

# Glad Tidings

*Of The Kingdom Of God*



## Featured **Articles**

Which Way Now? (p.3)

What's So Special About Jesus? (p.5)

A Fiery Chariot – and a Letter (p.10)

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

# Which Way Now?

WE often read about the help available to navigate the modern world. This may be very welcome when life is complicated.

Teenagers are offered guidance on their routes to different careers and life choices. The more senior may be given plans on their options for care or independent living. People recovering from illness or addiction are shown pathways to recovery and rehabilitation.

In the wider world, we hear about nations being 'at a crossroads': the USA in their politics; the UK and their relationship to the EU; states suffering civil war; and countries struggling with terrorism. For all of these, the way forward is unclear, and decision-making is difficult.

## Life Paths

As we grow and our circumstances change, we often need to make choices. Where to live? What to study? What job to do? Other decisions will be forced through circumstances, such as relationships, family and finances.

The most important decision we will ever make is whether to trust and obey God, or not. It will affect our life today and our prospects for the future. To those who believe and obey Him, God promises everlasting life in His Kingdom on earth.

*The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).*

This is the choice God has always placed before men and women, from the Garden of Eden down to today. Thankfully, He has made the choice clear and provided guidance on how to make it.

## Israel's Choice

The people of Israel had journeyed for forty years under Moses' leadership, and were on the borders of the Promised Land. He explained how God was offering them this very choice:

*See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil... I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live (Deuteronomy 30:15,19).*

If they chose to obey God, He would bless them, and give them peace and prosperity in the land. If they did not, He would use their enemies and the natural environment to afflict them and eventually remove them from the land.

It was a clear choice, easy to understand, and it was written down for them. Moses emphasised this:

*For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off... But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it (v11, 14).*

Israel could never claim that they did not understand their options. God had laid out their choices and His prophets continued to offer guidance. They had to believe God.

## Jesus' Choice

Jesus Christ lived a life of total obedience to God. He preached the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and showed compassion to the men and women he met. Yet he knew that he was destined to die a horrible death.

*Jesus began to show to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day (Matthew 16:21).*

He knew this because the Old Testament had foretold it in detail. Read Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 for graphic examples. They mapped out how he would suffer and die, but also that God would raise him from the dead after three days.

He could have avoided the pain, by stopping his work and avoiding the Jewish leaders who wanted to kill him. But when the time came, he chose to obey God, and...

*...he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51).*

He was killed, but God raised him from the dead as promised, and later Jesus ascended to join his Father in heaven.

*For the joy that was set before him [Jesus] endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2).*



## Our Route Now

We have to make a choice too. The Bible provides a simple roadmap to bring us into His family. The route takes us through faith to baptism.:

*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 11:6).*

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

God promises a place in His Kingdom, eternal life in a perfect world, if we respond in this way. If that becomes the goal of our life, then we can live today with purpose and hope. It is the right and only way.

# What's So Special About Jesus?

SUSAN was frantically cleaning the house, afraid that her sister Joan might arrive anytime. Her daughter watched with disapproval.

“You don’t even know when she’s actually coming,” the girl complained. “And yet you’re going mad getting ready for her. I’m sure she won’t notice a bit of dust here or there! Is she a perfectionist or something? What’s so special about Auntie Joan?”

There are certain visitors for whom we always make a special effort. We would be embarrassed if they found our houses untidy or unclean.

Jesus has told us that he is coming back to earth and that we should be ready and waiting for him.

In thinking about whether and how we should prepare for this we could all ask, “What’s so special about Jesus?” Here is a set of Bible verses which shows us just that.

## More than Just a Good Man

There are many things that made Jesus more than *just* a good man:

◆ He spoke with great authority and understanding even when he was a boy. (Matthew 7:28–29, 13:54; Luke 2:41–50; John 7:46)



- ◆ He was kind and compassionate. (Matthew 9:35–38, 14:13–14; Mark 1:40–45; Luke 19:41–44)
- ◆ He was able to heal sick people. (Matthew 4:23–24; Mark 1:32–34; Acts 10:38)
- ◆ He could raise the dead. (Luke 7:11–17, 8:40–56; John 11:38–44)
- ◆ He knew what people were thinking. (Luke 5:18–25, 6:7–8, 9:46–48; John 2:24–25)
- ◆ He could control the wind and the sea, and walk on water. (Mark 4:35–41, 6:45–52)
- ◆ Much of the Old Testament spoke about him. (Luke 24:25–27; John 5:36–43; Acts 17:2–3)

History itself shows that through Christianity, Jesus has had a phenomenal influence on our world.

