

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured **Articles**

The Challenge (p. 3)

Bathsheba (p. 6)

God Who Provides (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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The Challenge

THE ‘SHARK’S FIN’ peak of Mount Meru in the Indian Himalayas is widely regarded as the most difficult mountaineering challenge in the world. Over the years there were many attempts to climb it. Then in 2011 it was finally conquered by a team of three men, after years of preparation, a previous failed attempt, intensive practice and physical training, then a gruelling 11-day climb involving a 4000-foot ascent of treacherous snow fields before they could scale the 1500-foot vertical granite face.

The inevitable question is—why? The team leader Conrad Anker explained: “Why do we do this stuff? The view!”

Everybody likes a challenge. Not everybody is up for the kind of challenge which involves pushing your mind and body to their limit of endurance with a constant risk of falling to your death in temperatures colder than a domestic freezer, on a climb which many people said was impossible. But here’s a challenge which you can take up.

Sit Down And Read

The Bible makes a very bold claim—it claims to be the

Word of God, which can lead its reader to eternal life (John 6:68). The problem is, it’s a big book and it can be daunting. To contemplate reading it might seem like contemplating climbing a mountain!

So just read one of its 66 books. The Gospels are a good place to start because they will introduce you to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the perfect man, the Saviour of the world who is the focus of the Bible’s message. Matthew is the first Gospel.

Here’s the challenge. Arrange some time for yourself, in which you can sit down with as little interruption as possible. Matthew will take a few hours to read, it doesn’t have to be all in one sitting. Get hold of a copy of the Bible. Alternatively, read it online. Start by getting your attitude right, with a prayer to God. The words of Psalm 119:18 would do nicely: “*Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law.*” Then read, carefully and attentively. Take breaks when you need them. If you’re new to the Bible it may not be easy: it’s not written to be a page-turner! Also, the Gospel writers make

many references to the Old

Testament with which you may not be familiar. But enjoy what you read, and think about it. Ask questions. Make notes, if you're the note-taking type.

There is an important principle which needs to be borne in mind when reading the Bible. It's expressed in the prophecy of Isaiah:

Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist," says the LORD. "But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word" (Isaiah 66:1-2).

If the Bible is the word of God, it must be read with respect. There's a tendency these days to be critical of everything. Perhaps this is born out of the popular notion that your own opinion on any subject is more important than any supposed 'absolute truth'. But the Bible claims to be absolute truth (2 Timothy 3:16). So it's good to ask questions and flag up bits you don't understand or that make you uncomfortable—but remember what it is you're reading!

There are people who have been reading the Bible all their lives, and they're still asking questions and still discovering things they've never noticed before. You should not expect to get a grip on Matthew's Gospel

with one reading. But it may well give you an appetite to read more.

Then What Next?

There are 66 books to explore. Some are easier than others. What next? Genesis is the obvious choice—the Bible's first book, the book of beginnings which lays the foundation for everything that follows. Some people are fascinated by the rich imagery in the last book, Revelation, but Revelation is tying together threads that have emerged throughout the rest of the Bible so it's not the best place to start.

Reading an entire book in one sitting is like having a feast. A balanced diet, of course, involves regular meals. So here's another challenge: set yourself the target of reading something from the Bible every day. You may want to use a reading planner, such as the Bible Companion which appears annually in [Glad Tidings](#) and is freely available on the internet. Remember that a good plan will cover the entire Bible.

Imagine the exhilaration of climbing a mountain, reaching the summit, and gazing down upon the world in wonder. The only thing left to do is turn round and go back. Now imagine the exhilaration of coming to realise that your Creator has called you to everlasting life, and in the pages of the Bible He is showing you the way. It's a lifetime's journey, but when you reach the destination you will be at the beginning of eternity.



Nahum

NAHUM'S PROPHECY concerns Nineveh the capital city of Assyria (Nahum 1:1). The book can be dated between 640 and 620BC: that's 120 or more years after Jonah prophesied against that city. By now Nineveh had long forgotten its repentance in Jonah's time. The Assyrians had attacked and spoiled the nation of Israel, and threatened the nation of Judah. The Assyrians' attempt to overthrow Jerusalem was thwarted by divine intervention (2 Kings 19).

