

# Glad Tidings

*Of The Kingdom Of God*

## Featured **Articles**

A Way Out (p.3)

A New Life for Old People (p.8)

The Bible and Depression (p.12)

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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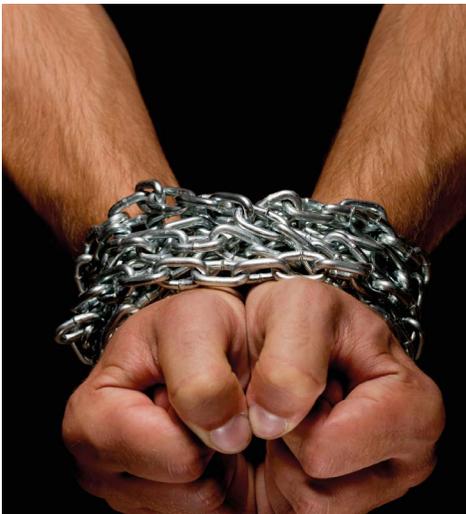
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# A Way Out

“WE’RE caught in a trap,” sang Elvis Presley, “I can’t walk out”. Whilst we may not consider 1960s rock and roll to be a source of wisdom, the songwriter did capture a feeling many of us have shared.

We can feel caught in many ways; in a boring conversation, in an uncomfortable situation, or in a job we dislike.

There are many other more serious forms of captivity too. Some are stuck in poverty with no apparent way out. In some countries, people are in prison because of their beliefs. Slavery has existed for thousands of years, and today there are estimated to be up to 70 million slaves in the world. This is known as ‘Modern Slavery’.



The Bible speaks a lot about captivity and freedom, and Jesus used these words, quoted from Isaiah, to describe his mission:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed (Luke 4:18–19).*

## Slaves to Sin

In Romans chapter 6, the writer (Paul) describes the natural state of men and women as being in slavery to sin.

*Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered (Romans 6:16–17).*

The Apostle Paul is referring to the direct connection between sin (disobedience to God) and death. He has explained this already in the previous chapter, showing that it is the case from Adam onwards:

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

We all disobey God to a lesser or greater extent, and so we all die. This would be terrible news if there were no means to be freed from the cycle of sin and death, but we have already seen Paul allude to a way out. Through the work of Jesus Christ, we can be freed from this slavery and work instead for God.

*Having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness... Now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life (Romans 6:18, 22).*

The idea is summed up splendidly in the final verse of this chapter:

*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (v23).*

## **Freedom at a Price**

This offer of freedom came at a price. To break the cycle of sin and death required a perfect sacrifice – which was made when Jesus died on the cross. He is the only person who has ever managed to live without sinning, and so he did not deserve to die. Yet God, in His love, provided Jesus to save us from the slavemaster Sin. Jesus showed wonderful love for us and obedience to his Father in submitting to the ordeal.

*For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly... God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath*

*through him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by his life (Romans 5:6–10).*

## **Seizing the Opportunity**

This is what lies behind those famous words:

*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).*

Here he explained that he was sent by God, in demonstration of the Father's love, to save men and women and to offer them eternal life.

But notice that the offer is qualified: He can and will save only those who believe in Him and His Son. We show this faith through obedience, starting with being baptised:

*He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned (Mark 16:16).*

Jesus was very clear in his teaching. To be saved, we must believe and be baptised; there is no other way.

*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me (John 14:6).*

We then begin a new life, one that is God-centred and follows the example of Jesus. In this new life we serve a loving, kind and forgiving God, who wants us to be in His Kingdom.

# Naboth's Vineyard

AHAB was a wicked king, and his wife Jezebel only made him worse. The Bible account of their dealings with a man called Naboth shows just how wicked they were.

Naboth had a vineyard in Jezreel, which was next to the palace of Ahab. This must have been a summer palace, as Samaria (the capital) and Jezreel were about eighteen miles apart. Ahab thought Naboth's vineyard would make an excellent spot to have a vegetable or herb garden, and the attraction of locally grown fresh vegetables would be very great. He wanted it.