## Unique in Many Ways

There are other things that make Jesus unique:

- ◆ His mother Mary was a virgin. (Matthew 1:18–25; Luke 1:26–35)
- ◆ God said that Jesus was His Son. (Matthew 3:13–17, 17:1–5; Luke 1:32)
- ◆ He could forgive sins. (Matthew 9:1–8; Luke 7:36–50)
- ◆ Although he could have sinned, Jesus never did. (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:14–16, 7:26)
- ◆ He only did and said what God wanted. (Luke 22:42; John 8:21–30, 12:42–50)
- ◆ He is the first to rise to immortal life. (Romans 6:9; 1 Corinthians 15:17–23; Hebrews 7:16; Revelation 1:5, 18)
- ◆ He is the only human being to have gone to heaven. (John 3:13; Hebrews 4:14, 8:1, 4)
- ◆ He will be the perfect king over God's Kingdom on earth. (Isaiah 11:1–9 with Luke 1:32–33; 1 Corinthians 15:22–28)
- ◆ He shows us the only way by which we can be saved from eternal death. (John 14:6; Acts 4:10–12; Romans 5:6; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 1 Timothy 2:5–6)

## The Most Special Visitor

Susan was preparing for a visit from Auntie Joan, an apparent perfectionist whose standards may not even have been fair. Susan was not sure when or if this visit

would happen, but it was unlikely to have far-reaching or lasting effects. We do not know when Jesus will come, but we have been promised that he most certainly will.

Unlike Auntie Joan, Jesus really is perfect. God has decided that Jesus will judge men and women, and we can be confident that his judgement will be completely fair.

*For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom he will. The Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son (John 5:21–22).*

Jesus will make his presence felt: in fact he will transform the whole world for ever.

One of his parables was about a housekeeper looking after his master's house while he was away. Jesus said that this housekeeper (and we too) should be waiting ready for him, and obedient to him:

*Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing (Matthew 24:46).*



Jesus is very special – we do well to prepare ourselves for his coming; to be obedient and watching for him. He will come, but what will he find us doing?

**Anna Hart**

# What is the World Coming To?

A SIGN outside a church read: ‘This is God’s World – What on Earth are you doing?’

Well what on earth is humankind doing? There seems to be nothing on earth which will unite us.

- ◆ United Kingdom – divided;
- ◆ United States of America – divided;
- ◆ United Europe – divided;
- ◆ United Nations – divided.

Also, most significantly, the Middle East is torn apart.

## Bible Prophecies are Alive

Old Testament prophecies, which seemed to many people to be dormant, have come alive.

We can read in Daniel 2:28–45 about this multi-metalled image, which was dreamt about by a Babylonian king. The dream predicted how one world empire would follow another, until the end of human government had come.

We can now see how Babylon was succeeded by other empires (Persia, Greece and Rome) until, at last, the world was divided into a mixture of strong and weak nations – the feet of the image being a precarious mix of iron and clay, that would not stick together.

Quite unexpectedly, a stone, cut out of a mountain without hands, is hurled at the image, which is felled and ground to powder, and the stone grows to fill the whole earth.



This represents Jesus setting up God's Kingdom. As we look at the divided world today, we cannot fail to recognise this is the time of 'divided nations' represented by those iron and clay feet.

There are divisions between and within nations. The world is in a very unstable condition, both politically and economically. The world economy is precarious. Any political tremor can cause markets to fluctuate wildly. Currencies which once looked steady are volatile. Uncertainty is everywhere. The image is ready to fall. Jesus will soon come back.

## The World Will Change

But though all human systems will be removed and there will be massive upheaval, we should be looking through all that with hope. Prophecy indicates that the reign of Christ is also about to begin. The world will never be the same again.

There will be a great time of restoration and stable peace. What is most important is that you and I could be there, fully involved in creating the new world order. What a prospect that is! The prophets tell us that the Lord will come with all his saints to deliver Israel and help establish the new world order.

*Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. And in that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east... And all the saints with you (Zechariah 14:3-5).*

## The Sign of Israel

The nation of Israel has always been a sign that God will keep His promises, and never more so than today. Its very existence is evidence of God fulfilling His plans.

One hundred years ago the First World War was coming to an end. This desperate war had affected many countries but heralded especially dramatic changes in the Middle East. Britain believed at that time that control of the Middle East was the 'back door' to defeating Germany in Europe. On 11<sup>th</sup> December 1917, General Allenby had liberated and then literally walked into Jerusalem.

