

# GladTidings

*of the Kingdom of God*

1582



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# Glad Tidings

of the Kingdom of God

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Its objectives are - to encourage the study of the Bible as God's inspired message to men; to call attention to the Divine offer of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ; and to warn men and women that soon Christ will return to Earth as judge and ruler of God's world-wide Kingdom.

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# The Big Picture

Have you noticed, that as you get further away from something, especially something large, you begin to appreciate its form and proportions better? If we want to look at a house, we will tend to do this from the opposite side of the street, to see it better. Many landmarks are best viewed from a distance in order to get the best perspective. If we travel by air, it can be fascinating to look down at familiar towns or villages – maybe our own – and see them laid out like a map below us.

In recent years, space missions have been able to share with us pictures like our front cover, seeing the whole Earth at once. This is quite amazing and would have been unimaginable 100 years ago.

Astronauts writing about this wonderful image give emotional responses to seeing Earth from space:

*It suddenly struck me that that tiny pea, pretty and blue, was the Earth. I put up my thumb and shut one eye, and my thumb blotted out the planet Earth. I didn't feel like a giant. I felt very, very small. (Neil Armstrong, first person to walk on the Moon)*

*What we really learned was about the Earth... from the distance of the Moon you can put your thumb up and you can hide the Earth behind your thumb. Everything that you've ever known, your loved ones, your business, the problems of the Earth itself – all behind your thumb... how fortunate we are... to be able to enjoy living here amongst the beauty of the Earth itself. (Jim Lovell, Apollo 8 & 13 astronaut)*



*As we got further and further away, it [the Earth] diminished in size. Finally it shrank to the size of a marble, the most beautiful you can imagine. That beautiful, warm, living object looked so fragile, so delicate, that if you touched it with a finger it would crumble and fall apart. Seeing this has to change a man. (James B. Irwin, Apollo 15 astronaut)*

This is perhaps the ultimate in literally 'seeing the big picture', having our perception heightened by seeing the whole thing at once. Viewing it from the right distance clearly plays a part in our being able to appreciate the full extent of an object or situation which we are considering. It is a concept we are familiar with in a practical way, for example in art, photography or design. It is a vital approach to problem-solving, strategy and philosophy, and the expression is used regularly in business. More importantly, it helps us consider our life, our purpose and our relationship to God.

## The Ultimate 'Long View'

The Lord God has the ultimate 'big picture' view. Not bound by time or space, He is all-knowing. From before He created the Earth, He knew its purpose and how history would unfold.

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

More than this, He directs history – small events as well as large – to bring about His purpose. It should be a great comfort and excitement to us that He also chooses to tell us about this:

*Remember the former things of old, for 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 that are not yet done, saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isaiah 46:9–10).*

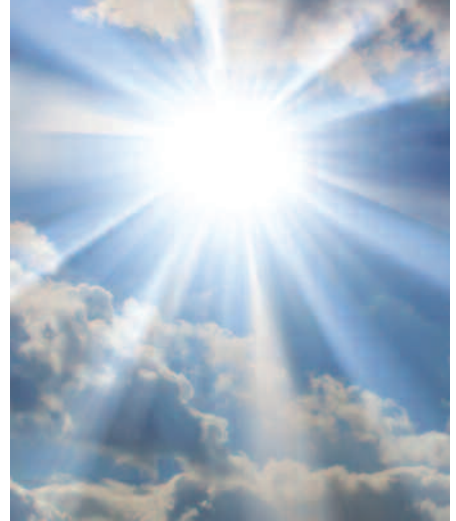
In fact, whilst the Bible has a huge amount of detail about how God is working out His plan, events in the past and prophecy about the future, we are given a very succinct description of His purpose and the ultimate fate of Earth. Returning to Isaiah 45, we read in verses 22–23:

*Look to me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by myself; the word has gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath.*

This is summarised for us in Numbers 14:21, where we read:

*But truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.*

We find exactly the same message in Psalm 72:19 and Habakkuk 2:14.