## Illegal from the Start

Ahab had forgotten the Law God gave through Moses, if he ever knew it: *“The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me” (Leviticus 25:23).*

The Law made very clear provisions, not wishing for the rich to begin to accumulate large amounts of land at the expense of the poor. Essentially the land was God's, and they were to remember this.

*...So the inheritance of the children of Israel shall not change hands from tribe to tribe, for every one of the children of Israel shall keep the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers (Numbers 36:7).*

Even if Ahab knew only the Ten Commandments, he should have known:

*You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbour's (Exodus 20:17).*

When he approached Naboth about his idea his offer appeared to be very generous. Ahab offered either a better vineyard, or its value in money. On the face of it, this was an excellent choice, but Naboth knew the Law, and would not go along with Ahab's proposal.

Naboth's reply might have seemed a little abrupt, but it was only what Ahab should have expected.

*The LORD forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you! (1 Kings 21:3).*

This completely surprised Ahab, who went home "sullen and displeased". He went off to his bed and refused to eat. Perhaps he should just have been left there, sulking on his bed, but Jezebel was not one to do so.

## The Cruel Mischief Maker

Here was an opportunity for mischief, and perhaps to establish the kingdom more securely for Ahab. Having discovered the source of the trouble, Jezebel began to arrange things so that Ahab could have the vineyard he coveted.

Telling her sulking husband to get up and have a meal, she made plans to remove Naboth from the scene. Knowing his wife, Ahab should have been alarmed.

Jezebel wrote letters in Ahab's name, using Ahab's seal to confirm what she wrote. The letters were to the elders of Jezreel.

*Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth with high honour among the people; and seat two men, scoundrels, before him to bear witness against him, saying, "You have blasphemed God and the king." Then take him out, and stone him, that he may die (v9-10).*

Naboth was to be removed without compassion, just because he stuck to God's Law, which conflicted with what the king wanted.

Jezebel wielded sufficient influence in Israel for what she demanded to be carried out unquestioningly. The cruel plot was carried through and she received the message, "Naboth has been stoned and is dead" (v14).

Even then it was not right for Ahab to attempt to claim the vineyard, despite the fact that he had killed both Naboth and his heirs (as we find later). But such niceties were not for Jezebel, who went straight to Ahab with the message:

*Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead (v15).*

## A Familiar Figure

So Ahab went off to Jezreel to claim the vineyard, knowing that it was most unlikely that any of his subjects would stand in his way.

He had forgotten that the Lord God, Who had given the laws for him to obey in the first place, also sees all that goes on. He was about to make sure that Ahab knew about that.

The Lord had a task for his prophet Elijah and sent him down to meet Ahab as he arrived at the vineyard. You can imagine the scene, Ahab arriving at the vineyard, pleased with his new possession, suddenly stopped short by the sight of the unmistakable figure of Elijah the prophet. Elijah's dress was very distinctive, and there would be no doubt who was waiting quietly in the vineyard for Ahab to arrive.



Jezebel was also to be punished for her wickedness.

*The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel (v23).*

## Ahab Repents

It was not a pleasant prospect, but even kings and queens cannot break God's law with impunity. All men and women are subject to Him.

The Bible text includes a comment about the way that Ahab had broken God's laws like no one before him, and the role of Jezebel in it:

*There was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up (v25).*

Given what we know of Ahab, his response to all this was particularly remarkable.

*When Ahab heard those words, he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning (v27).*

The terrible condemnation by Elijah really does seem to have worked and produced repentance in this wicked man. What is especially encouraging is the Lord God's response. He delayed implementation of the sentence until Ahab's son's days. If Ahab could be forgiven, then so can we.

Jezebel however did not repent and suffered the unpleasant death that Elijah had foretold, as we shall see later.

Ahab's heart must have sunk, and he greeted Elijah with, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" (v20). Ahab seems to have thought that his troubles came directly from Elijah, not seeing that they really came from God, because of his own wickedness. In reality Elijah was a messenger from God. This was the message:

*Thus says the LORD: "Have you murdered and also taken possession?... In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours" (v19).*

It was a damning indictment of Ahab's behaviour, though he would probably try to claim that it was not really him at all, but Jezebel who had been at work. The sentence established a principle that, if he knows what his wife is trying to do, a husband may be just as guilty as the wife herself, and vice versa. As Elijah continued, Ahab must have begun to tremble.