Just one month earlier, on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, the British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour had written this in a letter:

"His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of that object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

This summed up Britain's attitude towards Palestine (as Israel was then named). Britain was given a mandate to govern Israel, right up until November 1947, when the United Nations adopted 'Resolution 181' to partition the land between Jews and Arabs.



With the taking of Jerusalem it would seem that the times of the Gentiles had run their course.

However, we should think about the fulfilment of all that Jesus said rather than just this one sentence. Jesus says that these events would show the nearness of the kingdom of God.

*When you see these things happening, know that the Kingdom of God is near (v31).*

This means the return of Jesus Christ to bring the judgements of God and to begin his reign of peace over all the earth. Although the signs are that this time is near, we cannot know exactly when that day will be, for Jesus said:

*But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but my Father only (Matthew 24:36).*

## Are We Ready?

World events and anniversaries are interesting and instructive. Events in the Middle East often relate directly to Bible prophecy.

However, the question we should ask ourselves is whether we are ready – watching and waiting and obedient – for when Jesus comes back.

*Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man (Luke 21:36).*

**David Nightingale**

So, in 1948, the State of Israel was proclaimed. After centuries of non-existence, the nation of Israel was alive and back in its own land.

## The City of Jerusalem

In June 1967, the Israelis fought what came to be known as the Six Day War. It resulted in a resounding victory over their neighbouring Arab enemies, and the city of Jerusalem came back into Jewish hands for the first time in 1900 years.

This was a remarkable event by any standards. However, Bible readers found it especially exciting, at last fulfilling words spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ. For, speaking to the Jews of what was going to happen in 70 AD, Jesus said,

*For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled (Luke 21:23–24).*

# A Fiery Chariot – and a Letter

WHEN Elijah fled to Sinai from Jezebel's anger, he heard the Lord speak to him in a voice of gentle stillness. Then he was sent back with work to do. One of the tasks was to anoint his successor:

*Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place (1 Kings 19:16).*

Of the three tasks given him, this was the only one Elijah actually carried out. Although we are told that Elisha went after Elijah to assist him, we do not hear of Elisha again until the time came for Elijah to finish his work.

*And it came to pass, when the LORD was about to take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal (2 Kings 2:1).*

Presumably Elijah had set off with Elisha, but nothing seems to have been said to Elisha about what was to happen. Elijah then asked his assistant to remain at Gilgal, for God had sent him on to Bethel. Elisha seems to have sensed that there was to be an imminent parting, and so would not leave Elijah to be on his own for what would possibly be his last journey.

When they arrived at Bethel, about 18 miles from Gilgal, they were greeted by the 'sons of the prophets'.

Elijah and Elisha had organised the true followers of God into groups that would pass on God's message to the people of Israel. These young men had a message for Elisha:

*"Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?" And he said, "Yes, I know; keep silent!" (v3).*

Elisha told the young prophets to keep quiet about it, perhaps because he wanted to spend his remaining time with the older prophet, quietly listening to him.

## To Jericho

Elijah had another message for his young aide. He was now to stay at Bethel, but God had sent Elijah on to Jericho. This would be almost back in the direction they had come, another fifteen miles or so. Again, Elisha insisted that he would go with Elijah. Presumably this whole trip

*Jericho today*





would take more than a day, perhaps two or even three.

At Jericho they were met by another group of these sons of the prophets, who had the same message. Elisha responded just as tersely as before. He was becoming aware of the burden which was to be placed on his shoulders, when Elijah was no longer there to deliver the uncompromising messages from the Lord God.

Yet again Elijah asked Elisha to remain at Jericho, for God had sent him on to Jordan. This would only be a further six or seven miles. Again, Elisha was adamant that he would not leave his mentor:

*As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you! (v6).*

So the two continued, completing their journey of some forty miles together, and coming at last to Jordan. Fifty of the sons

of the prophets followed them from Jericho, keeping a respectful distance from these two men, deep in conversation.

At certain times of the year Jordan would have been easy to cross, but when in flood it would have been very difficult. The problem of crossing the river was solved. Elijah took off his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. Miraculously the waters parted to allow the two to cross on dry ground.

