

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured **Articles**

The Living Word (p. 3)

The Apostles' Teaching (p. 9)

Come And Buy! (p. 13)

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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The Living Word

I REMEMBER my school teacher demonstrating to our class why we shouldn't trust the Bible. He lined up some pupils and they played Chinese Whispers—the person at the front whispered a message in the ear of the one behind them, who whispered what they heard in the ear of the person behind them, and so on. Finally the person at the back said what they'd heard, and it was hilariously different from the original message.

That, declared my teacher, is how it is with the Bible. It's an ancient book which has been copied through the generations, so what we now have will be completely different from what was originally written.

This is a view that is held by many people. It's an appealing view, because the Bible is a challenging book and it says things that many people find uncomfortable. It claims to be the word of God, but if we have reason to believe it's flawed then we don't need to take it seriously.

The fact is, however, my teacher was wrong. There is an enormous amount of evidence to show that the Bible we have today is amazingly, minutely, miraculously similar to what was originally written.

The Two Testaments

There are two parts to the Bible. The Old Testament was written, mainly in Hebrew,

over many centuries and finished around 400BC. The New Testament was written in Greek in the First Century AD. The original documents of course no longer exist, so scholars have to analyse the surviving copies to work out what the original documents said. Let's consider the New Testament first.

We have nearly 6,000 fragments and over 30 full manuscripts of the Greek New Testament—there are far more historic copies of the New Testament than any other ancient book. The earliest documents date to the

Second Century AD. Such is the sheer volume and quality of material that scholars are confident that the New Testament in our modern Bible is 99.5% 'textually pure'. And the remaining half a per cent where there is doubt about the original words does not significantly affect the meaning.



A fragment of Matthew's Gospel, c. 250AD

There are far fewer manuscripts for the Old Testament. Until recently the oldest Old Testament manuscripts in existence

dated to around 1000AD. They had been preserved by copying by generations of Jewish scribes. The scribes were legendarily meticulous, but even so it was expected that the text would have altered significantly in the copying over the centuries. So there was huge excitement in the academic world when, in 1948, a collection of clay jars was discovered hidden in a complex of caves at a place called Qumran on the shore of Israel's Dead Sea—and these jars were found to contain a library of Hebrew Old Testament scrolls, which had been hidden there in the First Century AD! They were a thousand years older than the previously oldest known manuscripts.



The Dead Sea Scrolls were opened and analysed. They contain parts of every Old Testament book except one, and they contain some full books. And to the amazement of the academics, they were found to be virtually identical to the documents on which our modern Bibles are based. Those generations of Jewish scribes, copying and re-copying the scriptures over a thousand years, had preserved the Old Testament virtually intact apart from a few inconsequential errors.

So we know that the Old Testament we have in our Bibles is basically the same as

the one that Jesus Christ and his apostles used. And we can therefore be confident that it has not changed since it was written over the previous two thousand years.

What This Means

The fact that the Bible has been preserved so accurately is just one of the reasons why we can be sure it is no ordinary book. We could consider other reasons, such as the beautiful way it all fits together which shows a single divine mind overseeing its writing over the centuries; or the evidence of fulfilled prophecies; or the evidence it contains of scientific knowledge well ahead of its time.

But what does this mean for you and me? It means we need to take seriously the claims it makes and the message it contains.

What is the Bible's claim? Over 2,000 times in the Old Testament alone we see statements such as "Thus says the LORD" and "The word of God came to me". The Bible claims to be God's message to us.

And what is that message? It's the same message for us as Jesus Christ had for the people of his day:

Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:14-15).

It is an urgent and vital message. There are those who don't want to hear it and try to find reasons not to listen. But for those who listen, it's the Word of Life.

The Bible Today

HOW OFTEN do we hear the Bible quoted nowadays? Actually, more often than you might think! There are many common expressions that come from the Bible. Examples are ‘wisdom of Solomon’, ‘go the extra mile’, ‘by the skin of my teeth’, ‘wolf in sheep’s clothing’. Of course, this does not mean that people are aware that they are alluding to the Bible, far less that they believe it. The expressions may have become part of our English language in the same way as those from Shakespeare, such as ‘pound of flesh’.



What do Wimbledon, Whaley Bridge and Tamara Ecclestone have in common?