The Comforter

The name Nahum means 'comfort'. God's message through him proclaimed comfort for the Jews. Nineveh would be overthrown and the Assyrian threat would cease. The Babylonian attack on Nineveh is vividly foretold in chapters 2 and 3: it was fulfilled in 612BC. The city was finally sacked by the Medes and Persians and its ruins were only rediscovered in the 19th Century.



Excavation of Nineveh

Judgement of Nineveh

Nineveh was “an exceedingly great city” (Jonah 3:3). The Assyrians had conquered many nations, including Egypt: Nahum refers to the capture of No-Amon (Thebes) (Nahum 3:8).

God's words about Himself (chapter 1) were right. He is in control of all nations and the judgement of Nineveh is a foreshadowing of God's final confrontation with all human pride and power. God will send peace to His people. The wonderful words of Nahum 1:15 will ultimately be fulfilled when Christ returns:

Behold, on the mountains the feet of him who brings good tidings, who proclaims peace! O Judah, keep your appointed feasts, perform your vows. For the wicked one shall no more pass through you; he is utterly cut off.

Norman Owen

By kind permission of 'The Christadelphian'



Some interesting links with other parts of the Bible:

- ◆ Nahum 1:2—see Exodus 20:5; Joshua 24:19.
- ◆ Nahum 1:6—see Malachi 3:2; Matthew 3:12.
- ◆ Nahum 1:15—see Isaiah 52:7; Romans 10:15.

Bathsheba

The Gospels of Matthew and Luke give lists of the ancestors of Jesus Christ. Only five women are mentioned. These were all very special individuals. In this series we're looking at them in turn—this month we consider Bathsheba.

WE HEAR NOTHING about Bathsheba until late one night when she was washing (2 Samuel 11:2).

This is a most unusual Bible story, but one which can teach us very useful lessons. King David had fought many battles during his life, but on this occasion he sent Joab his captain to conquer the Ammonite capital city Rabbah, while he stayed at home. In modern language we can say he was 'bored', and one night he couldn't sleep and so went for a walk on the flat roof of his palace. He saw a woman in another courtyard or on a flat roof washing herself. He obviously had a second look and noticed that she was beautiful. He was

clearly attracted, and sent a messenger to find out who she was, and the answer came back, "*Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite*" (v. 3).

David—it's time to stop. She's a married woman, in fact she is the wife of one of your 30 mighty men (1 Chronicles 11:41). Walk away.

Temptation

God has given humans free will, which means that we can choose either good or evil. James wrote, "*Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him*" (James 1:12).

David should have realised that any liaison with Uriah's wife was totally wrong, but sadly he still went ahead. He sent for her to come to his palace, and slept with her. Some time later Bathsheba sent a message to the king to say that she was pregnant. We might well think that she should have refused the king's overtures and not gone to the palace, but kings in those days were extremely powerful, and she probably thought that she could not refuse. Bathsheba was now in a most difficult situation, because her husband was away fighting with the army and so it would be obvious that he was not the child's father.



Bathsheba's Husband

David devised a plan of deceit, and sent a message to the army commanding Uriah to come home. He tried to persuade Uriah to go to his own house, so it could be thought that Bathsheba's baby was her husband's. He tried this for two days, and then did an extremely wrong thing. He wrote to Joab the captain of the army to assign Uriah to a dangerous place in the battle where he would surely be killed. This wicked scheme worked, leaving Bathsheba as a widow, but expecting the king's child.

Now David was guilty of both adultery and murder. God severely punished him, but did not allow him to be put to death. David did not forget Bathsheba, and when her mourning for Uriah was over he sent for her again, and she became his wife. When he was born their baby boy remained very sick, and he died seven days later.

But Joab, the captain of David's army, was not a kind-hearted man, and when Uriah had been killed he did a very cruel thing. He sent a message to King David saying that he had conquered part of the city of Rabbah, and telling David to come to fight against it and complete the capture. This meant that David not only had to be absent from his new wife Bathsheba, but he had to see where Uriah had been killed.

A Queen

King David had a number of wives and many children. His marriage to Bathsheba was a shameful episode in both their lives. She made a bad mistake.