## A Double Portion

It was then that Elijah asked Elisha what he should do for him, before he was taken from him. There was now no hiding that this was to be the time of parting. Elisha had no hesitation:

*Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me (v9).*

Elisha was not asking for twice as much as Elijah had, but rather the portion of the firstborn. The Law of Moses acknowledged that firstborn sons would receive a double portion of inheritance from their father, whatever the father thought of his sons:

*He shall acknowledge the son of the unloved wife as the firstborn by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his (Deuteronomy 21:17).*

Elijah's response was conditional, he was leaving this in God's hands:

*You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so (2 Kings 2:10).*

## The Fiery Chariot

The two continued on their journey a little further when suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated them, and we are told that Elijah went up in a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha saw it all happen, and then

just as suddenly Elijah was lost from sight. He could see him no longer.

Elijah's cloak had fallen to the ground, so Elisha picked it up. He tore his own coat into two pieces and set off back along the way they had come. When he came back to the banks of Jordan, he struck the water with it as Elijah had done, calling out:

*Where is the LORD God of Elijah? (v14).*

The God of Elijah was clearly with Elisha too. The water parted again as it had not long before. This time on his own, but still on dry ground, Elisha crossed back to the western side of Jordan. He was met by a group of the sons of the prophets, who recognized that the mantle had passed from the old to the new. Elisha was now the prophet of God in place of Elijah.

They wanted to go and look for Elijah, fearing that he had been dropped by the whirlwind onto a mountain or into a valley. Elisha initially refused, but was urged to let them go. Eventually, he reluctantly allowed them to search, but even after three days, they could not find Elijah. Elisha reminded them *"Did I not say to you, 'Do not go'?" (v18)*. For the moment, Elijah's work was over.

## A Letter from Elijah

There was a brief, unusual follow-up however. In the reign of Jehoram of Judah we are told of a letter coming from Elijah. This would appear to be about two years before the death of Jehoram, in around 843 BC. The



rest of Elijah's work came to an end just after the reign of Ahaziah, around 852 BC. Some nine years had passed since Elijah was taken away.

*And a letter came to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus says the LORD God of your father David: Because you have not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat your father, or in the ways of Asa king of Judah, but have walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and have made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the harlot like the harlotry of the house of Ahab, and also have killed your brothers, those of your father's household, who were better than yourself, behold, the*

*LORD will strike your people with a serious affliction—your children, your wives, and all your possessions; and you will become very sick with a disease of your intestines, until your intestines come out by reason of the sickness, day by day (2 Chronicles 21:12–15).*

We are not told where the letter was written from, nor how it reached Jehoram. We must assume that the Lord God had removed to Elijah some place of safety, but because of the appalling behaviour of Jehoram, God allowed this letter as His warning.

Now Elijah's work really was complete.

**Mark Sheppard**



# 1 Kings

1 KINGS recounts the reign of King Solomon (forty years) and the following eighty-five years of the kingdom. It also tells of the spread of idolatry in the Northern Kingdom, in spite of the work of the prophet Elijah.

## The Kingdom of God

The two books of Kings record the history of the 'Kingdom of God' in the past with its capital, Jerusalem. King David (chapter 1) and his son, Solomon (chapters 2–11) ruled a united kingdom, but decay set in after Solomon turned to idolatry (chapter 11).

After Solomon, the kingdom was divided. His son, Rehoboam, ruled the southern two tribes from Jerusalem – and his descendants

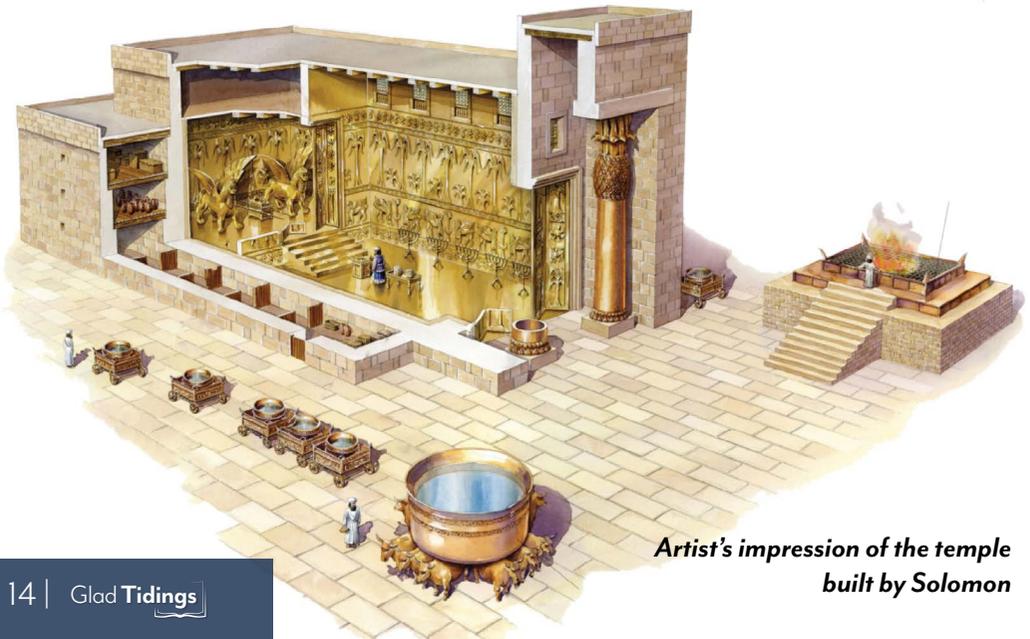
continued to do so. Various wicked kings ruled in the northern ten tribes, starting with a man called Jeroboam.

