clearly foretold in the writings of Moses and it is worth reading the prophetic words of Deuteronomy chapters 28, 29 and 30. Apart from a few who faithfully served God, Israel, over several hundred years, had become no better than the wicked nations around them.

The kingdom was divided for a period of about 350 years and eventually the Jews were taken into captivity in Babylon. During the period of the divided kingdom, the northern ten tribes were known as 'Israel' and the southern two tribes as 'Judah'. God sent prophets to warn them that brutal destruction and captivity was coming. Many of the Old Testament prophets cover this period and express warnings and appeals to repent, otherwise God would punish them.

Read: 1 Kings 18; 2 Kings 8; Jeremiah 7; Ezekiel 6.

This period of the divided kingdom and the prophets' work makes for depressing reading, but there are important lessons relating to the fact that God clearly blesses those who try their best to serve Him in the way He has prescribed in the Bible; but He clearly punishes those who turn

their back on Him and become idolatrous. This is a lesson for any who seek God and who want to serve Him today. It is a lesson that we will continue to touch on throughout the remainder of these studies.

Israel's dispersion

God made a final pronouncement on Israel, voiced through the prophet Ezekiel to king Zedekiah, the last king of the Judah:

‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “Remove the turban, and take off the crown; nothing shall remain the same. Exalt the lowly, and abase the exalted. Overthrown, overthrown, I will make it overthrown! It shall be no longer, until he comes whose right it is, and I will give it to him.”’

Ezekiel 21:26–27

It is interesting to note that the crown or turban, and therefore the throne, would be overthrown three times. To date, since this prophecy was given, Jerusalem has been overturned but twice. Once by the Babylonians and once by the Romans. The implication is that there will be one more overthrowing before ‘he comes whose right it is’ (Jesus Christ). It is not a big jump to see that in this day and age Israel is constantly under threat of destruction, and Jerusalem is a bone of contention as to whom it belongs. Jesus, talking prophetically, said to his disciples: *‘But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near’* (Luke 21:20). The primary fulfilment of his words came a few years later, in AD 70 and we await their secondary fulfilment.

The northern kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians in 722 BC and the southern kingdom of Judah to the Babylonians in 587 BC, the Jews being taken into captivity by the Assyrian Empire and the Babylonian Empire respectively. The Babylonian empire superseded the Assyrian empire in the intervening period. The prophets stated that the captivity would be for 70 years (see Daniel 9:1–2).

The Babylonian Empire was taken over by the Medo-Persian Empire. Their imperial policy was considerably different to the Assyrians and the Babylonians. The Persians occupied countries without carrying the people away captive. They brought the occupied countries under their rule and

fiscal systems. They also required occupied countries to provide armies in support of the Persian army. This meant that Cyrus, king of the Persian Empire (c. 540 BC), set in motion the repatriation of the Jews back to their land, exactly as the prophets had said they would. The rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem was completed in 517 BC just 70 years after the Jews had been taken captive to Babylon.

These historical events are corroborated by secular history and archaeological discoveries. But Bible students will be able to recognise that the hand of God was working in the kingdoms of men, to bring His people back to their land. The book of Daniel contains a powerful summary of God's hand at work in all these events. *Read: Daniel chapter 2*

It was into the partially regathered nation of Israel that Jesus Christ was born, carried out his ministry, was crucified and raised from the dead – we will deal with this in detail in a future article, God willing.

The most important thing to note as far as Israel's history goes, is that the Romans came and destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70 and the nation was once again taken into captivity and dispersed throughout the Roman world. Indeed, this is the event that has led to us finding Jewish communities throughout the world for nearly two thousand years.

Israel's regathering

But do not ignore the fact that the Old Testament prophets warned of this too, and also spoke of another regathering of the dispersed Jews and the re-establishment of the nation in the land of Israel. From AD 70 to 1948 there was no nation or State of Israel. But the prophets were right. The Jews have returned to their land and are still regathering, and the State of Israel exists today. The next step in the prophetic jigsaw is for the return of Jesus Christ during a time of great trouble in the world. At this point the Kingdom of God will be established.

