

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured **Articles**

Of Every Colour (p. 3)

Good News for Everyone

Can You Handle the Truth? (p. 8)

The Reality of Life and Death

Christ – Who Is He? (p. 18)

The Message About Messiah

A monthly magazine written and published by the Christadelphians (brothers and sisters in Christ) and available throughout the world.

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

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Publisher

The Glad Tidings Publishing Association
A registered charity – Number 248352

Of Every Colour

DIVERSITY is a subject occupying many in business, government and other organisations today. Amongst its different elements, an important question is how well people from different races are represented, and whether any are treated unfairly.

This is the result of a world where travel and migration have become much easier. It is easy to travel to most countries in the world. For many people it is quite straightforward to live and work there, either as a legal right or after an application process. Since the Second World War, the amount of migration has been more than ever before.

The problem lies with the tendency that some people have to distrust those who are different. Within commerce and government there have been cases where people were treated unfairly because of their nationality or their appearance. More severely, within communities and countries there have been tensions, even violence, because of racial differences. And at its extreme, civil wars and genocide have been the result. We have only to look at the events in Kosovo, Myanmar and the Kurdish territories to see examples in recent history.

The Bible, Ahead of its Time

Back in the Old Testament, we read how God chose the Jewish nation to be His people. He turned them into a nation, gave them a land and a Law, and wanted to use them to show the world what He expects of men and women.

Yet from the start God enshrined the rights of other nations – called Gentiles or ‘strangers’ in the Bible.



The Passover was the first feast established in the Law which God gave through Moses. It was first kept in Egypt, at the end of the plagues, when God was forming His nation and freeing them from slavery. We might not be surprised if this was exclusively for Jews. But we read that the same rule applied for Jew and Gentile.

When a stranger dwells with you and wants to keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it. One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you (Exodus 12:48–49).

The same applied to the other principles and practices of the Law, as we read overleaf:

One ordinance shall be for you of the assembly and for the stranger who dwells with you, an ordinance forever throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the stranger be before the LORD (Numbers 15:15).

Once the people of Israel were established in their land, they built a temple in which to worship God. The materials for this were prepared by King David, and the work was carried out under his son, Solomon. It is interesting to read about how the work was done – involving Gentiles as well as Jews. You can read about this in the early chapters of 2 Chronicles.

When the work was finished, there was a huge feast and great offerings made to dedicate the amazing building. In the prayer he gave at this occasion, look at what Solomon said:

Moreover, concerning a foreigner, who is not of Your people Israel, but has come from a far country for the sake of Your great name and Your mighty hand and Your outstretched arm, when they come and pray in this temple; then hear from heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You, that all peoples of the earth may know Your name and fear You, as do Your people Israel, and that they may know that this temple which I have built is called by Your name (2 Chronicles 6:32–3).

God Calls Everybody

God should be placed at the centre of everything, and all peoples of the world can come to Him. This is made even clearer in the work of Jesus. He was a Jew but through his sacrifice everyone can be part of God's plan.

"I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to myself." This he said, signifying by what death he would die (John 12:32–33).

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul talks about this subject. He shows how, through Jesus, all people can be included in the promises of the Old Testament.

The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed" (Galatians 3:8).

It is very worthwhile to read the whole of this chapter, where he explains how the death and resurrection of Jesus brings everyone together in him, concluding like this:

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 (v27–28).

A Colourful Future

This is good news. God's invitation is open to everyone. We can all read His Word, obey Him and be baptised. In doing so, we become part of His family and can look forward to His Kingdom here on the earth. In his vision of God's purpose being fulfilled, the Apostle John saw:

A great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes (Revelation 7:9).



Why Does God Allow Suffering?

MANY people ask the question “How can there be a loving God, if He allows thousands of people to die as a result of natural disasters? Or how can He look on while someone dies a slow and painful death, or while men kill each other?”

The ‘blame culture’ in which we live seems to demand that, when some tragedy happens, we pin the fault on someone. When we can’t, we call such events “acts of God”!