*You have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the LORD: Behold, I will bring calamity on you. I will take away your posterity, and will cut off from Ahab every male in Israel, both bond and free (v20-21).*

**Mark Sheppard**

# A New Life for Old People

THIS article is not concerned with hardening arteries or softening brains. It has nothing to do with pensions, politics or medicines.

And yet, its purpose is to point to a new life for old people. You will observe that we are not thinking of Old People and Young People, but Old People and New People.

## Old People and New People

You may say, 'How do I know whether I am an Old Person or a New Person?'

It is hoped that when you have finished reading you will be able to tell. God knows – because it is in relationship to God that a man or woman is either Old or New. This is the great dividing line that God has drawn through the world. Those on one side are Old and those on the other side are New.

All through the Bible we find contrasting terms to describe people who are New and people who are Old. Being in Christ on the one hand and being afar off on the other. Being in the spirit or being in the flesh, being New or being Old, being alive or being dead. This article examines how we can change

from being dead to being alive, in our relationship with God.

It is something that God has to do for us. The very essence of the Gospel is that God has taken the initiative. God Himself has built a bridge from His side – all we have to do is to walk across and to trust in Him. And if you do that the Bible says that you are not afar off, but you are near to God.

## The Old Man

In the Bible the expression 'the Old Man' is used to indicate the state of a man or woman without God. It always means the person of the old, corrupt human nature,

the inborn tendency to do evil, which is in us all.

For example, the apostle Paul writes to the Christians in Ephesus:

*This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; ... [but] be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according*



to God, in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:17-18, 23-24).

We see then that according to the Bible, Old People may not be wilful and deliberate sinners, it is just that they have never realised that in the sight of God they are sinners.

They trust in their own goodness and fail to acknowledge their need of God's mercy. They are good in their own eyes because they are guided by self rather than by a humble recognition that of themselves they can do nothing and are in fact in great need of God's infinite love and grace.

This is the Old Man, and such are Old People who must enter into a New Life – 'putting on the New Man', as the apostle styles it. Not just doing better than you did before, not just improving your outlook on life – but New Life – a different kind of person altogether, which God will form in you by the operation of His word in your heart and mind.

## The New Man

God's promises are given to those who believe and accept His salvation in Jesus. These people look for "new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13).

When the Lord Jesus returns to reward all of his servants, they are to be given a new name (Revelation 2:17). In vision in the book of Revelation the saved ones are portrayed singing a song – it is called a New Song (Revelation 14:3). The message of Jesus



that was to be written was this – "Behold, I make all things new" (Revelation 21:5). And so the way that Jesus has opened for us to come to God is called a "new and living way" (Hebrews 10:20).

Old things in the language of the Bible are those things which are fleshly. Things which serve for a time until they are superseded by better things. Old things pass away, they are of this age. New things are of God, eternal and undefiled, and do not pass away. Take for example 2 Corinthians 5:17:

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

That is God speaking to us. And we can depend upon it. A Being who can swing a world out into space, hold it up and cause it to move in its orbit age after age, can be depended upon when He tells us something.

He says, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation." That person may not feel he or she is very new. They will be called by the same name and live at the same address and do the same job, but God says they are new creatures.

God says this, and we can believe Him. *“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18)*. The message of the Bible is that the person who comes to God as a sinner and is baptised, is just as though they had never sinned, they are washed clean in the blood of Christ their saviour. They are a New Creature and start a New Life.

## Baptism

To the Christians in Rome who had recently turned from their old way of life and embraced salvation in the name of Jesus, Paul said:

*Our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin... And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness (Romans 6:6, 18).*

If you read Romans chapter 6:2–10 you will see what had happened to them. They had been baptised in water, buried in water as the apostle says, and in so doing they had recognised certain truths concerning themselves and their Old Life and concerning their relationship to God in a New Life.