The fulfilment of God's plan, and our opportunity to be part of it, is one of the themes in this issue of *Glad Tidings*. We see how the Book of Revelation shows that the Kingdom of God will come about, and then we consider how that Kingdom will expand to fill the whole world. The article on the meaning of life is designed to help us put this into a personal perspective, to understand where we can fit into God's plan, and 'Cockroaches' challenges us to respond to it. We will fill out the 'big picture' by looking at God's power and love, as well as considering the authority of Jesus, through whom God is fulfilling His purpose.

**Editor**

# Cockroaches

Walkers were on a beach admiring the beautiful rock formations, with their different layers. “Obviously, there have been big changes throughout the history of Earth”, they said. “All this panic about climate change is nothing compared with previous crises. Ice ages came and went, along with many species. Even if we all were to disappear, then the process of life developing on Earth could all start again if there were nothing but two cockroaches left.” Such beliefs are common. While having a respect for the wonders of nature, many people think that we are just products of an evolutionary chain which includes insects like cockroaches.

## Made in God’s Image

The Bible contains a different message. It teaches that God made the first man and woman on the same day that He made other animals. However, Adam and Eve, unlike the animals, were made *in the image of God* (Genesis 1:27). The Bible also explains the existence of things not easily explained by science, and which certainly could not occur by a random process of coincidence. These things include our consciences, the concept of morals, and death. Moreover, the Bible consistently and repeatedly invites us to respond to God’s message, so that we are not hopeless but have prospects beyond death. Take a look at Ezekiel 18:30–31, Amos 5:4, John 3:16 and Acts 3:19. However, the Bible is very blunt about non-believers: their ultimate destiny is no different from that of the animals.

*Nevertheless man, though in honour, does not remain; he is like the beasts that perish. This is the way of those who are foolish, and of their posterity who approve their sayings. Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall be consumed in the grave, far from their dwelling. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for He shall receive me (Psalm 49:12–15).*

This is one of several passages where the Bible repeats this message. Jesus says the same in Mark 16:16:

*“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”*

## Our Choice

If we chose not to believe the Bible, its message is still true; without the hope of the gospel, unbelievers will cease to exist and will remain in the grave. Then this life is all there is. However, this need not be the case. As explained in the Bible, non-belief is fundamentally wrong. If we believe and repent then we can be raised from the grave to live for ever on a glorious, perfected earth.

The choice is ours. Jesus said that his followers are of much more value than many sparrows, let alone cockroaches (Luke 12:6–7). Let’s seize this opportunity to believe and not act like mere enhanced cockroaches! Let’s be people of hope.

**Anna Hart**

# The Meaning of Life



Throughout time, men and women have asked the big question: what is this life all

about? Is there a purpose or meaning to it? To answer these questions, we can turn to the Bible message and see that it is still relevant to us living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We will look at what the Bible tells us about the meaning of life, then go on to consider the Bible message to us personally.

We will consider the meaning of life in three sections:

- ❖ Where did we come from?
- ❖ What is life all about?
- ❖ Where are we going?

Then we shall look further at God's plan and the promises which He has made.

## Where Did We Come From?

We were put here by a power greater than ourselves, by the unchanging Creator. The natural laws which govern our world do not change and those same constant laws apply outside of Earth. This indicates that the same



power is in control throughout the universe. The Bible tells us in Genesis 1 that God is that power, He created our world and keeps it going. In Malachi 3:6 we read that God is constant:

*For I am the Lord, I do not change.*

Because our Creator does not change, His message does not change either. This is crucial when we are thinking of the vital issues of life and death:

*You are God, and your words are true (2 Samuel 7:28).*

Not only that, but God will bless those who read His word and try to follow it:

*Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord! Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with the whole heart (Psalm 119:1-2).*

## What is Life All About?

The Bible shows that our Creator is concerned about us; in fact, God's care for us is seen all through the Bible. He assures us that the natural cycles which support our lives will continue. He told Noah after the flood:

*While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease (Genesis 8:22).*

God wants us to reflect His care, and the apostle John told us that we should show God's love to others:

*And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also (1 John 4:21).*

God also cares about our future and He offers us life after death, through the work of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is summarized by what is perhaps the best-known verse of the Bible:

*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).*

This can give us a real hope for the future, whatever our present problems. Jesus Christ promised that those who believe in him will be given endless life:

*And this is the will of Him who sent me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:40).*

The problems we encounter can make our lives very difficult. Sometimes, however, they can serve to make us think about our long-term future.