Quotes In The News

Most of us are interested in the news, and the Bible is still referred to in the news. For example, in August 2019 the English town of Whaley Bridge was threatened because the local dam was in danger of collapse, due to rain which a BBC reporter described as of ‘near biblical proportions’.

In July 2019, after the first day’s play at the Wimbledon tennis championships the Daily Mail reporter wrote, “*Had Lloyd Harris beaten Roger Federer it would not quite have ranked as the biggest shock since 1 Samuel chapter 17. David had stones with him when he faced Goliath, Harris playing in his first Wimbledon was up against the greatest grass court player of all time.*” This biblical reference was about the young shepherd lad David killing the giant Goliath.

Later in the year, after being burgled, the heiress Tamara Ecclestone cited Luke 8:17: “*For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light.*” She probably meant that the burglars would be caught. When Jesus said those words, however, he likely meant that the message of the Gospel cannot be hidden from those who seek it, and nor can our real motives be hidden from God.

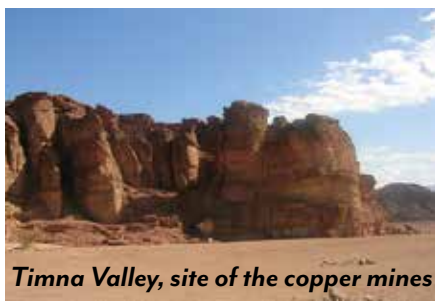
Such examples show that the words of the Bible are still part of people’s consciousness. But is it just regarded as interesting literature as opposed to sacred truth? In December 2019 a caller on a BBC radio programme observed that our age is “*not like fifty years ago; nowadays nobody takes a Bible view of the world.*” Indeed, in this ‘post-modern’ era many people query whether there is such a thing as absolute truth, and even if there is whether we can discover

and know it.* Against this background, the number of professing Christians is tending to decline worldwide.

Respect For The Bible

Nonetheless, it is not true that ‘nobody’ has regard for the Bible. Despite a torrent of scepticism, criticisms and challenges, some people are committed to believing the Bible—the whole Bible—trying to live by its principles, and fervently believing that the ‘Bible view of the world’ is, indeed, correct.

Amongst the prevailing scepticism there are news reports which encourage this faith position. Although not very prominent, there are still accounts of archaeological discoveries confirming details in the Bible which sceptics have discounted as myth and legend. For example, in September 2019 Sky News reported archaeologists finding evidence of the ancient kingdom of Edom, which is mentioned several times in the Bible. A specific issue was that the Bible describes Edom as a place where kings reigned before any Israelite king reigned (Genesis 36:31). This had been widely dismissed, but archaeologists in Israel have



Timna Valley, site of the copper mines

* ‘... In the postmodern understanding, interpretation is everything; reality only comes into being through our interpretations of what the world means to us individually.’ <https://www.pbs.org/faithandreason/gengloss/postm-body.html>

found a sophisticated copper production site which predates the Israelite kingdom and is believed to be Edomite.

Furthermore there have been, and continue to be, amazing fulfilments of Bible prophecies, especially in relation to the nation of Israel. And the continuing crisis in the Middle East is totally consistent with Bible predictions, as are the growing concerns about the future of our planet. In fact, the Bible itself offers fulfilled prophecy as a test of its credibility.

The Bible In English

We are very fortunate to have English translations of the Bible. We can even have free access to translations of the Bible, in several languages, on the internet. Some people are not so fortunate; they have no translation in their own native language. The history of how we got our English translation of the Bible is peppered with opposition, persecution and even murder of those people who were determined to make the Bible

available in a language that common people could read for themselves. They did not want people to be reliant on the (often dubious and unbiblical) narratives given to them by clergy who were equally determined to restrict Bible translations to Latin with their own exclusive access to them. But critics still dismiss the Bible as out of date. So were these courageous

and dedicated translators wasting their time and effort?

*William Tyndale,
one of the Bible
translators who
was executed for
his work*



It Matters

How do we decide what to believe? The Bible makes awesome claims about its message. Time and again it claims to be the Word of God. It describes actions and motives of God that no human being could deduce or observe. Even the records of Jewish history are written from God's perspective, including the sordid as well as the honourable. Moreover, the Bible says that there is only one God, and that we need to read His words to discover what He is like and what He asks us to do. Clever though we may be, we cannot discover this for ourselves. We would all come up with different ideas.