Cause and Effect

When God created the world, He established natural laws that involve cause and effect. For example, gravity is essential, or things would float upwards. But it has a side effect: if we drop things, we are likely to damage them. Again, we depend upon water for life; but water can also drown us or flood our houses. We’re grateful for the heat we get from fire; but if we’re not careful, fire will burn us.

Would we be prepared to go without water or fire on ‘health and safety’ grounds? Or do we not take for granted the principle



of cause and effect, and try to be careful how we use them? Life is sometimes like that. Some tragedies can be put down simply to cause and effect.

Much suffering is preventable because it is the result of our own actions. If we smoke, we are likely to end up with lung cancer. If we exceed the speed limit, we may kill someone, or ourselves. Join the armed forces and you might be shot dead. Increasingly we are finding that so-called “natural” disasters are, in fact, the results of our mistreatment of the planet.

God has given us free will, to enable us to choose our own behaviour – for better or worse. Do we wish to blame God for that? Would we rather He took away our free will altogether, so that we become robots?

Wrong Place, Wrong Time

The affairs of this life are very uncertain. Things don’t turn out the way we expect them to. As the Bible puts it:

I returned and saw under the sun that—the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favour to men of

skill; but time and chance happen to them all. For man also does not know his time: Like fish taken in a cruel net, like birds caught in a snare, so the sons of men are snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them (Ecclesiastes 9:11–12).

So, being caught up in a disaster or in an unfortunate accident might be a case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time, like those fish swimming near a fishing net.

The Bible tells of an incident in the life of Jesus, when two local tragedies happened. Firstly, the



Roman governor had killed several Jews from Galilee. Secondly, a tower had collapsed, killing eighteen people. The first was an act of

wickedness; the second was an accident. Jesus was asked what these people had done to deserve death. His reply was unexpected:

Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish (Luke 13:2–5).

Notice how Jesus accepted the principle of “in the wrong place at the wrong time” and drew a moral lesson from it. So, it’s time to look at what the Bible teaches about death.

Moral Cause and Effect

When God created the first man and the first woman, He also put into place moral laws

involving cause and effect. If they disobeyed Him, they would suffer certain consequences.

We can understand this, when we consider how necessary it is for parents to lay down rules for their children. These rules are to teach them the difference between right and wrong, and to ensure harmony within the family. Experts tell us that children need to know the boundaries of their behaviour, without which they become unruly, with devastating effects in later life on themselves and others.

The main punishment that God decreed was, and still is, death. You will find the record of this in Genesis chapters 2–3, which are the foundation for everything that the Bible is about. The law came from God, but it is human behaviour that is to blame for the punishment, not Him. We have all committed sin, so we all die.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned (5:12).

For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity. All



go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust (Ecclesiastes 3:19–20).

One way or another we're going to die. It may be when we are young, or when we are old. We may be struck down, or we may die naturally. The question is not, "Why does God allow it?" It should be, "What can I learn from it?", as Jesus taught the people of his day.

A Lesson for Life

The uncertainty of life is designed to remind us of the urgency of turning to God, while we still have time.

Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, "I have no pleasure in them" (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

We should therefore turn to God and read the Bible ourselves so that we can learn about His commandments and His promises to those who choose to obey Him. In His love, God wants to forgive our sins.

We may want to make much of God's love, but let's not forget that He is just, too. A magistrate does not let everyone off: those who are found guilty are punished. God does feel anger towards those who WILFULLY ignore or disobey Him. In the Bible we read of Him showing that anger in the past and punishing people for their sins, so there is every reason to think that He does so now – it's just that He does not tell us when and where. And the time will soon be here when God's justice will be fully on display, because Jesus Christ will return to earth and one of his tasks will be to judge the wicked.

On the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed



them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed (Luke 17:29–30).