In Jesus' day, a tower in Jerusalem fell and killed eighteen people. Jesus said that we should take notice and understand that without a part in God's plan, when we die that will be the end of us (see Luke 13:4-5). We are also given good advice on this in the Old Testament. Proverbs 16:25 tells us that only

those who respect God have any hope for the future, and we should not rely on our own ideas:

*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.*

## **Where are We Going?**

God's plan is for a peaceful worldwide kingdom. Throughout the Bible, many verses talk of a future world order, ruled over by Jesus Christ, which will be very different from today's fractured experience. Here is just one example:

*Give the king your judgments, O God, and your righteousness to the king's Son. He will judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice... In his days the righteous shall flourish, and abundance of peace until the moon is no more... There will be an abundance of grain in the earth... (Psalm 72:1, 2, 7, 16).*

The Bible tells us that some people will be raised from the grave and given



endless life when Jesus returns to the earth to establish this kingdom:

*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first (1 Thessalonians 4:16).*

God plans to fill the earth with those who respect Him, so we can be involved in this peaceful worldwide kingdom on earth, and even help in solving the world's problems:

*Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection... They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years (Revelation 20:6).*



## **Bible Promises**

We shall now look at the Bible message and what it should mean to us personally. This is the good news, the Gospel. Early on in the Bible we read of the promises that God made to Abram (later called Abraham), the father of the Jews.

*Now the Lord had said to Abram: "... I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:1-3).*

God makes it clear right at the start that everyone can be involved in the blessings on Abraham's descendants. The rest of the Bible is the account of how God works out this promise. Now,

through Abraham's son Isaac, the Jews are his natural descendants. How then can all nations be blessed with Abraham? We find the answer in the New Testament, in the letter that the apostle Paul wrote to the believers in Galatia, an area of modern Turkey. He explains that Jesus Christ is the particular descendant who would bring blessings on all nations:

*Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your seed," who is Christ (Galatians 3:16).*

This shows that it is through Jesus Christ that all nations can be involved in the promises made to Abraham. Both Jesus and the apostle Paul confirm the Jewish connection with God's plan:

- ❖ Jesus said in John 4:22: "Salvation is of the Jews".
- ❖ Paul wrote in Acts 28:20: "...for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain".

## **Our Part in this Plan**

In Galatians chapter 3, Paul also explains how we can be involved in God's plan:

*[God]... preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham (Galatians 3:8-9).*

So it is those who believe and have faith in God's promises who will be involved in His plan. When we have



that faith, then we need to be baptized to demonstrate our trust and commitment:

*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:27-29).*



So by having faith in God's word, being baptized and living as God asks mankind to do, people from any and all nations can be involved in the promises that God made to Abraham and his descendants.

Think about that for a moment. If we are part of God's plan, we have the hope of being raised from the dead when Jesus returns, and to live for ever in a perfect world – that really is a hope which can give our life meaning!

**Lawrence Cave**

# Faith

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen... Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

*(Hebrews 11:1, 6)*

# Baptism

*As many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death... Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

*(Romans 6:3-4)*

*Baptism [is]... the answer of a good conscience toward God.*

*(1 Peter 3:21)*

# The Authority of Jesus

Jesus was, and is, both kind and compassionate. But we would be wrong to think him simply a sentimental philanthropist. His kindness arose out of strength. When he spoke, there was a decisiveness in his tones and words that revealed power and authority. We read that:

*The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes (Matthew 7:28–29).*

## Authority in Teaching

It is important to consider Jesus' authority, for if his claims are well founded we can accept his teaching with confidence.