Despite postmodern ideas, if the Bible is right then these personal versions cannot all be valid. The Bible is unequivocal. It states that the one God who made heaven and earth has a plan for the earth. It says that this is centred on Jesus Christ—his life, death, and resurrection: and that our destiny depends on our response to these things. There is only one truth, and one way of salvation (John 14:6,

Galatians 1:8–12). One and only one. So it is not enough to be able to quote Bible words: we need to try to understand Bible ideas. This requires careful reading, taking context into account, comparing passages, and not merely selecting passages we like and imposing meanings that appeal to us.

The claims and warnings of the Bible are not to be ignored. Quite obviously the book can be, and is, misinterpreted. In particular, prophecy that is yet to be fulfilled can be misunderstood. During disasters such as the worldwide coronavirus pandemic, some religious leaders relate these to predictions in the Bible, especially the book of Revelation. Many such claims may be unfounded. But it is most definitely the case that the Bible really does warn of a time of trouble and fear preceding the return of Jesus to the earth when he will completely change life on this planet. For example:

And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory (Luke 21:25–27).

Either the Bible is the biggest fake in history, or it is the most important book ever written, with the best news ever. We can only decide by reading it, and reading it with care.

Chris Clarke

The Ebla Tablets

BETWEEN THE Syrian city of Aleppo and the Mediterranean coast lies a huge mound which is the remains of the ancient city of Ebla. Excavations have revealed that it was once a metropolis at the centre of a sophisticated civilisation. Archaeologists believe that the city was ransacked and rebuilt twice before it was finally destroyed by invaders around 1600BC.

In 1975 an extraordinary discovery was made in the ruins of one of the city's palaces: an archive of clay tablets, lying where they fell when the wooden shelves they were stacked on collapsed as the palace burnt to the ground. Around 1,800 of the tablets were intact, they were still in order, and there were even clay reference tags showing how the archive was organised.

There were financial records and economic documents, religious and literary texts and school books. They were all made of clay, because they were made long before the invention of paper. It's believed that the palace was destroyed around 2250BC.

Bible scholars were excited about the discovery of the Ebla Tablets, because it showed that writing is much older than was previously thought.

The first five books of the Bible—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy—are often known as the Books of Moses. Moses was the man who led the nation of Israel out of Egypt to the Promised Land. Exodus to Deuteronomy deal with the nation's journey and the law God gave them which Moses was told to write down (for example Exodus 34:27). It is traditionally held that he wrote these four books, and that he also wrote (or collated from earlier writings) the book of Genesis.

The problem was, Moses lived around 1600BC and until recently it was believed that writing had not been invented by that time. So the Books of Moses must have been written by other people long after the events they describe.

But the Ebla Tablets are dated around the time of Abraham, over 500 years before Moses. We now know that Moses, with his upbringing as a prince in the court of Egypt, would have been a fluent writer. Again the Bible is proved right and its critics have to eat their words!



One of the tablets

Doug Potts

The Apostles' Teaching

This is the ninth in a series in which we examine this fascinating Bible book. You can catch up with the previous articles at www.gladtidingsmagazine.org.

IN THE ACTS of the Apostles we have a number of speeches made by the apostles. These were generally given for one of three reasons: they were speeches given to outline the Gospel for those who did not know it, or they were defences of the apostles against accusations from either the authorities or the public, or they were warnings to Christians about threats to the Gospel.

In this article we shall focus on the speeches in which the apostles were proclaiming the Gospel. The reason that these are important is that they show the message that the apostles proclaimed to the world, which is the message that people accepted before they were baptised.

There are six speeches in which apostles proclaimed the Gospel to people who had never heard it before. Three of these (Peter in Jerusalem and Paul in Antioch) were to Jewish audiences, and one (Peter in Caesarea) was to an audience consisting of Gentiles (non-Jews) who had been investigating Judaism. Two more (in Lystra and Athens) were delivered to audiences of Gentiles.

Speeches of this kind also tend to have a common format. They begin with a comment on the immediate circumstances which caused the audience to gather, followed by an explanation of the Gospel, which in turn is followed by a further section which deals with the crowd's response to the Gospel.

Witness to the Jews

Acts chapter 2 relates Peter's speech in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, 50 days after Passover, and hence 49 days after the resurrection of Jesus. Peter had been with Jesus only nine days earlier and seen him



Peter preaching at Pentecost

ascend to heaven with the promise that he would one day return (Acts 1:11).