The Removal of All Suffering

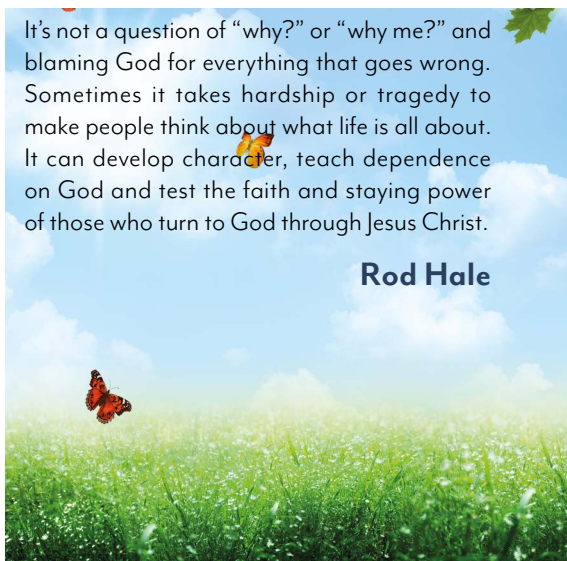
The day is coming when God will intervene and put an end to suffering and death.

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 21:4).

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing (Isaiah 35:5–6).

It's not a question of "why?" or "why me?" and blaming God for everything that goes wrong. Sometimes it takes hardship or tragedy to make people think about what life is all about. It can develop character, teach dependence on God and test the faith and staying power of those who turn to God through Jesus Christ.

Rod Hale



Can You Handle the Truth?



the people put Jesus to death because of the things he said.

Hating the Truth

The chief priests and the Pharisees – the religious conservatives of their day – hated what Jesus was saying. He said they were liars and fakers, and of course they hated that. He said:

The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do (Matthew 23:2-3).

At other times (see Matthew 12) the Pharisees tried to catch him out in debate, failed, and then plotted to kill him. You can see that in debates today too. Instead of trying to learn from each other, people become more determined to defend their position – whatever it takes. They don't want the truth, they just want to win.

Sometimes it even sounds as though the Pharisees knew Jesus was from God. But they shut their eyes to it. His message was so offensive to them that they didn't care if it was true or not – they hated it.

The Unpopular Truth

What was Jesus' message? What truth was he here to share? Here's a good summary, from the apostle Paul:

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief (1 Timothy 1:15).

ISN'T truth under attack these days? We hear about fake news and alternative facts; an inconvenient truth, the unbelievable truth, post-truth. Do we even know what truth is anymore?

But if we look into the Bible, we can see that truth has been under attack for a long time. In fact, almost all God's prophets were attacked for speaking the truth.

Attacked for Telling the Truth

Jesus came to speak and show the truth about God – and he was crucified for it. During his trial he told the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, who was judging the case:

For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice (John 18:37).

Jesus had a particular purpose: to witness to the truth. People had a choice – to listen, or not. Most people chose not to. Most people preferred darkness to light. Instead of listening,

The Pharisees could not accept this truth. They didn't want to accept that they were sinners who needed saving, or that the people they considered to be real sinners were worth saving at all. And they certainly didn't want to believe that this ordinary man, not grand at all, was God's chosen king – 'Christ' means 'anointed'.

Paul was a Pharisee. He didn't accept this truth at first. He could only accept it when he realised that he was a chief sinner: that he was not as righteous as he thought he was.

We might find it hard to accept too: first, that we are sinners who need saving; second, that God is just as happy to save even the very worst people as He is to save us. No matter how well behaved and good we might have been, we need Christ just as much as the very worst people do.

The Pharisees hated it when Jesus criticized them or told them they were doing anything wrong. And they hated it when Jesus met and befriended publicans and sinners.

Some people say, "the truth hurts". The truth was certainly too painful for the Pharisees to accept. They wouldn't listen to Jesus' voice, accept their position as sinners, and be saved. They conspired to kill him instead.

Who Cares About Truth Anyway?

And that's where Pilate came in. The Jews couldn't put a man to death in this way without Roman approval, so they took him to Pilate. He had to decide whether to give them permission to execute Jesus or not.