His authority was not the sort that comes from having just learned a great deal: the authority of Jesus was essentially a personal one, an authority that came because of who he was. This comes out clearly in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7), where Jesus teaches very clearly about how men and women should live, and about God's purpose with them. Jesus implicitly makes profound claims about himself, as well as definite pronouncements concerning future things as they affect his hearers.

When Jesus begins by saying who are 'blessed', he does so with finality; there is no argument, but a simple statement of fact that the poor in spirit, the meek, the seekers after righteousness, the merciful and the poor in heart are blessed. He tells us why. He says these qualities of life are

good because those who possess them have qualities that belong to a future life. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven (that is, God's kingdom, as the parallels in the other gospels show); and they shall see God. An ordinary teacher cannot make such statements: these are based on God's purpose. Yet Jesus always speaks with the assurance of one with full knowledge on the subject. The same knowledge of God's purpose is seen in his saying that the Father knows the needs of His children, and that those who seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness will have all they need (Matthew 6:32–3).

## Authority Over the Future Life

Some of his sayings in these chapters specifically refer to the conditions upon which men and women can enter a future life. He indicates that the conditions will not be easy and will not evoke a popular response.



*“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:13–14).*

Perhaps the most astonishing of his claims concern his own relationship to man’s destiny.

*“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).*

Jesus does not accept anyone claiming to follow him, who does not live obediently in the way he instructs. It is God’s will that must be done; however Jesus is clearly personally involved in judging the issue. He is involved directly as the means by which God makes, communicates and carries out His decisions. Not only this, but Jesus explains that his words are the basis upon which men and women’s future will be determined.

Introducing the story of the two builders, Jesus says:

*“Whoever hears these sayings of mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock... But everyone who hears these sayings of mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand” (Matthew 7:24–26).*

It is no wonder then, that the men and women who heard Jesus recognized the authority with which he taught them. This was not man-made or self-acclaimed authority, this was the authority from association with God.

## **Explaining His Authority**

So what was the ultimate source of this authority? He tells us himself – he is the Son of God, sent by God with a message to give and a work to do. Both the message and the work are fundamental to the fact that, in Jesus, God offers men and women everlasting life. Take a selection of statements from John’s gospel on this subject:

Speaking of himself, Jesus said: *“For he whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the spirit by measure. The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand. He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:34–36).*

*Then Jesus said to them, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father taught me, I speak these things” (John 8:28).*

The tremendous importance of such a message is confirmed, as is the effect of rejecting it: *“He who rejects me, and does not receive my words, has that which judges him – the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).*

Jesus claimed a ‘double’ authority for his message:

- ❖ Since it was given to him by God, it has the authority of the Almighty Himself;
- ❖ As the Son of God, his words have importance, coming from one so great.

## The Evidence

The authority of Jesus was shown throughout his teaching and life amongst the people of Israel. We will consider two examples, which resonate with the 'double authority' described above.

Jesus demonstrated his authority in the miracles that he performed. These are called 'signs' in John 20:30, and this is exactly what they were.

The miracles or signs that Jesus carried out were clearly beyond human power and could only come from God. Consider him raising Lazarus from the dead, feeding 5000 people with five loaves and two fishes, and stilling the storm on Lake Galilee. In these, God was showing that He had sent Jesus, confirming his authority. The apostle Peter confirms this to those listening in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, shortly after Jesus' ascension to heaven:

*"Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through him in your midst" (Acts 2:22).*

The second example is also used by Peter in Acts 2, and is Jesus' resurrection. In verses 25–36 he uses connections to Psalms 16 and 110 to show that by raising Jesus from the dead, and by afterwards receiving him into heaven, God was showing Jesus to be *'both Lord and Christ'*.