At Pentecost Peter and the other disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and found themselves able to proclaim the Gospel in

a wide variety of foreign languages. They went into the street and the multinational crowd who assembled in Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost gathered to hear them.

Peter addressed the crowd, and his speech can be summarised thus:

Context	Verses 14–21 Peter speaks to the crowd about the miracle that they are seeing: the apostles speaking in foreign languages and proclaiming the Gospel
Core Gospel	Verses 22–36 Peter delivers the main points of the Gospel: <i>Jesus has been raised from the dead; there is evidence for this (vs. 24-32)</i> <i>Therefore Jesus has been declared by God to be “both Lord and Christ [the Messiah]” (v. 36)</i>
Response	Verses 37–40 The response required of those who hear the Gospel—repentance and baptism.

Around 3,000 people were baptised in response!

In Acts 13, the Apostle Paul was speaking in the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch. Here he

followed a similar pattern. This time the first part of the speech was a comment on Old Testament history. He then proclaimed the basic Gospel. The reaction of the crowd in this case was rather less encouraging than the reaction to Peter’s speech in Jerusalem.

The same pattern appears in Acts 3:12–26 where Peter explains the Gospel to a crowd in the Temple in Jerusalem, and Acts 10:34–43 where Peter explains about Jesus to the Roman centurion Cornelius.

In these speeches the section on the basic Gospel contains these facts:

- Jesus was approved by God
- He was killed by the authorities in Jerusalem
- He was raised from the dead (‘resurrected’)
- There are witnesses to the resurrection
- The resurrection of Jesus fulfils Old Testament prophecies
- By his resurrection Jesus is exalted and shown to be the Messiah who was foretold in the Old Testament
- Jesus will be the judge of the world; he must return to earth to be judge
- There is a need for people to repent of their sins and turn back to God
- Our sins can be forgiven because of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Witness to the Gentiles

In Acts 17, after Paul had been proclaiming the Gospel in Athens he was brought before the court of the Areopagus (Mars Hill) to explain his teaching. Here he gave a speech in which he again proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



Paul preaching in Athens

The speech began with a section tailored to his audience. In this speech the introduction concerned the tendency of the Athenians to produce statues and shrines for every conceivable god, including an unknown god. Paul then went on to talk about the real God as the Creator of the universe Who maintains mankind in existence. However, he then conveyed the main points of the Gospel in very few words:

Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men

everywhere to repent, because He 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 17:30–31).

This encompasses the fact of judgement by Jesus Christ, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and the need for repentance. These are some of the main points of the Gospel as mentioned in the speeches that the apostles made to their Jewish audiences, although there is rather less detail.

The Apostles' Central Teaching

The main teaching of the apostles centred on the death of Jesus Christ and the fact that he was raised from the dead. The apostles gave evidence for this and they linked it to the message of the Old Testament.

The evidence they gave included the fact that the apostles themselves had met Jesus alive after the resurrection. The fact that Jesus' tomb was empty was sometimes alluded to, but it never formed a major part of the evidence. This is what we would expect. The apostles had met the living Jesus; they had talked with him and been taught by him. This would be much more important to them than the tomb, which they possibly only saw once.

Paul's List in Corinthians

The evidence of witnesses became a formal list later on. In 1 Corinthians 15, which was

written in the late spring of 55AD, we have a list of people who met the risen Jesus. This includes only male witnesses. In the Jewish world of the First Century AD the evidence of women was not considered to be especially valuable (so it is significant that it was women who were the first to witness the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Luke 24:1-7 and John 20:1-18).

Paul wrote that he received this witness from others: *“I delivered to you first of all that which I also received”* (1 Corinthians 15:3). This means that the list is rather older than the letter; Paul must have heard it from other apostles. He set off from Antioch in 52AD, so he must have been given the information which forms this list before this. He had visited Jerusalem in 48AD for the Council of Jerusalem and before this in 46AD for a visit to relieve famine (Acts 11:28-30). It is likely that the list that Paul includes in 1 Corinthians 15 came from the apostles in Jerusalem before 50AD. The list, of course, includes more than 500 people who saw Jesus alive, some of whom were close associates of Jesus and some of whom were at the time hostile (James the brother of Jesus was both hostile and a close associate).

Repentance

The message of the apostles always has one other crucial point: in every case there is a call to repent.