The apostle says that in being buried in the water they had in symbol crucified the Old Man, because in fact they recognised it to be no good at all in the sight of God. The apostle told them they had been buried with Christ by their baptism.

This is the spirit in which baptism must be approached. It is a humiliation before God, not an achievement; a surrender to Him, not a milestone of progress. Baptism is not the public award of a certificate that we have successfully passed an examination in scriptural knowledge. There is no glory in baptism. It is not calculated to enhance our dignity. When men and women are baptised, they are not saying “see how good I am”, for we are not good and our going down into the water is a confession of it.

Christ in his crucifixion made it plain that he put no confidence in the flesh – he showed us what God’s opinion is of the Old Man. The apostle Paul says, *“those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:24)*, and this bids us to be ashamed



of what we were before and show it in our baptism.

## The New Life

But although baptism is a humbling ritual, there is room for exaltation of the right sort. For the apostle tells us that in submitting to baptism we are not only symbolically buried with Christ in the tomb but in rising from the water we are in symbol rising with Christ from the tomb. Although the death of Jesus was a shocking death, his resurrection was a mighty triumph, and in baptism we share in both the shame and the glory.

The simple truth is that the man or woman who has in symbol shared in the resurrection of Christ in baptism and has thereafter walked in the New Life, will by God's grace share in the resurrection from the grave when Jesus Christ returns to the earth to establish the Kingdom of God. They will then walk in the power of eternal life throughout the ages of eternity.

Those who have refused to be buried with Christ and be raised with him now in baptism – those who have refused to be partakers of the New Life now – will not be able to have eternal life in the age to come.

The person then who rises from baptism is a new creature and has entered into a New Life. In the words of Jesus, they have been 'born again'.

*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3).*



## Justified

The wonderful, tremendous truth that comes to the man or woman who accepts God's salvation in Christ and is baptised is that their sins are forgiven:

*I will remember their sins no more (Hebrews 10:17).*

The Bible calls this 'justification'. One of the most sublime blessings of the New Life in Christ is being someone who God forgives and no longer considers sinful.

*Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity (Psalm 32:2).*

It is crossing over that dividing line, of which we spoke in the beginning. From being afar off we are near; from being in the flesh we are in the spirit, from being Old Men and Women we are New Creatures, from being dead we are made alive, from being sin's servants we are God's children.

This is justification. And God does it for us and not we ourselves.

**Dennis Gillett**

# Depression

DEPRESSION is sadly a common feature of modern life and affects many people. Because it is an invisible illness, we often will not know who is suffering with it. If we suffer ourselves, it can be very hard to deal with. As we wrote in the first of this series, taking the Bible view on such issues does not mean we should not accept whatever help is available.

A very helpful model used to approach depression from a psychological point of view is the 'cognitive triad'. This is when



a person holds excessively negative views about themselves, the world or the future (or all three). Interestingly, the scriptures have much to say about this triad of topics and provide us with extremely powerful perspectives to help us when we are feeling spiritually depressed.

## 1. About Ourselves

A common reason why we might have a negative view about ourselves is because we feel guilty about how we behave, perhaps how often we disobey God. It can feel overwhelming when we have not been able to conquer a particular temptation or we are struggling with the same sinful behaviour for many years.

At other times we may be feeling down about our efforts to do the right thing, with thoughts such as: "I've hardly done anything for God. I'm just not good enough." If not kept in check, these thoughts and feelings can send us into a state of spiritual despair and depression.

It then becomes even more difficult to fight against sin and to do what God asks. Needless to say, the effects on our faith can be disastrous. What can be done to break this destructive cycle of self-criticism?

When we feel spiritually depressed about ourselves it is likely that we are placing far too much emphasis on us and far too

little emphasis on God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Personally speaking, there are times when I have been so concerned with my own sins and so wrapped up in my efforts to do good works that I have managed to make discipleship all about me!

However, the plain teaching of the Bible is that of ourselves we cannot be righteous (morally good) before God. The first seven chapters of the letter to the Romans give a thorough explanation of this crucial theme. Rather, it is through faith in Christ that a man or woman is 'justified' (looked upon as righteous) in the eyes of God:

*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 3:23–24).*

It is true that essential aspects of having faith in Christ are resisting temptation (Luke 22:40) and practising good works (Ephesians 2:10). However, these are to be done with God and Christ at the forefront of our minds, acknowledging that no matter how successfully we resist temptation or how many good works we manage to do, we can never be pronounced righteous in the eyes of God without faith.