Jesus did rise from the dead, a fact which was witnessed by well over 500 people, some of whom wrote down their testimony which we can read today in 1 Corinthians 15:1–8. In this God was demonstrating that Jesus was the Christ (the Messiah, or Anointed). Not only that, but the resurrection,



epitomised by the empty tomb, was also an assurance that Jesus is the coming king of the world. It was another apostle, Paul, who proclaimed in Athens:

*"He [God] has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising him from the dead (Acts 17:31).*

The authority of Jesus was clear to his listeners and to those who read his words in the Bible today. This authority came from who he was – the Son of God, and from the things he said – the message and word of God. The things he said were borne out by the things he did and his resurrection from the dead. We can accept his teaching and build our lives around it with confidence.

## John Carter

*From 'The Call Of Christ: His Offer Of  
Life Beyond The Grave'*

# **Revelation – The Final Drama**

The Book of Revelation is a series of visions, seen and recorded by John, one of Jesus' apostles. We saw in the last two issues how the book uses imagery to depict the history of the Roman Empire from its early phases through to its eventual fall. In this concluding article we find that history is now being viewed from a different perspective: a spiritual one.

In the last ten chapters of the book, the reader sees everything working together towards the great climax of God's purpose – the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth.

## **The Seed of the Woman**

In Revelation chapter 12, we catch up with events inside the church, and the picture is not encouraging. John sees a vision of a pregnant woman in heaven who gives birth to a son. There is a conflict with a large red dragon, which is thrown out of heaven. This unusual imagery is based on the first prophecy in the Bible – the promise to Adam and Eve that a descendant of the woman would destroy the serpent which

deceived them and led them to commit the first sin (Genesis 3:15).

That promise was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus, son of the virgin Mary, and therefore the seed of the woman, who defeated the power of sin in his death and resurrection. But that was long before and the Revelation now uses this Old Testament language to describe the fourth century battle between Constantine and the pagan emperor (Licinius) who ruled over the eastern third of the Empire. Paganism was overthrown and Christians could briefly rejoice that they could worship in peace, a short-term foretaste of the peace of God's coming Kingdom.

## **Compromise and Corruption**

But shadows lay ahead. The woman represents the church. She is no longer a virgin, pure and separate from the world, awaiting the return of the Lord as her husband-to-be (see 2 Corinthians 11:2). She is pregnant, unfaithful to him, and now in a position of power as a partner of emperors and princes. That is why in the vision she is depicted in heaven, and crowned with the sun and stars.

The effect of power was compromise and corruption; the true gospel of the First Century church was corrupted. New teachings crept in from Greek philosophy, such as humans having immortal souls, and the myth that Jesus is God. A hierarchy of priests, bishops and archbishops replaced the simplicity of the early church. Christians once refused to fight in the Roman army, but now joined its ranks.



## Persecution of True Believers

There were some who protested against this corruption. A tiny minority, they championed the true gospel as preached by the apostles, and they suffered in consequence. There is no intolerance like religious intolerance. As the centuries passed, they faced exclusion, imprisonment and death. The ousted pagan dragon is replaced in the next chapter by another composite beast, with seven heads, which has great power and we read:

*It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them (Revelation 13:7).*



The record goes on to describe harsh persecution – including captivity and execution – for true believers, really testing their faith and endurance.

## More Beasts

Another beast appears, this time with two horns. It makes an image of the previous beast and forces people to worship it. It has the number 666.

What is all this about? The different beasts are different phases of Rome's religious development. The seven heads are explained for us in chapter 17, when we come to consider the last phase – a red beast ridden by a harlot. The red beast still has the seven heads, and they are identified as a city of seven hills, ruling over the earth. Rome was the political and religious power of the time, well fitting the various descriptions in the different phases. It was Rome that killed Christians when the pagan emperors reigned. When they were gone it was Catholic Rome, the new religion, which persecuted those faithful believers who protested against her.

## Moving to the End

Chapters 14 and 15 comfort the true believers (called 'saints') with a picture of them with Jesus at the Day of Judgment, when their innocent blood will be avenged.