## The Temple of God

The temple built by Solomon (chapters 5–8) was similar in design to the Tabernacle, though the sizes of the two main rooms were doubled and the number of lampstands and washing places (lavenders) was now ten.

Built in a time of peace, this temple pointed forward to a future one, when the Kingdom of God will be restored in Israel – with Jesus Christ as king!

*Yes, he shall build the temple of the LORD. He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule on*



**Artist's impression of the temple built by Solomon**

*his throne; so he shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both (Zechariah 6:13).*

## King Solomon

This great monarch was famed for his wisdom and wealth. The Queen of Sheba (southern Arabia) paid a state visit (chapter 10).

Solomon's ships traded across the known world, bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes and peacocks from as far away as India.

*King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom (10:23).*

His legendary wisdom was shown in the story of two women who lived together with their baby sons. One boy had died in the night and both claimed the surviving child was theirs. Solomon solved the argument by offering to cut the living boy in two. His real mother became evident as she would rather have given away her son than have him killed. The baby and his mother were reunited.



## Some interesting links with other parts of the Bible

- ◆ **1 Kings 13:18** – see Galatians 1:8
- ◆ **1 Kings 18:21** – see Isaiah 44:6; John 17:3
- ◆ **1 Kings 22:24** – see Micah 5:1; Matthew 26:67



## Elijah the Prophet

Elijah (chapters 17–22) was a prophet of God to the Northern Kingdom (which later was called Israel).

He showed who was the true God when, on Mount Carmel, and in the sight of all the false prophets, he called on God to send down fire from heaven. God sent His fire, which consumed the sacrifice that Elijah had prepared. Thus it became clear that Baal – worshipped by so many in Israel – was nothing more than a dumb idol.

Fleeing from king Ahab's wife Jezebel, Elijah came to Mount Horeb where God revealed Himself in *"a still small voice"* (19:12).

**Norman Owen**

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# Copper Mines and Donkey Dung

THE 10<sup>th</sup> Century BC was the heyday of the kingdom of Israel. This was the time of its most famous kings, David and Solomon – as we saw in the previous article.

David increased the nation's power and territory through war and conquest, and his son Solomon whose reign was characterised by unprecedented peace, security and wealth embarked on a programme of trading and building. Most famously he built the temple of God in Jerusalem.

## Bronze in Abundance

The Bible's First Book of Kings chapters 6 and 7 describe the building of the temple. It was a magnificent building, and Solomon furnished it with all kinds of precious materials. The record says he didn't bother to keep a tally of the amount of bronze he used, there was so much.

*Solomon did not weigh all the articles, because there were so many; the weight of the bronze was not determined (1 Kings 7:47).*

The Bible does not say where all this bronze came from. There are rich copper deposits and remains of ancient copper mines in the region known as the Arabah Valley south of the Dead Sea, and the suggestion

was made that these were the source of Solomon's bronze (bronze is an alloy which consists mainly of copper with the addition of other metals).

However, many were sceptical, pointing out that the mines were deep in the territory of the kingdom of Edom, which was an enemy of Israel; and that the mines were thought to have pre-dated the Israelite kingdom by hundreds of years. So, the source of Solomon's bronze was unknown, and many doubted that the account of it was true.



**Ancient Edomite smelting site**

Edom was located in what is now southwestern Jordan, between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba.

The location is actually not a problem: the Bible records that David subjugated the Edomites:



*He also put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became David's servants. And the LORD preserved David wherever he went (2 Samuel 8:14).*

This means that Solomon would have enjoyed easy access to the mines.