Jesus Christ lived a perfect life of holiness and good works, and defeated sin. We share in that victory by having faith in him. This change in perspective enables us to cease being depressed about our own inadequacies and instead be glad that by God's grace we are looked upon as righteous because of our faith in His Son.

This doesn't mean that we don't try to do the right things – we still need to do our best!

## 2. About the World

There are plenty of reasons to feel depressed about the world. If we watch the news, we may find ourselves groaning in despair at just how wicked the world really is. There is nothing we can do to change that state of affairs – the world will not experience any significant changes for the better until the Lord Jesus returns.

What we can do to make us feel better is remind ourselves that the wicked state of the world is consistent with what the Bible teaches:

*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever (1 John 2:15–17).*

When we see that what the Bible teaches corresponds to what we experience in our lives it can encourage us. It can also act as a powerful reminder of why we should want to be in the Kingdom of God.

The world we see now is only one side of the story. To get the whole picture we must keep in mind what Jesus taught about his own life's mission in relation to the world. This is a key theme in the Gospel of John. Frequently in this Gospel the world being

spoken of is what we might describe as ‘the Jewish world’, i.e. the nation of Israel during the time of Jesus (see 7:4, 18:20 etc.) and not ‘the world’ as we might use the term today. However, as the Jewish world of the first century was a microcosm of the wider world, the following teaching of Jesus still has relevance for us and our ‘world’ today.

Speaking to his disciples, Jesus said:

*The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify of it that its works are evil (John 7:7).*

Jesus knows how it feels to live in a wicked world. How did he encourage his disciples in their unavoidable struggles with the world?

*These things I have spoken to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world (John 16:33).*

With this instruction Jesus invited his disciples to change their focus from the problems which the world would cause, and concentrate on him and the fact that he is the solution to their problems. This inspiring theme is expanded on in the first letter of John:

*For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5:4–5).*

Faith in Jesus as the Son of God accomplishes so much because of what Jesus did in overcoming the world by the

sacrifice of himself. When we feel depressed about the world, let us remember that Jesus has overcome it and that we too can overcome the world by our faith in him.

### 3. About the Future

No-one knows exactly what the future holds for us in our individual lives. Some may find this fact liberating and maybe even exciting.

Others use this as an opportunity to ‘catastrophize’ about what the future may hold for them. They might fear that in the future it will be even harder to be a disciple of Jesus than it is now; or that in the future they might be persecuted for their faith; or they might wonder how they would cope if their spouse were to die before them.

These melancholic musings carry enough weight to significantly damage our spiritual or mental health.

What guidance from the Bible do we have to help us face the future with hope and optimism instead of dread and pessimism?

The Apostle Paul had the benefit of the Holy Spirit which enabled him to know certain aspects of his future. However, the details were hidden from him and so, like us, he lived in uncertainty about exactly what the future would hold for him. This is what he said, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles:

*And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit*

*testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me (Acts 20:22–23).*

Paul knew from the start of his ministry that he would experience great suffering as a disciple of Jesus (see Acts 9:16). However, when he was going to Jerusalem, he did not know the details about what was going to happen to him there. In a similar way, we do not know the details about what we might have to go through. Instead of being distracted by wanting to know the future, we can increase our focus on what is really important and concentrate on establishing a right relationship with God.

This is what Paul did, as we shall now see. He continued:

*But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24).*

Paul's focus was not on the temporary things of this life; rather he followed Jesus' instruction:

*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves 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. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Matthew 6:19–21).*

Paul focused his mind on the hugely important task that Jesus had given him to do, which was to preach the Gospel. He could have worried about the certainty



of future suffering or the uncertain details concerning this, but instead he took strength from concentrating on the task he had been given – ‘to testify to the gospel of the grace of God’.