And yet it is Bathsheba who became the mother of David's two most important sons—Solomon, who succeeded him on the throne and through whom the royal line descended which led to Jesus' stepfather Joseph (which is the line we see in Matthew's genealogy); and Nathan, from whom Jesus' mother Mary was descended (whose line we see in Luke's genealogy).

Bathsheba features in two later chapters of King David's life. When Adonijah, another of his sons, tried to usurp the kingdom, Bathsheba was instrumental in ensuring that David's intended heir Solomon was crowned king (1 Kings 1:28–35).

Later after David's death Adonijah tried to take advantage of Bathsheba's influence over her son Solomon to further his ambitions (1 Kings 2:13–25). But King Solomon considered this a step too far, and Adonijah was put to death.

In this very sad account of lust, adultery and murder Bathsheba seems to be only a pawn in King David's machinations. But she shared the heartache while their baby was so ill, and his subsequent death.

Her son Solomon was evidently very special because we read "*the LORD loved him*" (2 Samuel 12:24). Perhaps this is testament to his mother's good influence.

David Simpson



3. Parallel Passages

The Bible can be a daunting book. In this series we look at what it is, and how to read it.

AN INTERESTING and very useful feature of the Bible is the fact that you can put two or more passages together to gain a better understanding of the whole. This is possible because of the consistency of the Bible's content. The Bible says of itself that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16), and of God we read "I am the LORD, I do not change" (Malachi 3:6). The Bible ultimately has one author, the unchanging God, so we should not be surprised that it is entirely consistent.

There is a Bible precedent for putting different passages together, borne out of the method by which the book has been transmitted through many different inspired writers. This is the concept of multiple witnesses. Under the law which God gave to His people Israel, which is known as the Law of Moses, one witness wasn't enough to convict a person or convince a court:

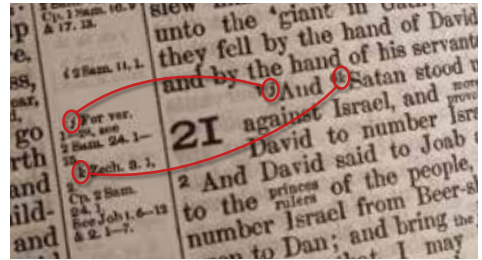
One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established (Deuteronomy 19:15).

Jesus picked up on this law when he said in a similar context, "by the mouth of

two or three witnesses every word may be established" (Matthew 18:16).

This principle can be applied with good effect when studying the Bible itself: putting two or three passages together helps to clarify the principle being examined. Sometimes it reveals things you might not expect.

Where do you start? If you're looking at a Bible passage, how can you find related passages to compare it with? One method is cross references. Many Bibles have cross references which draw your attention to similar verses.



These cross references were not in the original text of the Bible, they have been put there by the publishers to help with Bible study. Consider the following examples.

Jesus' Return

The Bible makes lots of references to Jesus' second coming. Perhaps the most celebrated is the record of the words spoken by the angels to Jesus' disciples whilst they

gazed open-mouthed at the cloud into which Jesus had just disappeared: “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

Acts 1 describes how Jesus and the disciples were on the Mount of Olives to the east of Jerusalem, when he was taken up into heaven and a cloud received him out of their sight. The message from the angels was that Jesus will return in the same way. This is consistent with many other passages. One of particular interest is in the Old Testament prophecy of Zechariah:

Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. 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 the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south (Zechariah 14:1-4).

The context of this prophecy is the prelude to the Kingdom of God. Jerusalem is surrounded by enemies, half the city is taken and the victors are cruelly triumphant over the defeated Jews. This is the moment when the Lord Jesus Christ appears, and the parallels with Acts 1:11 are clear. Putting the two passages together gives a clearer picture of the whole. If you continue to read the rest of Zechariah 14 it describes the re-establishment of the Kingdom of God. (This is the very thing the disciples had just asked Jesus about in Acts 1:6.)

There is a similar passage in 1 Thessalonians which describes Jesus’ return but this time from the perspective of the believers who are raised from the dead when he comes:

But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall

be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18).

This passage describes Christ's return, and mentions the clouds, and it also tells us that at that time there will be a resurrection of the dead. Paul calls them "those who sleep", because as far as the Bible is concerned when a believer dies they are asleep, waiting to be awoken.