There are numerous prophecies in the Old and New Testaments regarding these things. We strongly recommend you read and digest the prophetic words of Jesus in Luke chapter 21 and the following passages about the restoration of Israel, a few of the many prophecies in the Old Testament.

Readings: Isaiah 2:1-4; 11:1-12; Ezekiel 37 and 38; Zechariah 14.

Next Time

God willing, we will look at the Bible's message about other nations, some of which are mentioned in the above prophecies. In the meantime, think about these prophetic words of the Apostle Paul to Timothy about 'the last days' and compare them with the state of our world now:

'But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power.

And from such people turn away!'

2 Timothy 3:1-5



A sense of dread

I was born near the start of the 1950's. I remember (probably in the very early 1960's) calculating whether I would survive if the Russians dropped the bomb on Melbourne in Australia where I have lived most of my life. Everyone knew that the bomb would be dropped directly on the Central Business District over the top of the General Post Office! I lived in a suburb far enough away that I thought my chances of survival were reasonable. I think you'd agree – not a nice thing for a youngster to spend time on. But that's the way it was.

'And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken.'

Luke 21:25-26

As a believer of the Bible, earlier in my adult life I thought that the threat of nuclear holocaust was the issue that was the likely fulfilment of those prophetic words I quoted above; *'men's hearts failing them from fear'*. Even in the 1980's the well-known film 'The Day After' was about the aftermath of a devastating nuclear strike on the US. It was certainly a real fear then.

But since the end of the Cold War that threat, although still there, has receded. It's more of a worry what terrorists might do with nuclear weapons. But that hasn't materialised either. It seems to me that the focus of humanity's fears has mainly shifted to climate change and pandemics, specifically Covid-19 – more on both issues below.

Climate change

I was reminded of two expressions about the Titanic recently. The first: **'Not even God himself could sink this ship'**. This was attributed to Edward John Smith, the captain of

the Titanic. There is some doubt whether he said it, but it is certain that someone close to the Titanic did. We know how that boast turned out – the Titanic famously sank on her maiden voyage!

The second expression was:

‘rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic’. That saying is a description of pointless activity in the face of an impending disaster.

Both expressions seem appropriate when I look at humanity’s progress in addressing urgent climate change and environmental issues. The first expression is an example of the unwarranted confidence we place in our ability to solve any problem. And the second seems to sum up what has happened, and not happened, to date about addressing these problems; and what I think is likely to happen, and indeed not happen, in the future. I suppose it is a little harsh to describe inadequate actions taken to date to deal with climate change as pointless. But the main gist of the saying applies. If enough useful actions aren’t taken, the effect will logically not be enough. And words alone count for very little.

Here are some relevant statements that came up in the media as I was writing this article:

‘It’s time for humanity to grow up on climate change’.

‘It’s time to build back better’.

‘It’s another trip overseas... and I’ve spent a lot of time in quarantine’.

‘Build back better blah blah blah’.

The first two statements were part of an address given to the UN by the UK Prime Minister, Boris Johnson. The third is from the Australian prime minister Scott Morrison. And the fourth is from Greta Thunberg, the well-known Swedish climate activist in a speech at a ‘Youth4Climate’ conference in Milan.

Boris Johnson is the host of the upcoming COP26 climate summit in Glasgow, which will have concluded when this magazine is published. Scott Morrison thinks that his priorities at home are more important than world decisions on climate change. Greta Thunberg believes that most of the words uttered by world leaders are ‘blah blah blah’; words that don’t mean very much at all. Rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic indeed!

Glasgow will most likely be yet another occasion when world leaders have got together and made supposedly binding decisions on reducing the harmful emissions that appear to be affecting climate so severely. Some changes will be made and indeed have been made. But there is doubt about whether it is enough. Once again that expression



‘rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic’ seems sadly apt.

Have a look at this article from Time magazine which gives an insight into how the young view these problems. It hardly inspires a level of confidence in the ability of humanity to fix the problems. And, from a Bible student’s perspective, highlights the need for God’s solution:

‘Growing up in the emerging reality of the climate crisis is taking its toll on young people’s mental health. According to a global survey and peer-reviewed study soon to be published in Lancet Planetary Health, a scientific journal, 75% of young people think the future is frightening and 45% say climate concern negatively impacts their day. The study, which claims to be the largest investigation to date into youth climate anxiety, surveyed 10,000 people aged 16–25 across 10 countries.