If we find ourselves experiencing a bout of depression regarding the future, we can look to examples such as Paul and be reminded to focus on the bigger picture. God has provided a wonderful hope for the future in His Kingdom. And He has given us things to do now.

This is so much more important than any dire deliberation which we can devise concerning the future.

**Stephen Blake**

# 1 Samuel

THIS book records events at the time of Samuel the prophet: the reigns of King Saul over Israel and God's choice of David to be the king of His people, instead of Saul.

## David and Goliath

Hannah – a godly, childless woman – prays for a son. Samuel is born and she and her husband devote him to the Lord's service. Samuel's life is then spent restoring Israel's worship – and being a kingmaker.

Perhaps the best known event in this book is in chapter 17. With a single stone from his sling, David the shepherd-boy defeated the great Philistine champion, Goliath. This showed that God was on David's side.

This incident is a remarkable foretaste of how Jesus (the "Son of David") will overthrow the kingdoms of men, when he returns to re-establish God's kingdom in Israel (compare the prophecy of Daniel 2).

## Samuel the Prophet (40 years)

The ark (from the Tabernacle) was captured by the Philistines (1 Samuel 4) but later returned (chapter 5).

Israel asked for a king (chapter 8), though their God was their king!

*The LORD said to Samuel... "They have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them" (8:7).*

Samuel was told by God to anoint Saul as king (chapter 9).

## King Saul (40 years)

Saul disobeyed God (chapters 13 & 15), so God rejected him and told Samuel to anoint David, "a man after [God's] own heart".

Saul envied David and often tried to kill him (chapters 18–31).

## King David (40 years)

After the death of Saul, David became king. He ruled first in Hebron (7 years), then in Jerusalem (33 years). The record continues into 2 Samuel.

**Norman Owen**

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### Some interesting links with other parts of the Bible

1 Samuel 15:22 – see Micah 6:6–8

1 Samuel 17:49 – see  
Daniel 2:34,44,45

1 Samuel 18:5,14,30 – see  
Luke 2:52.



# The Black Obelisk

ARCHAEOLOGICAL finds often cast light on the world and events that we read about in the Bible, and they provide evidence that the Bible record is accurate.

Much of the action in the Old Testament takes place in the Israelite Kingdom, which lasted from around 1000 to 600 BC. There are many mentions of Israelite kings in the archaeological record – but as far as we know there’s a contemporary picture of only one of them. This is king Jehu, and his picture is on the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser.

The Black Obelisk is a 2-metre high limestone block, which was found in northern Iraq in 1846. Its four faces are intricately carved with bas reliefs and captions commemorating the deeds of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III (reigned 858-824 BC).

One of the reliefs shows king Jehu bowing with his face to the ground before Shalmaneser. The caption reads:

*Tribute of Jehu, son of Omri: I received from him silver, gold, a golden bowl, a golden vase with pointed bottom, golden tumblers, golden buckets, tin, a staff for a king [and] spears.*

The story of Jehu is in the Bible in 2 Kings 9–10. He was anointed king by God’s prophet and tasked with bringing the



corrupt and faithless nation of Israel back to God. He started his reign with enthusiasm for God, but the record says that his heart was not in it and his 28-year reign ended with disappointment.

*The LORD began to cut off parts of Israel; and Hazael [king of Syria] conquered them in all the territory of Israel from the Jordan eastward...(2 Kings 10:32–33).*

During this time Jehu did not turn to God for help. Instead it appears from the archaeological record that he tried to buy help from Shalmaneser the king of Assyria.

We can see how the Bible and archaeology agree.

The Black Obelisk is on display in the British Museum.

**Chris Parkin**

# Blotted Out

“If you’re selling your computer you need to get rid of your sensitive data,” the boss told Ian. “I have deleted all the files,” he replied.

“Oh! That isn’t enough. That marks them as empty, but the information is still there. It needs to be over-written in a special way.”