One final passage in this sequence draws together what we have seen and reveals another aspect of Jesus' return.

At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever (Daniel 12:1–3).

The "time of trouble" ties in with what we learnt from Zechariah 14, the raising of those who "sleep in the earth" is consistent with 1 Thessalonians 4. So we also learn that there will be a selection, a judgement at Jesus' return. This is confirmed by other passages such as Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats:

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And he will set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left... (Matthew 25:31–33).

Each of these passages gives a part of the picture of what will happen at Christ's return. Such is the consistency of the Bible that we can put them together and see a fuller picture. There are many other passages which give further details.

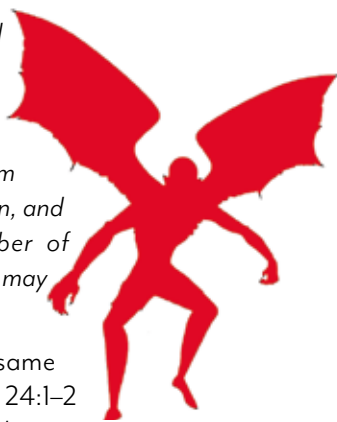
Satan and the LORD

Who is Satan? We see the surprising answer to this question when we put together two parallel Bible passages.

In 1 Chronicles 21:1–2 we read: "Now Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel.

So David said to Joab and to the leaders of the people, 'Go, number Israel from Beersheba to Dan, and bring the number of them to me that I may know it.'"

Describing the same event, 2 Samuel 24:1–2 reads: "Again the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel, and He moved David against them to say, 'Go, number Israel and Judah.' So the king said to



Joab the commander of the army who was with him, 'Now go throughout all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, and count the people, that I may know the number of the people.'"

On this occasion Satan is “*the LORD*”, the God of Israel. This is surprising until it’s understood that the word ‘satan’ in the Hebrew language simply means ‘adversary’. God was an adversary to Israel because it appears they were unfaithful to him. He tested them to see if they would be faithful or not.

The first time the Hebrew word ‘satan’ occurs in the Bible is in Numbers 22:22, when an angel of God is sent to confront a prophet who was intent on a foolish errand: “*Then God’s anger was aroused because he went, and the Angel of the LORD took his stand in the way as an adversary against him.*”

By putting these verses together, we have discovered that ‘satan’ refers to an adversary, someone who opposes someone else. That opposition can be a force for good or a force for evil: the word itself is ambivalent, the clue is in the context.

We have considered three occurrences of the Hebrew word Satan in the Old Testament. The New Testament is written in Greek. There are various Greek words for ‘adversary’, but interestingly the New Testament writers don’t use the Greek words, they use the Hebrew word ‘satan’. And they tend to

use the word as a name, which is the reason why some readers assume that Satan is an actual evil being. However, in the New Testament Satan is simply an adversary, as we saw in the Old Testament. For example:

From that time 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. Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord; this shall not happen to you!” But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men” (Matthew 16:21–23).

Peter was a disciple who loved Jesus and wanted the best for him, but because he was unwittingly opposing the Lord’s will he was called Satan.

We have seen the value of putting passages together. Putting together various passages which use similar language (for example describing events around the return of Christ) can give a bigger picture. Putting together passages which describe the same event (for example David’s numbering of Israel) can show us what was really happening. Putting together passages which use the same original words (for example Satan) can show us what those words mean.

James Hardy

God Who Provides

ONE OF THE CHALLENGES of having faith in God is to believe that He will provide for us in whatever circumstances we find ourselves. The Lord Jesus Christ said this:

Do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you (Matthew 6:31–33).

The clear message of Jesus to his disciples is that God will provide. This is so simple to understand, but it doesn’t always work out quite as we might expect. That’s why the Bible is so helpful by giving us examples of people for whom God did provide, people like the prophet Elijah.

Trying Times

The spiritual health of the nation of Israel had deteriorated with the reigns of a succession of godless kings, culminating with King Ahab of whom it was written that he “*did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him*” (1 Kings 16:30). At the climax of his wickedness the prophet Elijah arrived with this announcement:

As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word (1 Kings 17:1).