In the Bible, the word ‘repentance’ does not simply mean feeling sorry for past actions; it means making a decision to change your

way of life. In their speeches the apostles always warned their hearers to turn away from their previous way of life to become followers of Jesus Christ.



Paul preaching the Gospel

In some speeches this is the end; the hearers don’t respond, or they are hostile. At Pentecost (Acts 2) 3,000 people were baptised.

The message of the Gospel hasn’t changed, nor has the invitation. We too are invited to change our lives around and become followers of Jesus Christ.

John Thorpe

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Come And Buy!



Ormskirk market today

ORMSKIRK is a small town in north-west England, well-known locally for its unique parish church, its gingerbread and its vibrant market. This outdoor market is held



... and 100 years ago

near the old clock tower every Thursday and Saturday throughout the year. When the weather is good it is bustling with people buying, selling, chatting and advertising local events. It is one of the oldest markets in the UK, dating back to 1286 when monks at nearby Burscough were granted a charter by King Edward I to hold an outdoor market in Ormskirk. In today's market you will not see cattle and pigs roaming around, and we can be sure that there were no electrical goods in the Thirteenth Century. But for hundreds of years it has been a place to buy food, drink, clothes and hardware.

Come And Buy!

Many people like to visit markets. Some just look around, while others search for bargains. Enthusiastic stallholders loudly extol their goods to passers-by.

Marketplaces are mentioned in the Bible, notably in the gospels. The marketplace was a social gathering place. Jesus warned about religious leaders seeking attention in the marketplace (Mark 12:38); children played there (Matthew 11:16–17); and men wanting employment stood in groups waiting to be hired (Matthew 20:3–4).

To ensure that market traders in Ormskirk were not dealing dishonestly, standard measurements were displayed on the wall of the police station and they are still there to this day. But the origins of this idea of fairness go back to biblical times. God asked for honesty from His people, and the Jewish law commanded them not to cheat

The clock tower was built in the marketplace in 1876, and soon became a focal point in its own right. It functioned as a meeting place for the locals, and events were held in its shadow. In those days there

but to have fair weights and balances (Deuteronomy 25:14–16).

Dishonest scales are an abomination to the LORD, but a just weight is His delight (Proverbs 11:1).

In Jesus' time the Temple precincts in Jerusalem were being turned into a marketplace for selling animals for sacrifice, and Jesus made it clear what he thought of this (Luke 19:45–47).

Without Money

Markets nowadays sell food and drink for hungry customers. In hot weather bottles of water are popular, even if they are expensive. The Bible often draws on common life experiences, sometimes with bizarre twists to teach lessons. There is a beautiful example in Isaiah's prophecy, which depicts God calling out with an offer:

Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price (Isaiah 55:1).

This seems a peculiar contradiction in terms: inviting people to buy without money. But it is not referring to ordinary shopping, and is designed to attract our attention. The chapter had relevance to the days in which it was written over 2,500 years ago, likely referring to a time when God delivered His people from the threat of captivity by the Assyrians (the background is in Isaiah 37). But it is clear that it is principally talking about a much more important deliverer—the Messiah,

the Christ who would come much later. His deliverance was not to be from a human army and enemy, but from the greatest threat to us all: sin and death. It is talking about being saved for ever, not just for a short period of time. There are, therefore, very important messages in this chapter:

Verse 1	This offer from God is for anyone—whether Jews or non-Jews; there is no price because this has already been paid; people must recognise that they are unable to pay, but they need to respond to the invitation.
Verse 2	The blessings on offer cannot be acquired by our own efforts; such efforts only achieve 'fake' bread.
Verse 3	The people who respond must put their trust in the 'sure mercies of David'. (What does this mean? We'll come back to it.) Responding brings life, and—by implication— failing to respond brings death.

A Unique Offer

What is this offer, we might ask. In fact it is the most valuable, precious and amazing free gift that we could ever imagine. It is God's offer to all of us of salvation and eternal life. This is made possible by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He urged people to come to him (John 6:45); he claimed to be bread from heaven

which if someone eats they can live for ever (John 6:51); and on a great feast day he proclaimed:

If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water (John 7:37–38).

The Jews, who knew their Old Testament scriptures, would recognise the allusions to Isaiah 55. Jesus was claiming to be the long-promised Messiah. He was the Saviour foretold by the Jewish prophets.