Levels of concern varied from country to country, tending to be higher in the Global South nations surveyed than in those in the Global North. When asked if their own family’s security would be threatened by climate change, for example, on average 65.5% of those in the South said yes, compared to 42% in the North.

The looming threats of the climate crisis—which include increased extreme weather and economic instability—are affecting how young people plan for their future, the survey suggests, with 39% of respondents saying they are hesitant to have their own children. The proportion reporting that hesitancy varied relatively little between countries, standing between 36% and 48% for all those surveyed, except Nigeria on 22%.

Young people were also asked about how they see governments’ responses to the climate crisis. Broadly speaking, governments have failed to reassure young people through their actions, per the study, with 64% of those surveyed saying officials are lying about the impact of the measures they are taking and 58% saying governments are betraying future generations.

In almost every category, negative feelings about the government’s

climate response were most prevalent in Brazil, where President Jair Bolsonaro has overseen a dismantling of environmental protections since 2019. Respondents in Finland were the least likely to have a negative perception of their government's actions, though even there, 47% believed the government was failing young people' (Ciara Nugent Time Magazine 14 September 2021).

God has a plan

But enough doom and gloom! It is unnecessary for me to enter into a debate about climate change and the politicians and leaders involved. Our future rests on the fact that, as Bible students, we know what the outcome will be. Where most people are apprehensive, or worse, about climate change, we don't have to worry. We know God will not let us wreck His creation:

'...you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were angry; and your wrath has come... for destroying those who destroy the earth.'

Revelation 11:17-18 NIV

These words cover the destruction of those who corrupt God's creation both physically and morally. We are privileged to see mankind's failures as a sign of hope, if we look at it from the perspective God intends us to. Jesus will return in God's good time.

Those who are ready and waiting for him will have a wonderful future in a perfected world.

The very next two verses after those quoted earlier from Luke 21 at the start of this article, are such a contrast to the preceding verses and very much relate to what I've just said: *'Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near'* (Luke 21:27-28).

In the present time of turmoil, believing these words is a great comfort!

Covid-19

'And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven.' Luke 21:11

I've talked about Covid-19 as a pestilence before. And so it is. But for this article I want to focus on another issue. Courtesy of Covid-19 we now have a debate between two groups in many countries, most notably and sharply in the US. But it's alive and well in Australia where I live. How about where you live? The two groups I refer to are the 'Vaxxers' and the 'Anti-Vaxxers'. It's yet another divisive issue in societies that are

already divided, often bitterly, over so many things.

It reminds me of the feet in the image that the ancient Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of, and the Old Testament prophet Daniel explained to him. It's in Daniel chapter 2 if you want to read it. But the bottom line for now is that the feet of the image comprised a mixture of iron and clay. These two materials will not adhere to each other. This is often interpreted as prophesying an unstable state of international affairs. Correctly so in my view. But I think there's more. It is also an apt description of the state of so many countries' internal affairs. That makes the prophecy in Daniel all the more remarkable. And note that it is when this situation applies that Jesus will return. What a wonderful thing to focus on amidst the turmoil in our societies!

A House of Cards

Recently I read a fascinating article entitled "Banking Is A House of Cards But It Works, usually." This is the web link:

<https://medium.datadriveninvestor.com/banking-is-a-house-of-cards-that-only-patience-and-luck-can-build-53f78a7f11b6>

The author's main contention is that although the financial system is indeed a 'house of cards', inherently prone to risk, complex, and at times

inequitable, it has brought great benefits to our world. A literal house of cards stands only as a result of balance, friction, luck and skill. The more layers it has, the more impressive and complex it is, but the riskier it becomes. World finance is the same.

The main point I want to make here is that the complexity of the financial system is another component in a raft of technologies and systems that support most of the things we take for granted that enable our lifestyle. How easily it can all break. If nothing else, Covid-19 has vividly demonstrated that.