The withholding of rain from the nation was what God had said would happen if they did not listen to His voice (Deuteronomy 28:23-24). Although this was a punishment which affected the whole nation, God in His mercy provided for those who were obedient to His voice and were seeking His kingdom.

Hiding Place

After Elijah’s confrontation with Ahab, God told him: “*Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. And it will be that you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there*” (1 Kings 17:3–4).



And that’s what happened. Despite their proverbially ravenous appetites, “*the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook*” (v. 6).

The raven was an unclean bird under the Law of Moses (Leviticus 11:15), yet it was

the means that God chose to deliver food to Elijah, until the brook dried up. When this happened God comforted Elijah by informing him that He would still provide for him, but this time in a different way.

The Widow of Zarephath

King Ahab was searching high and low for the prophet, so God sent him out of Israel into neighbouring Sidon where he would be safe. But Sidon was still an area affected by the drought. What comfortable lodgings did God have in mind for His prophet? Of all people, he sent him to a widow who was in dire circumstances herself, having just a handful of flour in a bowl and a little oil. She was about to bake a cake for herself and her son, *“that we may eat it, and die”* (1 Kings 17:12).

This was the place that God had arranged for His prophet to stay and, in so doing, God saved not only Elijah but also the widow and her son. For this is what Elijah told the widow:

Do not fear; go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first, and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son. For thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry,



until the day the Lord sends rain on the earth’ (vs. 13–14).

First there were ravens and now there was a starving widow! God evidently chooses to provide for His children in unusual ways sometimes; but the message is clear—God will provide. And when the widow responded in faith, she too was provided for. The bowl of flour never was exhausted nor the jar of oil empty, thanks to God’s gracious provision.

Fearless Faith

The widow was a Sidonian, not an Israelite. But there were faithful people in Israel too. One of them was Obadiah, a high ranking official in King Ahab’s own household. This was the very last place where you would expect to find a man who trusted God and put his life on the line as a consequence, because Ahab’s wife Jezebel was a ruthless persecutor of God’s people. It was Obadiah who *“hid one hundred men of the LORD’s prophets, fifty to a cave, and fed them with bread and water”* (1 Kings 18:13). He was a further example of how God provided through unusual and unexpected ways.

These examples in the lifetime of Elijah demonstrate that God has provided for His people in the past—even in the midst of severe drought and persecution. When appropriate He can provide through unusual ways, sometimes in ways which are unexpected. He has said that He will provide; all that He asks is that we seek first the Kingdom of God.

Stephen Blake

The Governor's Memoir

Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor who sentenced Jesus Christ to death. This is an imaginary memoir, but it is based on the facts as we know them from the Bible and archaeology. The Bible verses are given for reference.



Part 1

THE JEWISH PASSOVER was always a dangerous time. Jerusalem was packed with pilgrims and bubbling with nationalistic fervour. I ensured our garrison was at full strength, and I took up residence in the city myself and I made sure it was known.

This year there was a particular sense of unease. The Jewish rabble were raving about a travelling preacher by the name of Jesus, whom they had made a focus for their discontent with Roman rule. He arrived in the city a week before the feast.

He rode in on the Jericho road, it was a spectacle and half the city went out to watch. They were shouting “Hosanna to the son of David” ([Matthew 21:9](#)). I knew

who David was, he was a Jewish king. That was tantamount to treason against Caesar. I called the priests in and had stiff words with them about it. I was reassured—they seemed to be no more keen on the troublemaker than I was.

Whatever he was up to, he had the sense to keep a low profile after that. My spies reported that he spent the days talking in the Temple, then at night he'd retreat to an Olivet village ([Matthew 21:17](#)). We were braced for an uprising. The cauldron was seething, but it seemed that we were holding the lid on.

It was the night before Passover, very late. A deputation arrived from the priests. It was about Jesus. They said he'd been causing trouble and they'd had no option, they'd apprehended him and brought him in for questioning. He was standing trial before Caiaphas the High Priest as we spoke ([Matthew 26:57](#)). I reminded the emissary that night-time trials were illegal under their law. He snarled. I reminded him that he knew the way things worked, and he smiled and slipped a pouch of gold into my hand ([Micah 7:3](#)). We agreed that a quick resolution was in all our interests—they'd bring him over first thing in the morning, he'd be hanging by lunchtime, Jerusalem would be a safer place and we could all get on with our lives.