Pilate asked some questions. He couldn't see anything particularly wrong with Jesus, but he wasn't that interested in his message either. He wasn't interested in things like sin, or being

saved, or all that spiritual stuff. He cared only about what worked in the 'here and now'. Jesus was looking further ahead, and he said:

My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now my kingdom is not from here (John 18:36).

Jesus could have escaped the chief priests and Pharisees, easily. But that wasn't his mission. He wasn't here to win at whatever cost. He was here to give witness to the truth. So the record continues:

Pilate therefore said to him, "Are you a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice." Pilate said to him, "What is truth?" (John 18:37-38).



Pilate wasn't interested. He couldn't find any fault in Jesus. But he couldn't find any great value either. He knew the charges against Jesus were a lie, but he thought it would be better all round to give the Jews what they wanted. So he did. After all, when you get right down to it, "What is truth? Who cares?"

Brave Enough to Live It?

There was one man at Jesus' trial who had listened to the truth, accepted it, and accepted Jesus as the Christ – the one who had come to save sinners. When Jesus was arrested, Peter had tried to protect him.

When Jesus was led away, Peter followed. He watched. Until someone recognized him:

The servant girl who kept the door said to Peter, "You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not" (John 18:17).

Jesus had even told Peter that "before the cock crows, you will deny me three times". We've already seen the first.

They said to him, "You are not also one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not!" One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of him whose ear Peter cut off, said, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" Peter then denied again; and immediately a rooster crowed (John 18:25–27).



Peter was devastated by what he'd done. He wept bitterly. He realized he'd failed to stand up for the truth. And Jesus forgave him, just as he'll forgive everybody who listens to his voice.

Is God's Truth for You?

We all sin, and we all need Christ Jesus if we want to be saved. If you can accept that you



are a sinner, if you are willing to see yourself as no better than anybody else – and no worse either – then Christ Jesus came to save you. And he will save you, if you live by his truth and seek his forgiveness where you fail.

As Peter would proclaim openly just a few weeks later:

"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation" (Acts 2:38–40).

Peter witnessed to the truth, just as Jesus Christ had done before him.

Like all generations, the one in which we live is crooked. It is full of lies and corruption. Many people care little about truth. Some even hate it. But those who love it can still listen to Christ's truth, follow it, share it with others – and repent and be baptized to be saved.

David Barnes

Abraham's Faith

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony (Hebrews 11:1-2).

THIS verse is telling us that faith is the certainty of the things we hope for, the proof of things we do not see and the confidence of their reality. Faith believes what we cannot see, hear, touch, smell or taste nonetheless to be real. It is also telling us that by faith, the men and women written about in the Bible achieved a good account from God.

Abraham's faith is mentioned several times in the Bible, and so it is worthwhile to consider his faith and what it can teach us. God told Abraham many things and made promises to him, that Abraham believed.

He believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness (Genesis 15:6).

Abraham trusted God's word and never wavered, even though it took so long to be fulfilled and appeared impossible. In this article, we will consider three aspects of his faith.

Leaving Home

Abraham left his home when God told him to. Let's think about what that would mean to us. Imagine we were told to just get up, take our families, leave our houses and friends, and go to a place we did not even know the name of, but would be shown when we got there. Would we feel comfortable leaving everything behind to go to a place we'd never seen? I for one would certainly not be too happy about it!



Yet we are given no indication that Abraham hesitated, though he had to leave behind all that was familiar. This is even more amazing when we consider that he wasn't a young man. We might consider taking on such a huge task if we were young and fit, but Abraham was 70 years old! He believed God, and he went.

Promised a Son, and a Land

Another facet of Abraham's faith was that he believed that he would have a son, even though he knew that Sarai his wife could not have children. I think most of us would have questioned this part of the promise since it was humanly impossible. Again, Abraham did not waver in his belief. Even after ten years went by, he showed no disbelief, but he showed curiosity by asking how God would give him a son.