Back to the world of finance. You don't have to look very hard to find inequity. Even during the pandemic, the very rich have been getting richer and the gap between the poor and the rich grows bigger. Contrast all that with this scriptural passage: *'...and he shall not judge by the sight of his eyes, nor decide by the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth...'* (Isaiah 11:3-4).

That's all going to happen when Jesus returns. My hope is that he comes back soon and that he finds a lot of people ready and waiting for him!

David Gamble
Melbourne, Australia



from our mailbag

A reader of the Light magazine in Malaysia has asked: ‘why did Yahweh command the Israelites to annihilate the pagan nations dwelling around them with their offspring, and not show compassion or mercy, although the Bible says Yahweh is a God full of mercy and compassion?’

In our modern world we still have instances of ethnic cleansing which is quite rightly denounced as barbaric and unacceptable. But when we consider the reasons this occurs, it quite clearly demonstrates that this action is often a direct result of people’s desire for political and national advantage.

The record of similar instances in the Scriptures are quite different as the questioner points out. It was as a result of an instruction to Israel by Yahweh (Israel’s God) not national leaders seeking personal revenge or greed. (It should be noted that the

name Yahweh was revealed to Moses as the memorial name of God at the burning bush, before he returned to Egypt to lead his people from Egyptian slavery to the promised land – see Exodus 3:13-15).

In Isaiah we are reminded that we cannot apply human thinking and logic to God’s decisions:

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways’, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”
Isaiah 55:8,9

We cannot question the decision of God who knows everything, both present and future. In the past his commands and actions were directed towards the wellbeing of his chosen people Israel, both physically, morally, and in their religious worship. God’s instruction was very clear: *‘Do not turn to idols or make gods of cast metal for yourselves. I am the LORD your God’* (Leviticus 19:4 NIV).

We have confirmation of this before the Israelites conquered and occupied the land of Canaan:

‘Fear the LORD your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name. Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you; for the LORD your God, who is

among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land'

Deuteronomy 6:13-15 NIV

The Canaanites in the land, and surrounding it, were idol worshippers with child sacrifice and other evil practises carried out as part of their religious rites. In the longer term, this did have a bad influence on the Israelites. We often read that the people strayed from following Yahweh and began to worship these Canaanite idols which remained in the land. This was as a result of their failure to destroy them, and God's anger was aroused against them (see for example Judges 2:11-14).

So, we can only conclude that God foresaw the temptations that would happen in the future as a result of pagan influences if they were not completely removed. The destruction commanded by Yahweh was designed to protect His people from perverted religious practices and remind them that the pagan worship of their neighbours was something to be on their guard against.

God is a God of compassion and mercy as James tells us: '*...the Lord is very compassionate and merciful*' (James 5:11), but we must remember this is conditional. The Apostle Paul confirms this when writing to the believers in Rome:

'What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion"'. Romans 9:14,15

God's compassion and mercy is reserved for those who faithfully acknowledge Him as the great Creator and Sustainer of all life, for it is by His mercy and grace (unmerited love) that we can be saved. This has been demonstrated in the life of His son Jesus Christ who came into the world to save sinners as Paul reminded Titus: '*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men*' (Titus 2:11). Again, in Paul's letter to the Ephesians we read: '*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and not of yourselves; it is the gift of God*' (Ephesians 2.8).

So, to conclude, we cannot question the decisions of Almighty God, although we might sometimes find them difficult to understand. But we do know that salvation resulting in eternal life is a personal matter, not based on our efforts but on the compassion, mercy and love of God and it is available to us all through faith and trust in Him.

John Carpenter
Kent, UK

Bible Questions and Answers

This is an answer to a question about the Apostle Paul's attitude to women. Is the Apostle Paul being unfair to women in his advice to Timothy?

He wrote:

'I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works. Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.' I Timothy 2:8-14

These verses state that the men (brothers) should pray and lead the congregation in public worship, whilst the women (sisters) should adopt a quiet and submissive attitude, not exercising authority over the men. When individuals become related to Jesus Christ through baptism, they become his

brothers and sisters and are referred to in this way many times in the New Testament (see for example Mark 3:35; I Corinthians 16:1; James 2:15-16).

The Apostle also goes right back to the events in Eden when explaining his reasons to Timothy (see Genesis chapter 3:6).