Isaiah 55 goes on with further powerful lessons:

Verses 6–7	We need to draw near to God, to learn about Him and to repent—to change our ways—and to obey Him. He will forgive us.
Verses 8–9	We do not naturally think in the same way as God does; we need to learn about Him from what He tells us.
Verses 10–11	God’s word will come to pass: nothing can frustrate Him.
Verses 12–13	There is great hope for people who do this.

The Sure Mercies of David

While he was preaching in Antioch, the Apostle Paul referred to the ‘sure mercies of David’. He was arguing very persuasively that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the special descendant promised to King David. David had died, was buried and

his body had corrupted in the grave (Acts 13:36). But David had been promised a special descendant, a king who would reign for ever (Psalm 89:34–37). Jesus was that descendant. Jesus never saw corruption (that is, his body never decayed)—he was raised from the dead, never to die again.

And that He [God] raised him [Jesus] from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: ‘I will give you the sure mercies of David’ (Acts 13:34).

Many people recognised who Jesus was when they saw his power and authority, calling him ‘son of David’ (Matthew 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30 & 31; 21:9 & 15). In fact the very start of Matthew’s Gospel declares Jesus as ‘Son of David and Son of Abraham’ (Matthew 1:1). Jesus was far superior to the Jews’ famous king David. And the mercies of God, promised to David, involved the offer of forgiveness of sins because of Jesus (Acts 13:38 & 39) and the hope of eternal life with King Jesus (Acts 13: 46–48). What an offer!

We need to be careful with apparent bargains. “If it seems too good to be true, it probably is too good to be true!” But God’s offer is no fake. Awesome though it may be, it is nonetheless completely genuine. It is free. It is better than anything we can buy in Ormskirk market, in any other market or shop, or even nowadays on the internet. It is available for us if we really want it. It is eternal life in God’s Kingdom. Can we afford to ignore this offer?

Anna Hart

A Book Ahead of Its Time

DO YOU REALISE how many modern pandemics have originated with animals?

The SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) outbreak in 2002–2003 was found to have originated in cave-dwelling horseshoe bats in the Yunnan province of China, and made the leap from animal to human infection somewhere in the Guangdong Province in late 2002. During the period of infection, there were 8,098 reported cases of SARS and 774 deaths.



The pandemic was eventually brought under control in July 2003, following a policy of isolating people suspected of having the condition and screening all passengers travelling by air from affected countries. Scientists identified the culprit as a strain of coronavirus and found genetically similar viruses in masked palm civets sold in Guangdong's animal markets, suggesting that the deadly strain probably originated in the bats, and later passed through civets before reaching humans.

The MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome) outbreak in 2012 also appears to have originated in bats. The evidence available to date suggests that the viruses have been present in bats for some time and had spread to camels by the mid 1990s. The viruses appear to have spread from camels to humans in the early 2010s.

Both SARS and MERS were diseases caused by viruses in the family known as coronaviruses. In December 2019 a new coronavirus disease was identified in the city of Wuhan in China's Hubei province. It came to be known as Covid-19 (COroNaVirus Disease 2019). Covid-19 has close genetic similarity to bat coronaviruses, suggesting it emerged from a bat-borne virus. An intermediate animal reservoir such as a pangolin is also thought to be involved in its introduction to humans. Pangolins are protected under Chinese law, but their poaching and trading for use in traditional Chinese medicine remains common.

The AIDS pandemic began in the early 1980s. AIDS is caused by a human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which originated in non-human primates in Central and West Africa. While various sub-groups of the virus acquired human infectivity at different times, the global pandemic had its origins in the 1920s in the

emergence of one specific strain in what is now Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Law of Moses

About 3,500 years ago guidance was given which, if it had been followed, could have prevented all these pandemics.

The Law of Moses was given by God to His people Israel. The account is in the Bible book of Exodus. The Law defined two distinct classes of animal—clean and unclean. Clean mammals were those which chewed the cud and had cloven hooves—cattle, sheep, goats, deer; the rest were unclean, and to be avoided completely as food, and treated with caution if domesticated as working beasts—horses, asses, camels. The preferred work animals in peacetime were oxen. Only fish with scales and fins were clean. Only herbivorous birds were clean, such as doves. These food and contact restrictions, if followed closely, would minimise the risk of sickness arising from animal-borne diseases. All recent pandemics have involved animals which the Law of Moses classed as unclean, which a faithful Israelite would have avoided completely (Leviticus 11:1–23).