He also asked about the land God promised he would inherit. He asked:

Lord GOD, how shall I know that I will inherit it? (Genesis 15:8).

Please read on in Genesis chapter 15. In Biblical days men used this dividing of animals to reinforce covenants. They would then walk between the pieces as if to call on themselves the fate of the dead animals if they broke their agreement. In verse 17 we see that the glory of God, symbolised by a burning lamp, passed between them, showing that He was responsible for this covenant. Then God stated His covenant with Abraham:

On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates" (v18).

God used this situation to strengthen Abraham's faith, and we can ask God in prayer to strengthen our faith. A man appealed to Jesus to do exactly this:

Lord, I believe; help my unbelief! (Mark 9:24).

God doesn't require blind faith from us. Like the promises to Abraham, the promise of His coming Kingdom on earth may sound fantastic by human standards, even too good to be true. But God always provides some proof for us to base our faith on and one of these proofs is fulfilled Bible prophecy. Just as God has foretold the future in the Bible; just as He has fulfilled His promises to date; so He will set up His Kingdom.

Making a Sacrifice

A powerful demonstration of Abraham's faith is seen in the incident of God requiring him to sacrifice his only son.

Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you (Genesis 22:2).



We can read the account in Genesis 22. This was possibly the hardest test of all for Abraham's faith. But he was equal to the test and nothing, even this overwhelming request, shook his faith in God. Even though he thought Isaac was going to have to die, Abraham knew that God's promise of a multitude of descendants through Isaac would be fulfilled and some miraculous intervention would occur. We find the commentary in Hebrews:

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense (Hebrews 11:17-19).

This test of Abraham's faith was important as it was a representation of what would happen

to God's own Son. The table below shows just some of the similarities between the two incidents.

When Isaac was expecting to die at the hand of his father, God called to Abraham and showed him a ram caught nearby. By this deliverance from death, Isaac was given back to Abraham as if he had been resurrected. The angel of God called to Abraham a second time and confirmed God's promises once more:

By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son—blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice (Genesis 22:16-18).

Following Abraham's Faith

We can read in Paul's letter to the Galatians how this was a prophecy of the work of Jesus:

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).

The Bible tells us that when Jesus rules the kingdom of God, all people will be blessed – read Psalm 72. Paul continues to explain that, if we have faith in Jesus, we can be called children of God, and treated as heirs to the promises God made to Abraham:

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus... And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:26, 29).

Laura Morgan

Sacrifice of Isaac	Sacrifice of Jesus
Genesis 22:2 – Isaac was Abraham's only son of the covenant; Abraham loved him.	Luke 3:22 – Jesus was God's only son of the new covenant and God loved him.
Genesis 22:2 – The Land of Moriah was the place specified for Isaac's sacrifice.	Mount Moriah is where Jerusalem is now – where Jesus was crucified.
Genesis 22:6 – Isaac carried the wood for the sacrifice.	Luke 23:26 – Jesus carried the wooden cross.
Genesis 22:9 – Isaac would have been stronger than his elderly father but he surrendered to his father's will.	Luke 22:42 – Jesus also surrendered to his Father's will by letting himself be sacrificed.
Isaac had done nothing worthy of death.	Hebrews 4:15 – Jesus was completely sinless and did not deserve to die.

Bible Beginnings - Genesis

IN this series, we will look briefly at each part and book of the Bible in turn. Every part of the Bible matters. The wonderful links between these sixty-six books become apparent when you read from all sections of God's word, humbly and prayerfully.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:16).

The Bible is really one book, whose author is the Lord God. It is God's Guide Book to Life – for all to read. Without it, we shall wander aimlessly through life, to the grave. With it, we can know what God has in store for the earth, and how we can share in His glorious purpose, centred in the Lord Jesus Christ. The twin themes of both Old and New Testaments (see Acts 8:12) are the Kingdom of God and Jesus Christ.