As we near the end of the story, the spotlight swings back to the secular world of politics, to see how this will be accomplished. In chapter 16, seven bowls are now poured in sequence onto the world. These are described as "*the wrath of God*", a series of judgments on a world and a religious system that has persecuted God's saints for too long.

These outpourings are setting the scene for the return of Jesus. And then he comes! Like the thief in the night who catches us unprepared, he steals into the world:

*"Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame" (Revelation 16:15).*

## War!

The appearing of Jesus initiates the war of Armageddon, the climactic confrontation that runs through all the scriptures, when the united forces of the world set themselves against God and His son. The outcome is clear: defeat for the opponents of God and the Lord Jesus. The battle is marked by an earthquake which shatters the world, and the coalition is destroyed by giant hailstones, like the enemies of Israel in Joshua chapter 10.

The religious conflict reaches its finale in chapters 17–18, where the adulterous harlot is thrown down into a fiery and fatal destruction.

In the meantime, Jesus' faithful bride-to-be prepares herself for the marriage supper of the Lamb. This is a picture of the true body of believers getting ready for the Kingdom of God to begin.

## A Glorious Conclusion

Through chapters 19–20 John observes amazing events, foretold throughout the Bible. In the vision, he witnesses the resurrection of the dead, and the day of judgment. The wicked are condemned to death, but the faithful are granted to live for ever and to reign on the earth with their Lord, with great rejoicing.

The final chapters of the Revelation paint a glorious picture of the new world, the Kingdom of God.

*And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall*

*be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:3-4).*

Ultimately, God will live with men in His holy city Jerusalem, and living waters will glide out of that capital city to bring healing and peace to all nations. We can read about this in Revelation 22:2.



The good news, the Gospel, which flows through the whole of the Bible, is that we can be there. If we read and learn from the pages of the Bible, and we live faithfully watching for Jesus' coming, then, in the beautiful words of Revelation 22:14, we will be given the right to eat of the tree of life and live forever.

**David M Pearce**

*Concluded*

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# **Establishing God's Kingdom on Earth**

The Bible states that when Jesus returns to the earth as God's king, he will make Jerusalem the capital of his kingdom. However, this will require great changes both there and worldwide. Progressively, Jesus will rid the earth of all misrule, crime, sin, suffering, and unbelief.

## **Jerusalem at the Centre**

The 'saalem' in 'Jerusalem' means 'peace', but we know it seems far from that today: Jews and Palestinians fight over it, each side supported by other nations. About 2,400 years ago the Old Testament foretold this situation and said that it would be one of the signs that Messiah (Christ) would soon be back on earth. Zechariah 12:2-3 is a clear example, where God says:

*Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it.*

Every time we see or hear world leaders arguing about Jerusalem, it is further proof that the Bible really is God's message to us. Other prophecies revealed that, although the Jews would return to Israel, they would not

be a godly nation at that time. This also is true today. Israel as a nation is relatively secular, and much more importantly, only a small minority accept Jesus Christ as their Messiah.



## **Dramatic Change in Israel**

A great invasion will destroy the state of Israel as it exists now, as we are shown in Ezekiel 38 and Zechariah 13-14. Only one third of the nation will survive, but their experiences will bring them to conversion and repentance.

*“And it shall come to pass in all the land,” says the Lord, “that two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, but one-third shall be left in it: I will bring the one-third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on my name, and I will answer them. I will say, ‘This is my people’; and each one will say, ‘The Lord is my God’ ” (Zechariah 13:8-9).*

Specifically, the survivors will accept Jesus as God's Prophet, Messiah, and



Son, a change of heart described in Zechariah 12:10–12. This will be a big change from the self-confidence that we see in modern Israel.