Was Paul inspired when he wrote this letter?

So, was Paul correct in his assessment? The first point to consider is whether Paul was directly inspired by God when writing his letters. The answer is 'yes he was', for on several occasions Paul directly refers to being instructed by God's power, the Holy Spirit (see for example Romans 15:18-19). The scriptures, which includes the letters of Paul, are divinely inspired for the following reasons.

He wrote about the way in which the Holy Spirit was revealing God's Word through the Apostles, teaching the 'mysteries' hidden in the Old Testament concerning Jesus Christ. The things which had been concealed from the eyes of previous generations were now revealed, as he wrote to the believers at Corinth:

‘...“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God... no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit... from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.’

I Corinthians 2:9-13

Again, Paul refers to his direct contact with the Holy Spirit when writing to Timothy:

‘Now the spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.’

1 Timothy 4:1-3

Therefore, just because a teaching does not fit with 21st Century society’s thinking, it does not mean it should be rejected. To judge God’s Word by contemporary human ideas completely negates the authority of scripture. If we don’t accept that the Apostle Paul was writing through the Spirit’s guidance, we have the dangerous situation of picking and choosing what we accept and what we don’t. In fact, we could adopt this wrong approach throughout the Bible, which many do. Erosion of Biblical teaching has been in operation for centuries, such that many original doctrines have been completely lost or ignored as irrelevant to modern Christianity. The role of women in the church (translated from Greek *ekklesia* meaning assembly or congregation) is one such doctrine.

Sisters in Christ – not women in the world

It is important to understand at the outset the position of women (sisters) in the church before God. They have exactly the same highly privileged position as all baptised believers, being joined to Christ, and being daughters of God. There are no second-class citizens in the family of God. Paul emphasised the equality of all who are in Christ in his letter to the Galatians. They are all one, part

of the body of Christ, and related to an inheritance of the promises to Abraham:

‘There is neither Jew nor Greek... slave nor free... male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus’

Galatians 3:28

To be a son or a daughter of God brings exactly the same privileges, honour and responsibilities to all individuals, regardless of whether they are men or women.

Paul refers to a woman being *‘saved in childbearing’* (1 Timothy 2:15) amongst other things. Bearing children and nurturing the family is an important responsibility of a God-fearing married woman, blessed with children. The influence of the mother on the family is a key factor in a Christian household, the importance of which cannot be underestimated.

It is, however, the role that sisters are called upon to undertake in the church that is different from brothers, although both are subject to scriptural teaching and commandments. If we think that women cannot be a powerful influence for good and an instrument to be used for the furtherance of the Gospel, we will be very wrong as the following examples demonstrate.

Examples of women of faith

Deborah was a judge in Israel and, together with Barak, led Israel to victory against the Canaanites (see Judges 4:4–10). Ruth was a Moabitess, but her heartfelt declaration of faith (see Ruth 1:16–17), and her subsequent behaviour has marked her out as one of the outstanding women of the Bible. The same can be said of Rahab the harlot. It was her faith and her actions based on that faith, that qualified her to be a daughter of God (see Joshua chapter 2). It was the wisdom and diplomacy of Abigail that saved her foolish husband Nabal from David’s wrath (see 1 Samuel 25).

Proverbs 31 sets out in poetic form the qualities of a good wife: *‘her worth is far above rubies’*. Her responsibilities extend far and wide as she guides and supports her household. Whilst this chapter also has a symbolic application to Christ’s true church as a whole (referred to as his bride in the New Testament), the original ideas clearly apply to an excellent woman.

The Apostle Paul, in Ephesians chapter 5: 25–33, exhorts husbands to love and cherish their wives to the highest possible extent – in fact even as Christ cares for the true church! Women are not to be denigrated or treated with disrespect in any shape or form. These were Paul’s words

through the Spirit, so he was certainly not a denigrator of women! That would be utterly opposed to scriptural principles.

Scripture records the devotion of the women at the foot of the cross, and those who went to the tomb with spices in an act of love to anoint Jesus' body – only to find the stone rolled away! It was Mary who ran back to break the news to the sceptical disciples. There are examples in the early church of enthusiastic women of faith, active in their respective roles, being recipients and promoters of the gospel message. Timothy's upbringing in a godly household is one such example (compare 2 Timothy 1:5 with 3:15).