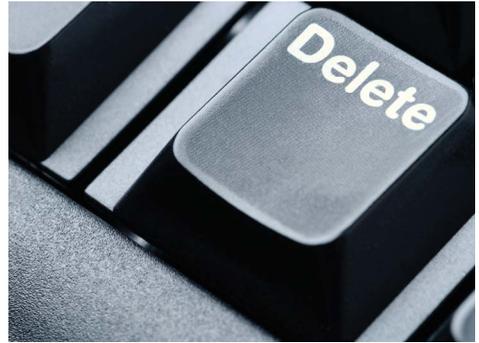
“Well that sounds worse than getting a blood stain out of a cloth. Should I consult an expert?” Ian looked worried.

Getting a stain like blood out of a cloth can be very difficult. But at least we can see whether or not we have been successful. Removing information from computers is much harder. Technical experts can often read computer information that has apparently been deleted. Of course, if we have no sensitive or unlawful data, we should have nothing to worry about.

However, when it comes to our consciences and memories, we all have things to be concerned about. Removing the effects of things we have said or done in the past can be virtually impossible. We all wish we could ‘undo’ some of our less virtuous deeds. Sometimes it is extremely difficult to forget what either we or someone else has done.

## God Doesn’t Always Remember

God knows everything. This includes not only what we do or think but also why:



*O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off (Psalm 139:1-2).*

Similar ideas are expressed in Psalm 44:21 and Hebrews 4:12-13.

He knows our deepest secrets – things unknown to even our closest friends. It is therefore amazing that He actually offers to forget what we have done wrong. In the past, when pleading with Israel to return to serving Him, God compared their sins to blood-red, and offered to wipe them out:

*Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land (Isaiah 1:18-19).*

When He forgives our sins, He also chooses not to remember them – things we find so hard.

*I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins (Isaiah 43:25).*

*As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us (Psalm 103:12).*

Going east we can never ever get to the west, so this is total separation. This idea is repeated throughout the Bible.

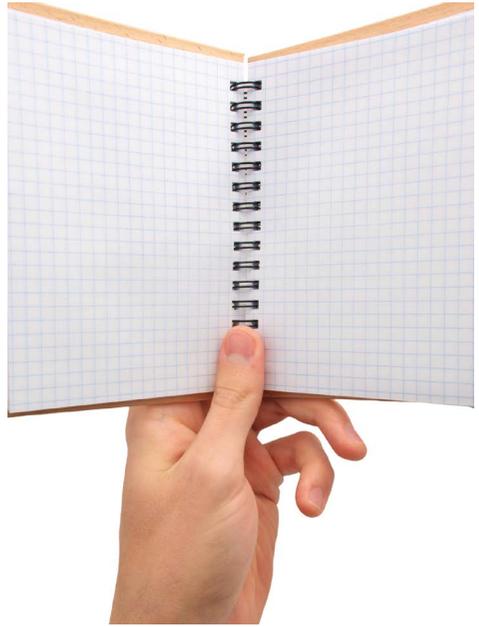
However, God's forgiveness is not automatic. In fact, it is conditional. God hates sin (Habakkuk 1:13; Romans 2:6–11), and we have no claim on Him. It is a stark fact that we deserve nothing but death (Romans 6:16–23). He cannot do anything that is unfair or which breaks His own laws and so He cannot save people who do not truly want to be saved.

## **We Need to Repent**

We must acknowledge that we are, by very nature, in a desperate, hopeless situation. We must humbly admit that, despite our best efforts, we repeatedly disobey God (Romans 7:13–25).

God then asks for our repentance – a conscious and deliberate change of heart. Repentance is mentioned over 50 times in the New Testament. Paul preached that God “*now commands all men everywhere to repent*” (Acts 17:30).

Repentance involves changing our ways and being baptised (Acts 2:37–39). In this way we are joined to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (as we read in



Romans 6:3–8). This is the one way by which we can be forgiven and saved.

*Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).*

The sacrificial death of Jesus is the only means by which God can and will take away our sins (Hebrews 10:3–14). If we want our sins to be forgiven so that we can be saved from extinction, we need to be ‘in Christ’ now (Romans 8:1–2).

Given our sad track records we need a solution urgently and God has provided it. I am needed advice. We have God's advice in the Bible.

Do we want our failings to be on record for ever, or wiped away and forgotten by God? The choice is ours right now.

**Anna Hart**

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