The prophet Ezekiel was shown a remarkable preview of what comes later, with God's presence coming to rest on the earth in the temple which Ezekiel saw in a most detailed vision:

*The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the temple. Then I heard Him speaking to me from the temple, while a man stood beside me. And He said to me, "Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever" (Ezekiel 43:5–7).*

## **A Worldwide Kingdom**

These changes in Jerusalem and Israel are important because this new order will be applied globally. The government that the Lord Jesus and his immortal saints will set up in the land of Israel will be the centre and nucleus of the worldwide Kingdom of God. Daniel describes how this Kingdom will replace the existing kingdoms:

*And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever (Daniel 2:44).*

The standards and laws of God will be extended across the world:

*Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit (Isaiah 27:6).*

David prophesies that this will happen, and the wonderful state in which Jesus' subjects will live:

*Those who dwell in the wilderness will bow before him, and his enemies will lick the dust ... Yes, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him. For he will deliver the needy when he cries, the poor also, and him who has no helper. He will spare the poor and needy, and will save the souls of the needy. He will redeem their life from oppression and violence; and precious shall be their blood in his sight (Psalm 72:9–14).*



Jesus will be helped by his resurrected and immortal people, and he will have at his disposal all the power of Almighty God. He will bring into being the just, effective, sound and honest government for which well-meaning men and women have always longed. The standards of this future world order will be God's standards, and all men and women will learn to honour Him. The result of this will be a world of peace and prosperity, of justice and godly behaviour: a perfect place to live.

**John Woodall**

# The God of Power and Love

"With God all things are possible." So stated the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 19:26. Clearly, only a God who can do everything is worth taking note of. A god who is limited in any way would have weaknesses like us humans, and sooner or later would let us down. So what kind of power does the God of the Bible have, who is known as 'God Almighty' ?

## A Powerful, Timeless Creator

He is not bound by time and has the ability to create anything and everything, as we are told in Psalm 90:2:

*Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.*

It is very hard to imagine a being who has always existed. However, if we think about Einstein's theory that time and space are relative and may vary under different physical conditions, it is perhaps possible to imagine time 'stopping'. God states that He created times and seasons along with everything else, when the world began, as recorded in Genesis 1:14. God reinforces this point when challenging Job:

*"Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" (Job 38:4).*

The rest of that chapter is a description from God about His work in creation. This demonstrates the unique power of God, used to create everything we can see. So the next time you look at the vastness of the

stars or the delicate detail of your favourite flower, consider the macro and micro powers of God which are at work.



## The Loving God

The thought-provoking thing about God, the timeless, all-powerful, creative being is that He is interested in the lives of each of us. We are just one little detail in that creation, so why is the Lord God so concerned about us? Because we are made in His image (Genesis 1:27) and He wants to share His nature and existence with us.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus emphasises that God does indeed care deeply about men and women:

*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 put great care into the creation of life on this planet. He worked to a plan and loved what He was doing. Mankind came along and spoilt what had been beautifully made. Imagine our feelings if someone did that to us. However, God loved His creation and the people in it so much that He decided to allow flawed humans an opportunity to have a close and continuing relationship with Him, although He would not force them to do so.

## The Plan

God's plan worked on 3 levels. Firstly, He developed a group of people who would become the focus of showing how the relationship with God could be restored. This was the Jewish nation and He loved them, as we can see in Deuteronomy 7:6-8.

Secondly, He created a system of laws and social organisation for the Jewish people, which He shared through Moses. These would, if the spirit and letter of the laws were kept, demonstrate how all people could relate to God.

These all pointed to the third and central part of the plan. This was the Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, created to complete His plan. God's love for humans was so strong that He provided Jesus, who willingly accomplished the task set before him: to imitate God in every aspect of his life, to do nothing wrong (be sinless) and then to willingly sacrifice that life through terrible torture and death on the cross.

In doing so, Jesus made it possible to cover up the frequent sins that we humans commit, the many ways in which we break God's laws. He showed God's tremendous love for all men and women, through his own love to those around him. He demonstrated this for



us too, who he knew would be born, generation after generation, until God's plan is finally completed.

## Real Love

How great is that sort of love? Could you sacrifice your child? Could you be a sacrifice yourself, despite being innocent? We see how God proved His love in the work of the Lord Jesus.

*For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:6-8).*

How do we respond to such a powerful love?

*In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another (1 John 4:10-11).*

**Cynthia Miles**

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