So, were women active and influential for good in the early church? We can answer that with a resounding 'yes they were'. But was their role in the church the same as the men? The simple answer to that is 'no it wasn't', because they accepted and followed the authority of scripture, in the teaching of the apostles.

The teaching of Paul through the Spirit

Paul instructed Timothy: '*I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man but to be in silence*' (1 Timothy 2:12). The word

'silence' used here by Paul is translated from a Greek verb meaning 'causing no disturbance to others' and is associated with meekness and quietness of disposition.

This must mean within the formal assembly of the church, otherwise a woman would have a vow of silence and be unable to teach even her own children, which is clearly contrary to scripture and is one of her primary duties. However, Paul's teaching prohibits a woman from having authority over a man or to teach in the church assembly. Sisters must give place to brothers in the duties of speaking and teaching, and not have a leading role. It must mean this, for elsewhere sisters are exhorted to teach younger women (Titus 2:3–5). Priscilla helped her husband Aquila teach Apollos (Acts 18:26), and Philip had four virgin daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:9).

Whenever the church is assembled, however, sisters are to adopt a submissive disposition, not undertaking the lead in worship or speaking or praying on behalf of the congregation. In this way they are to be '*in silence*' and not to hold a formal 'public' office over a brother. In the first century church the overseers were to be brethren. This can be demonstrated by looking at those who were appointed to hold office. When we look at the qualifications of

‘pastors’, literally shepherds of the church, they were to be the husband of one wife (1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6). This clearly implies that wives were not to be the shepherds, though they no doubt would have supported and assisted their husbands and been very active in other ways in the church.

Finally, the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians setting out through the Spirit’s guidance the divinely appointed model. He wrote *‘Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ’* (1 Corinthians 11:1). He went on to speak of the appropriateness of sisters wearing head coverings in the congregation, a principle that we should adhere to (see 1 Corinthians 11:4–7). This is based on the divinely established pattern recorded by Paul for us to understand:

‘Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.

But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.’

I Corinthians 11:2–3

Justin Giles
London UK



Picture credits

- P.1 (cover) SeppFriedhuber/ istock
- P.3 callofthewild.co.uk
- P.4 PA
- P.7 public domain
- P.8–9 public domain
- P.11 public domain
- P.12 public domain
- P.14 noparrit/istock
- P.16 roytoms
- P.17 roytoms
- P.19 roytoms
- P.27 Democracy Now
- P.29 CCA-SA.4.0 via wikipedia
- P.40(back cover) roytoms

We apologise to any copyright holders whose names may inadvertently have been omitted.

this magazine

Light on a new world

is published for
the Dawn Christadelphians by:

Light Bible Publications

PO Box 362, Dartford, DA1 9GT
England

Editor: Colin Dryland

Correspondence: John Carpenter

Design: Roy Toms

ISSN 0047-4657

The Christadelphians believe the Bible (Old and New Testaments) to be the wholly inspired and infallible Word of God. Its principal theme is the salvation of mankind through the saving work of Jesus Christ, and the setting up of the kingdom of God under his rulership when he returns to the earth.

We believe that over the centuries the original message of Christianity has been corrupted. Light is published to provide a better understanding of the true Christian hope.

All Bible quotations in this magazine are taken from the New King James Version (NKJV) except where another version is indicated after the text.

New King James Version copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

please visit

www.lightmagazine.org

for back issues, special issues and to download computer files.

The correspondence secretary will be pleased to arrange for the magazine to be mailed free to any address on request. Many other Bible-related publications are also available.