Another feature of the Law of Moses was the insistence on washing—of clothes, persons and vessels for food and drink, according to context. This minimised the risks of food poisoning and disease spreading (for instance Leviticus 11:24–40).

A topical and relevant feature of the Law of Moses was isolation. An individual with suspected or diagnosed disease had to remain outside the camp, alone, for a period which would at the end indicate the severity of the problem and determine the action to be taken (for example Leviticus 13:1–6).

God said to Israel: *“If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you”* (Exodus 15:26).

God’s people are no longer obliged to keep the Law of Moses (Acts 15:22–29); but it was a law which was given for both spiritual and practical reasons by the Almighty God to His chosen people, and it was obviously many centuries ahead of its time.

That Word of God can do more than help keep us healthy in this present life: it can lead us to everlasting life, unhindered by mortal ailments, if we follow its instruction.

Peter Banyard

Questions? Comments?
We’d love to hear from you!

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Daniel

DANIEL WAS a Jewish captive who was deported to Babylon in about 606 BC. He and his three friends Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, though only teenagers, displayed great courage in exile, holding to their beliefs and the worship of the God of Israel (chapters 1–3). As an old man he faced being thrown into a den of lions rather than renounce his faith (chapter 6). God delivered him.

A Book of Prophecy

The Book of Daniel contains many prophecies, which concern the conflict between the kingdoms of men (particularly as they affect Israel) and the Kingdom of God. For example:

Chapter 2 *Nebuchadnezzar’s image*: the statue of a man whose parts, from head to feet, represent successive empires involved in God’s purpose.

Chapter 5 *The writing on the wall*: warning to Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson Belshazzar of the imminent overthrow of Babylon by the Medes and Persians.

Chapter 9 *Vision of 70 weeks*: pinpointed the time of Messiah’s arrival.

Chapters 10–11 *The Kings of the North and South*: an outline of history from the Persian empire to the time of the end.



The writing on the wall

The Overthrow of Human Rule

Chapter 2 particularly contains a dramatic forecast of the end of all human empires when a stone (Christ) shatters the image and grows into God’s Kingdom (chapter 2:44). Chapter 12 foretells the resurrection and judgement at Christ’s second coming, and gives further time periods relevant to the last days.

Norman Owen

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Some interesting links with other parts of the Bible

- ◆ Daniel 2:44; 7:27—see Revelation 11:15
- ◆ Daniel 4:35—see Isaiah 45:9; Romans 9:20, 21
- ◆ Daniel 7:2–8—see Revelation 13:1–5.

Across

- 1 In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, he himself was represented by this metal (4) *(Daniel 2:38)*
- 3 Daniel was cast into a den of these (5) *(Daniel 6:16)*
- 7 This divine messenger saved Daniel (5) *(Daniel 6:22)*
- 8 The animal in 14 across had this number of horns (3) *(Daniel 8:3)*
- 9 It was prophesied that Egypt would not do this (6) *(Daniel 11:42)*
- 11 Apart from (6) *(Daniel 3:28)*
- 14 Daniel had a vision of this animal standing by a river (3) *(Daniel 8:3)*
- 16 Not ever (5) *(Daniel 2:44)*
- 17 In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, 5 down was cut out without these (5) *(Daniel 2:34)*
- 18 Daniel had a vision of this, whose height was great (4) *(Daniel 4:10)*



Down

- 1 In Daniel's vision this animal represented Greece (4) *(Daniel 8:21)*
- 2 In Nebuchadnezzar's dream these were made of iron (4) *(Daniel 2:33)*
- 4 "The king commanded that they should take Daniel up ___ of the lions' den" (3) *(Daniel 6:23)*
- 5 This struck the image on its feet (5) *(Daniel 2:34)*
- 6 Nebuchadnezzar was not able to do this (5) *(Daniel 6:18)*
- 10 God will set up a kingdom which will do this for ever (5) *(Daniel 2:44)*
- 11 The stone became a mountain which filled this (5) *(Daniel 2:35)*
- 12 Always (4) *(Daniel 7:18)*
- 13 Correct (4) *(Daniel 3:14)*
- 15 Although three were thrown into the furnace, there were four in the midst of the fire (3) *(Daniel 3:25)*

(These clues use the New King James version of the Bible. If you're using another version some words may not be quite the same.)

Colin Jannaway

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