## More Digging

Recently a number of archaeological digs at various sites in the Arabah Valley have unearthed evidence that the copper mines were much more extensive and complex than was previously thought, and furthermore the peak of their productivity appears to have been in the 10<sup>th</sup> Century BC – exactly the time of King Solomon!

In 2013 archaeologists from Tel Aviv University commenced a dig on 'Slaves' Hill', 30 km north of the Gulf of Aqaba.

They uncovered the remains of a fortified mining and smelting settlement, and among these remains there were many fragments of textiles and other organic materials which had been well preserved in the arid desert climate, and which indicated an origin on the Mediterranean coast.

Among the remains on Slaves' Hill was a pile of animal excrement, perfectly preserved and containing undecayed plant matter. Laboratory analysis concluded that it was the dung of a donkey, dating from the 10<sup>th</sup> Century BC, and the food the donkey had eaten came from the Judean hills.

Piece by piece, and little by little, the archaeological record verifies the Bible.

**Chris Parkin**

# Ready to Rule the World

EARLY in November I was startled to see the words of our title in very large print on the front page of a newspaper. It was a



journalist going 'over the top' on the victory of Lewis Hamilton in the Formula 1 motor racing World Championship.

At the same time, it is very clear, from all that we hear about today's

politics and economics, that there is a very pressing need for a world leader who can solve the problems now facing our world. Lewis Hamilton is highly skilled as a racing driver, but not as a world ruler. Where is such a person to be found?

## What Sort of Person?

This raises a question. What would the necessary qualities be? Firstly, total and unquestionable honesty so that everyone would know that when this person spoke, their words could be relied on absolutely. In turn, this would require someone with a phenomenal intellect and a capacity for absorbing and retaining an immense amount of information as well as having the ability to recall it and clearly communicate his decisions

Secondly, total impartiality would be needed so that no one person or cause

would be favoured at the expense of another. Thirdly, this leader would have to be able to command respect and loyalty from all. Fourthly, absolute power would be needed to deal effectively and permanently with any opposition or rebellion.

Humanly speaking, no one alive would meet these criteria. Neither would any great leaders of the past, however illustrious or brilliant.

Nor is this the only problem. There are too many varieties of government and political philosophies existing in various states of disharmony, tension and even open conflict in various parts of the world. No one human individual could reconcile them. Certainly, none could impose a universal form of government acceptable to all.

Does this mean that as population increases, and finite resources run out, mankind is heading inexorably towards inevitable disaster and absolute chaos? The gloomy answer is "Yes, if left to itself". There are some words of Jeremiah that sum up the situation perfectly:

*O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps (Jeremiah 10:23).*

## The Coming World Leader

To our great relief and joy there are many positive words in the Bible that do indicate

a great and wonderful future for this world and its inhabitants. Paul the apostle said this to the Greeks 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 Lord Jesus Christ is the one person who exhibited all the qualities necessary to make him fit to be a world ruler. He was the only man who ever achieved perfect morality throughout his life.

For his fellow men and women, he had abounding love and sympathetic understanding. On the other hand, he had a righteous hatred of oppression in rulership, of dishonesty in business, of all kinds of immorality. Throughout his ministry he demonstrated his unique fitness to rule over men and women.

Paul's words show us that in God's good time there will be a dramatic intervention in the affairs of men. A leader, appointed by God, and therefore beyond question – to use a modern phrase – 'fit for purpose', will assume control of world affairs.

## **A Life of Preparation**

When the Lord Jesus first came to this earth it was as a weak defenceless child, born to poor parents who within a short time had to flee with him into exile. When he began his ministry, Jesus had to face being misunderstood, maligned and finally crucified. It seems a very sorry story.

Thankfully it didn't end there. God raised him from the dead and Jesus ascended to heaven. He is the one man who is capable and qualified to be leader of the world. We can be assured that the words of Jesus himself will come true in God's good time:

*There will be signs... and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity... men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near (Luke 21:25–28).*

Jesus Christ will return from heaven to the earth, with the necessary authority and power of God to sort out the world's problems and transform this earth into the peaceful, harmonious place that God intended it to be at the very beginning.

There is something very reassuring to look forward to; much more so than the prospect that naturally faces mankind at the moment. To implement that change, the Lord will use a lot of helpers. By turning to him now, examining his claims and what he requires of us, we can begin to prepare ourselves for the great privilege of assisting him in this glorious work.

The choice is ours to make. When the Lord returns will he find you "ready to rule the world" with him?

**Michael Buckler**

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