We will be happy to answer your questions; please write to the correspondence secretary at the address opposite or e-mail us at:

mail@lightmagazine.org

For more information about the magazine, Bible-related topics and publications, visit the following websites:

www.lightmagazine.org

www.the1way.net

www.dawncp.co.uk

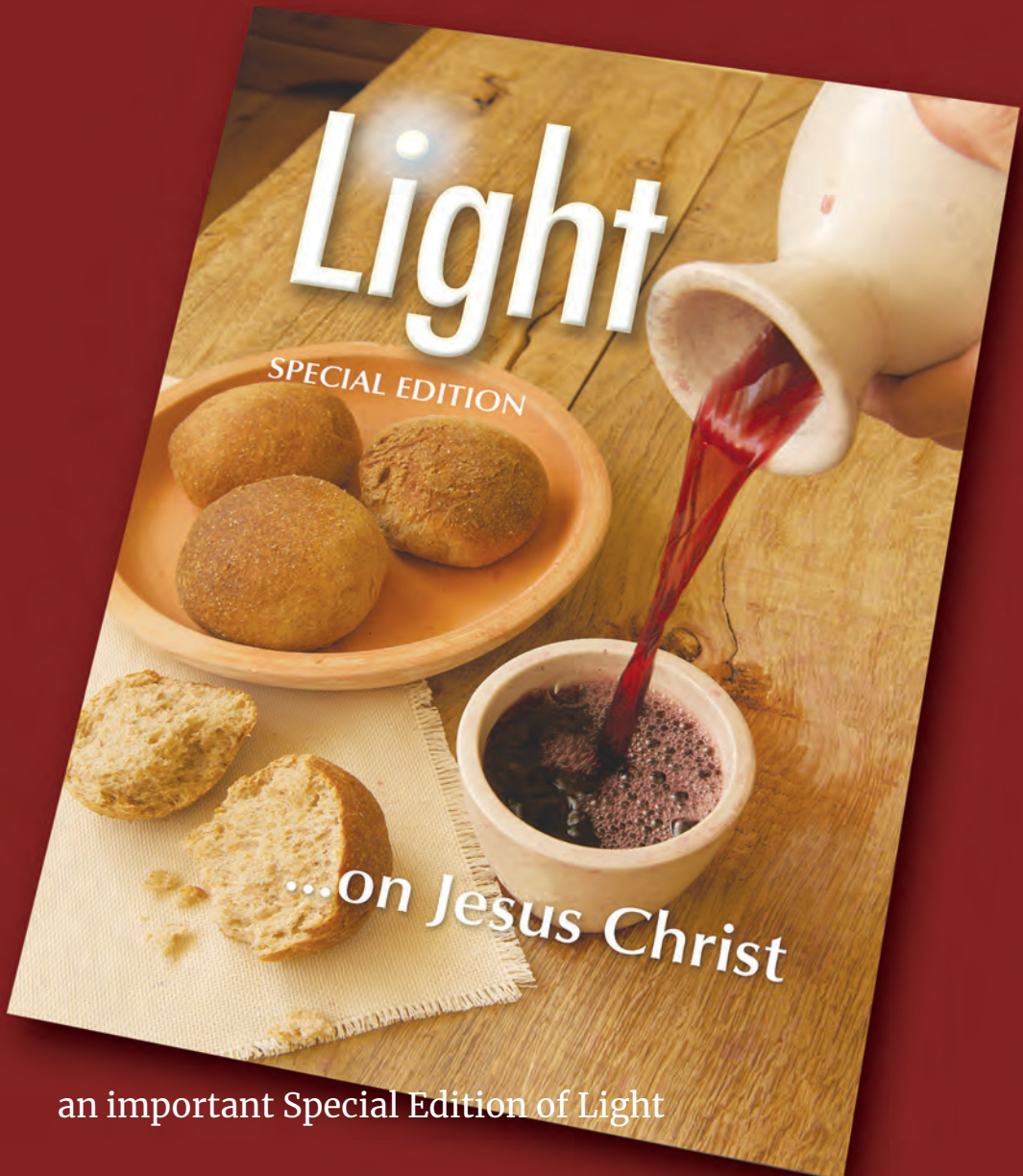


Find us on Facebook:

**[facebook.com/
lightonthebible](https://facebook.com/lightonthebible)**

DATA PROTECTION ACT 2018

In accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations, Light Bible Publications retain direct subscriber addresses on a private and secure database. They are not distributed or made available to any other organisation and are removed following a subscriber's request to cancel their subscription



Light

SPECIAL EDITION

...on Jesus Christ

an important Special Edition of Light

order your free copy from

Light Bible Publications

(address on inside back cover)