They came at first light, a band of the temple guard bristling with weapons surrounding the tethered prisoner. They wouldn't enter the Praetorium so I went out to them ([John 18:28](#)). I was acquainted with the Jews' sensitivities, and I humoured them, it was part of the job.

The crowd parted and the prisoner was thrust forward. I regarded him—haggard and dishevelled, streaked and stained with dirt, but he stood erect and composed. He returned my gaze, and nodded with respect. He did not look like a revolutionary.

The gold chinked in my purse but I played the part: "What accusation do you bring against this man?" ([John 18:29](#)).

One of the priests spoke up: "If he were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered him up to you!" ([John 18:30](#)). I know that Jews are capable of good manners, but they don't waste them on Romans.

I looked from the priest to the prisoner, and felt uneasy. "You take him, and judge him according to your law."

"It's not lawful for us to put anyone to death," snapped the priest ([John 18:31](#)). He was right, those were the rules, although he knew and I knew that they had no qualms about a swift stoning when it suited them ([Acts 7:57–60](#)). But that was not what

they wanted now. They didn't just want the preacher dead, because he was popular with many of the people and that could have made him into a martyr. They wanted a show trial, they wanted him discredited, so he needed public disgrace and the execution of a common criminal. It was a sensible strategy.

"We found this fellow perverting the nation," the priest said, "and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ, a King" ([Luke 23:2](#)). That was the charge—treason. I couldn't ignore that.

I retired into the judgement hall and had them bring the prisoner inside. I sat down, my officials and guard ranged around me. There alone before us stood the peasant.

I regarded him with interest. He was smarting from a cut to his lip, and I could see a black eye forming, but he was uncannily composed. He was not at all intimidated, by me, by the grandeur of the judgement hall, or by the gravity of the situation he was in. He waited for me to speak.



“Are you the King of the Jews?” I asked (John 18:33).

“Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning me?” His voice was measured, courteous and deeply unnerving.

“Am I a Jew?” I snapped. “Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you to me. What have you done?”

“My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now my kingdom is not from here.” With that he dismantled the treason accusation—maybe he was a deluded fanatic, but he posed no threat to the Emperor.

I scratched my head. “Are you a king then?”

“You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice.”

I was a Roman noble and a politician—truth is a grand concept, but you don’t let it get in your way. “What is truth?” I sneered. Rulership is not about truth, it’s about power. That’s why I’d got where I was, and he’d got where he was.

An interesting chap, it would have been amusing to talk further with him if circumstances were different. However, this was not the time. I hoisted myself out of my seat and strode out to the waiting priests. It wasn’t what they wanted to hear, but I

wasn’t going to play their games: “I find no fault in him at all” (John 18:34–38).

Immediately the gaggle of priests erupted: “He stirs up the people!” shouted the spokesman, “teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place” (Luke 23:5).

Never had I seen them so passionate about one prisoner—what was their problem with this man? This could quickly get out of hand, it was exactly the kind of situation I didn’t want, here at the Passover. I hesitated, then I had an idea: “He’s a Galilean?” Galilee was Herod’s jurisdiction, and the old villain was in residence in Jerusalem for the festival—I’d send the prisoner to him for a second opinion (Luke 23:7).

I dispatched him under heavy guard to Herod’s palace, and the rabble of priests followed like a pack of hounds baying for the kill. I was glad to see them leave, and went about my business.

Katie Cabeira

Questions? Comments?
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To be continued.

JG writes:

Did the death of Jesus pay the price for past, present and future sins?

This is the first of two questions on the crucial subject of sin and forgiveness. The second question will appear in next month's issue, God willing.

THE NAME 'JESUS' means 'God is salvation'. He was given that name because, as the angel Gabriel explained to Jesus' mother Mary, "he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Gabriel also said that Jesus will one day sit on David's throne in Jerusalem as King (Luke 1:32). But his first role was to bring salvation from sin and death, for those who are "his people".