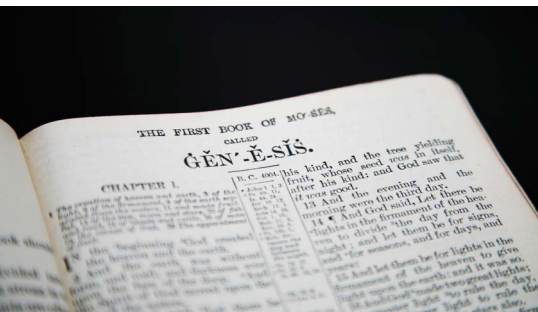
In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (1:1).

The opening words of the Bible teach that God is the creator of the universe, which He made with a plan and a purpose.

A Book of Beginnings

- ◆ Beginning of life on earth (chapters 1, 2).
- ◆ The origin of sin and death and the promise of a saviour (chapter 3).
- ◆ The flood: a new beginning with Noah's family, saved in the ark (chapters 6–10).
- ◆ Babel: the origin of different languages and races of mankind (chapter 11).
- ◆ The beginnings of Israel (chapters 12–32).

God called Abraham and his family to leave Ur, in Mesopotamia, to migrate to “a land that I will show you” (12:1) – Canaan, the future land of promise. Lot, his nephew, settled near



The First Book of the Bible

The name “Genesis” means ‘birth’ or ‘beginning’. In this book we learn about very important beginnings in God's plan for the Earth.



Sodom and Gomorrah, and had to be rescued when those evil cities were destroyed.

God's Promises Through Abraham

God promised Abraham:

1. A 'seed' (Jesus Christ) – Isaac was a child of promise in the short term, but the 'seed' promised to Abraham (22:18; Galatians 3:16) was Christ;
2. A nation – God's people, in the first place Israel (Genesis 17:7,8), but extended to all those who are "in Christ" (Galatians 3:29);
3. Inheritance of the promised land of Israel by the faithful;
4. Blessings for all nations – "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:3).

Abraham's faith was tested when God asked him to kill Isaac. He had the knife poised but he was stopped from sacrificing him.

It was as though his son had come back to him after death (see Hebrews 11:17–19). The promises were repeated to Isaac (Genesis 26:3) and to Jacob (28:13), whose name was changed to Israel.

Jacob had twelve sons, heads of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Jacob's sons sold Joseph into Egypt as a slave, but he was promoted to be Pharaoh's prime minister! Jacob and his family joined Joseph in Egypt, but Jacob (47:30) and Joseph (50:24–25) both asked to be buried in the Promised Land – Canaan.

Norman Owen

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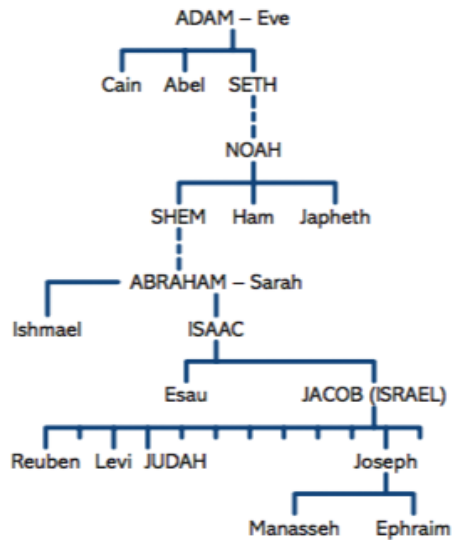
Interesting links...

...with other parts of the Bible:

- ◆ Genesis 2:7 – see 1 Corinthians 15:45.
- ◆ Genesis 2:24 – see Matthew 19:4,5.
- ◆ Genesis 13:15 – see Galatians 3:16–29.
- ◆ Genesis 15:7 – see Acts 7:5.



People Mentioned in Genesis



A Rough Riding Steam Engine

THE moon was full and high as a pilot steam engine backed down on to the front of the late express train from Sheffield to Derby. Its job was to add extra power to the heavily laden train, helping the newer express engines, slow to climb but like greyhounds on the flat. The express had its own driver and fireman. The engines were quickly coupled up. The old pilot engine was wheezing steam and smoke. As the fireman tidied the footplate, tended the fire and checked the gauges, all was well. Pressure was rising slightly in the glass, a little wisp of steam escaped from the safety valve. Just about right!