God cannot and will not forgive everyone, for He is a holy God and will only forgive those who have shown they want to be forgiven, and have come into a relationship with Him in the way that He made possible. We need to understand the Gospel, believe it, repent, and be baptised (Acts 2:38, 18:8), and then we must live in line with God's commandments, to show that our faith is genuine. Baptism is immersion in water. The apostle Paul said this about it:

...Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4).

After we are baptised we will still do, say and think things that are wrong, but we

have the assurance that God will forgive any and every sin when we ask Him to.

Pointing Forward

Many people had lived and died in Israel before Jesus was born. They had a relationship with God based on the Law which God gave to Israel through Moses (Leviticus 26:46), which required them to lead a life of obedience to God's commandments. They kept feasts, offered sacrifices, and made contributions, but nobody was able to keep all those laws. Indeed, as the New Testament explains, God knew that nobody could keep the Law properly, and this was the point of it! The Law was designed to make people recognise their failings and appeal to God for forgiveness as an act of His grace. The Letter to the Hebrews explains that the sacrifices that were offered as part of keeping the Law could not themselves take away sins. Instead they pointed forward in time to one who would come to fulfil that Law, and perfectly obey the will of God:

...In those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. Therefore, when he [Christ] came into the world... by one offering he has perfected forever those who are being sanctified (Hebrews 10:3-4, 5, 14).

Those verses explain the central role of the work of Christ in God's plan of salvation:

- It was foreshadowed by the sacrifices detailed in the Old Testament
- Those sacrifices could not, of themselves, take away sins
- Christ's sacrifice was perfect and complete of itself, and
- The believer's role is ongoing: *"those who are being sanctified"*.

The Lord Jesus Christ died to offer his life as a perfect sacrifice for sins and, in so doing, declared for all to see that God is right to condemn sin, and we all must recognise that sin is wrong and that God is right (or righteous) (see Romans 8:3-5).

Past Sins

Are past sins cleared by the sacrificial death of Christ? For the believer, at his or her baptism they most certainly are, as the apostle Peter made clear: *"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 2:38). But what about all those people who had lived and died before the birth of Jesus? We are told twice that the death of Jesus, which fulfilled everything those arrangements had anticipated, also had retrospective effect. He died to set people free from sin and death, whenever and wherever they lived:

...Whom God set forth as a propitiation by his blood, through faith, to demonstrate His

righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus... (Romans 3:25-26);

And for this reason he is the mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance (Hebrews 9:15).

These are not easy verses to understand and they need to be read in their context. But what they tell us is that:

- God was shown to be right (or righteous) when Jesus died
- God had previously forgiven sin, in anticipation of what would happen when Jesus was born
- The life and death of Jesus opened up a new relationship with God (a new covenant), and thereby it gave retrospective effect to God's forgiveness for all the sins that had been committed in the past
- If we want our sins forgiven, and to be counted as 'right' with God, we need to become members of God's family in the way that He has made possible.

In next month's issue: will God forgive sins for which we don't ask forgiveness, and sins we're not aware of?

Tecwyn Morgan

The Minor Prophets

THERE ARE 12 prophetic books in the Old Testament which are referred to as the 'minor prophets'. This is because they are short, not because they are unimportant. All 12 names are in the Wordsearch grid.

The list contains 11 of these names.

One minor prophet is missing from the list, but is in the grid. He prophesied about the same country as did Nahum, and is mentioned by Jesus in the Gospel records by Matthew (chapters 12 and 16) and Luke (chapter 11).



The list also contains one name that is not in the grid. He was an Old Testament prophet whose words came true (1 Kings 16), but who has no book with his name.

Anna Hart

H	A	I	N	A	H	P	E	Z	K
M	A	A	U	J	R	H	M	B	U
H	V	I	O	A	A	O	U	I	K
O	A	N	R	I	I	S	H	W	K
Y	A	G	D	A	F	E	A	B	A
H	T	A	G	J	H	A	N	C	B
F	B	E	R	A	M	C	M	D	A
O	C	H	A	C	I	M	E	O	H
M	A	L	A	C	H	I	Z	Z	S
S	J	O	E	L	J	B	K	X	R

AMOS	MICAH
HABAKKUK	OBADIAH
HAGGAI	NAHUM
HOSEA	MALACHI
JEHU	JOEL
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