Driver turned to the fireman, “We’re in for a rough ride tonight! What with being late, the heavy climb out of Sheffield and then the fast ride down into Derby — there’ll hardly be chance to breathe. Be ready to hang on! Everything OK?”

“Aye, Aye captain!” was the fireman’s answer, with a twinkle in his eye. He knew it was going to be tough, but he relished the challenge.

Confidence and Power

Then the fireman said a quiet prayer. Not everyone knew it, but he had been a conscientious objector during the war years; a man of faith. As a consequence he had to stay working on the footplate and learn to take the rough with the smooth. Sometimes he worked with drivers who had absolutely no tolerance for “conscies”, especially if they had fought or lost family fighting in the war. Life then could be very difficult. At other times, like this night, it was OK; they worked well together.

The whistle blew and the fireman waved in response to the guard’s green flag. Almost immediately there was a ‘whoosh’ of steam and movement as both engines moved in harmony, easing out of the station, into the night and the first big test as they climbed. Soon the regulator was open wide and both engines barked savagely as they got to grips with the task in hand. It was on this part of the journey that the secondary passenger engine would really earn its keep, but by the crest of the hill it would feel as though the smaller engine was flying for its life with the express well in charge of the whole train. It was also clear that the

express crew were intent on regaining the lost time. Could they really regain all the time by Derby?

As they crested the hill, the fireman finished firing and shut the doors on the fire and they felt the rear engine buffer up, just a slight bump which shivered through the tender to the footplate. “Now we’re for it!” said the driver above the rattle of wheels on track. They felt the speed increasing, no speedometer, but the quarter mile posts seemed to flash past alarmingly quickly.

“Signals all seem to be off, ready for us, but what about the slacks?” (Slacks were places where speed restrictions applied). “I don’t think they have any intention of observing many of those tonight.”

“But what about that really tight curve at Ambergate?” “Hold on and pray!”

Too Much Excitement?

The rattles and bangs continued to the rhythm of the rails, with the wind rushing past. The cab swayed to and fro. The two men hung onto the hand rails at the side of the cab. The fireman stuck his head out, searching for the next signal – clear away! They were really moving now – something near 80 mph! The old engine swayed around as if the next roll would take her right off the track.

Ambergate curve came on all too soon. “We should be slacking off,” yelled the fireman. “Does he really know the road?” thinking of the express driver.

“The best we can do is shut off so he’s having to really push us.” With that the regulator was closed and the whistle sounded. They felt the train begin to slow, but it seemed marginal.



The next second, they hit the curve: the scream of wheels and rails could be felt as much as heard as the train struggled to stay on the tracks. Finally the express driver had got the message and they felt the brakes go on – so theirs could too.

The curve was coming to its end, the pilot engine came onto the straight and everything just seemed to settle down. The driver opened up the throttle again, brakes off, the fireman tended the fire.

“Straight run into Derby now. The sooner this old lady gets a refit the better.”

Relief

A few minutes later, they pulled to the end of platform six and came to rest. An inspector stood by the cab with his fob-watch in his hand. “Well done lads! You must have flown! If we can get the passengers to move on, you’ll leave here on time.”

“Just a minute,” said the driver, “I need to stand down on the platform, my legs haven’t stopped shaking. Fireman’s alright though, he takes his God with him!”

The fireman thought of his favourite Psalm:

I called on the LORD in distress; The LORD answered me and set me in a broad place. The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? (Psalm 118:5–6).

David Nightingale

Christ – Who Is He?

THE students were unhappy. “Well, I thought he was the lecturer!” one snorted. “You only asked him about that paragraph in the textbook and he was flummoxed. Talk about ‘the blind leading the blind’: he hadn’t a clue.”

This critical phrase ‘blind leading the blind’ comes from the graphic words of Jesus about religious leaders in Israel (principally the Pharisees).

Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch (Matthew 15:14).

Later, in Matthew chapter 23, Jesus uses the word ‘blind’ five times when warning about such people. This is because, tragically, they refused to believe the stark evidence of their own eyes about who Jesus was. Moreover, despite supposedly being experts in the Jewish scriptures, they too were unable to answer the questions which Jesus asked them. One question was about this verse:

The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool” (Psalm 110:1).

Son of David

Psalm 110 was written by king David, about his descendant Jesus, hundreds of years before Jesus was born. It is the most quoted psalm in the New Testament, which indicates its significance.

In using this verse Jesus confirmed two things: that the words were penned by David, and that they refer to the Christ – the Messiah (i.e. to Jesus himself). Clearly then, in this verse ‘The

LORD’ is Almighty God and ‘my Lord’ is Jesus, the Christ.

Jesus’ question to them is recorded in three of the four gospels (Matthew 22:41–45; Mark 12:35–37; Luke 20:41–44), and afterwards we read:

No one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question him anymore (Matthew 22:46).

Great King

Through the words of this psalm, even great king David acknowledged the complete supremacy of his descendant who would be the Christ king (Psalm 110:2; Luke 1:32). This was contrary to Jewish custom, where ancestors were always superior to their descendants. So the verse was a problem for the Pharisees, whose prejudices made them antagonistic to Jesus of Nazareth.

The apostle Peter quoted the exact same verse in his speech at Pentecost (Acts 2:34–35). He made a strong and conclusive case to the people and to their leaders that Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled the Messiah’s brief in every detail (Acts 2:22–36).

Psalm 110 is quoted again in the letter to the Hebrews in support of the same teaching (Hebrews 1:5–14; see verse 13). This shows very clearly that Jesus is superior to every other human being and also to the angels. No other human being has either been given divine nature (1 Corinthians 15:22–23) or ascended to heaven (John 3:13). As evidence of this, even the dead body of David, a man ‘after God’s

own heart' (Acts 13:22), was in Jerusalem (Acts 2:29).

The fact that Jesus was exalted to God's right hand is so awesome and important that it is referred to in a further 12 passages in the New Testament.

Great Priest

This verse is also quoted extensively.

The LORD has sworn and will not relent, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110:4).

This occurs word-for-word in Hebrews (5:6; 7:17–21) and is also alluded to (Hebrews 5:10; 6:20), proving the unique role of Jesus as priest. He is a priest for ever and, like Melchizedek (a character from Genesis 14), was different from the priests under the Law of Moses (Hebrews 7:19–27). This fact about Jesus is so crucial that God 'swears and will not relent' as Psalm 110 has it. Jesus is superior to and supersedes all other priests because his sacrifice has opened up the way for believers to be saved from eternal death. No one else did or could do this.

These are awesome truths about Jesus Christ, and they show how the New Testament gospel is inextricably based on the Old Testament writings. We cannot fully comprehend the inspired words of Jesus or the apostles without turning to the scriptures to which they are referring.

We Can See the Christ – Now and When He Comes

Given its importance in the New Testament, it is therefore important to read this whole psalm. In addition to the words about the supremacy of the Christ it contains very clear

language about him. He has God's authority to exercise unassailable power. There is no hope for the enemies of this triumphant ruler when he returns – all his enemies are subdued. This fact is also referred to several times in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 15:25; Ephesians 1:20–22 and Hebrews 10:13).

A common image of Jesus is of a 'meek and mild' man who would not 'hurt a fly'. This does not agree with this psalm's picture of an immortal supreme Christ ruling with great power, putting down opposition with the full authority of God.

Of course, everything he will do will be right and completely just, but we do well to be ready, ensuring that we are his friends, not his enemies. This means doing what he asked of us (John 15:14). We can only see and obey Jesus properly by reading the whole Bible for ourselves, avoiding the teaching of 'blind leaders'. We then need to believe what it says and to prepare for his coming.

Anna Hart



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