

A detailed image of a satellite in orbit. The satellite has a central body covered in a grey thermal blanket, with various instruments and antennas protruding. Two large, dark solar panel arrays are extended from the sides. The background shows the curved horizon of the Earth with a blue atmosphere and white clouds, set against the blackness of space filled with distant stars.

Light

...on a new world

a quarterly magazine focusing
on the Bible and its message for today

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COVER:
The spacecraft Juno in orbit around the planet Jupiter (artist's impression). See 'God's interactive plan', page 13.

Note:
All Bible quotations taken from the New King James Version (NKJV) except where another version is indicated after the text.

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the Bible stands

THE TEST OF TIME

Recent discoveries in the City of David

Within the last 10 years amazing archaeological discoveries have been made, dating from the time of King David, which underpin the Biblical records. This article briefly outlines the work of those involved in these discoveries in what the Bible calls 'the City of David', the original ancient city of Jerusalem.

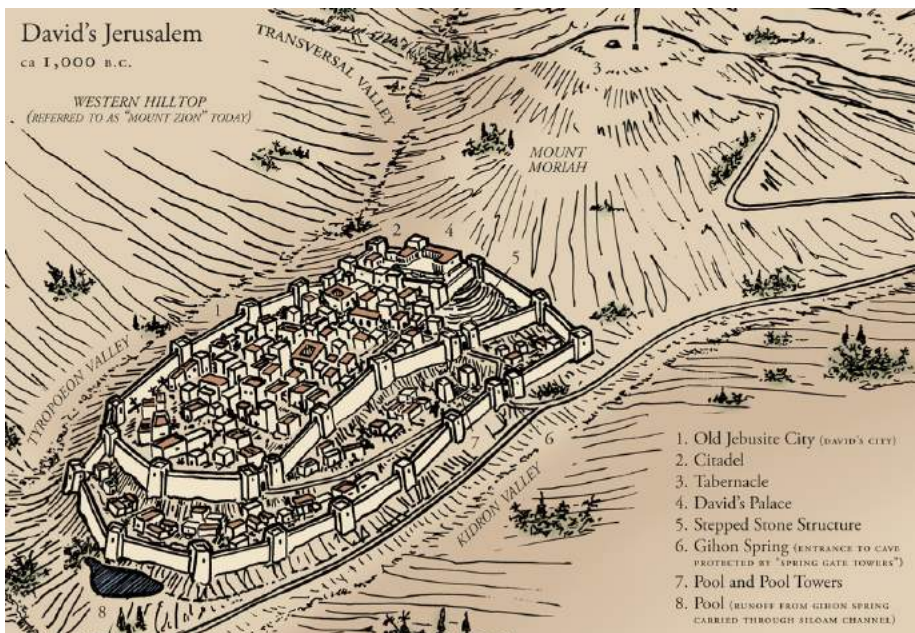
Picture: what is believed to be part of Solomon's city wall (c.900 BC) with the Temple Mount in the background

Dr Eilat Mazar is an eminent Israeli archaeologist who has been working for many years for the Institute of Archaeology at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Her grandfather, Benjamin Mazar, was the first archaeologist to be granted a digging permit in the newly formed State of Israel in 1948. What made her and her grandfather's approach different from many other archaeologists? It was their conviction that the Bible accounts are a unique and accurate source of reference when attempting a dig in a specific location. This fact is clearly of great interest to those who share that conviction, because they believe

the Bible to be God's inspired Word.

After the 'six-day war' in 1967, the Israeli government gained access to East Jerusalem. This enabled Benjamin Mazar to uncover what lay beneath the pavements around the Temple Mount. The 11 year-old Eilat gained her first experiences then as a budding archaeologist. She learnt a lot from her grandfather, including the wisdom to treasure the best source of information, the Biblical records. She has described it as 'a marvellous historical source'.

The City of David: note the location of key items 4 and 5





In 2005 when Dr Eilat Mazar began her excavations at the summit of what is known as 'the City of David', a spur of high ground to the south of the Temple Mount, she had one great hope, which was to discover David's royal palace. She knew one had existed because of what is recorded in the Bible:

'So David dwelt in the stronghold, and called it the City of David. Then David built all around from the Millo and inwards. So David went on and became great, and the LORD God of hosts was with him. Then Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, and carpenters and masons. And they built David a house. So David knew that the LORD had established him as king over Israel, and that he had

Fifteen year-old Eilat Mazar on site with her grandfather Benjamin Mazar

exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake.'

2 Samuel 5.9-12

The Bible clearly refers to David making the nation of Israel a force to be reckoned with, and that his son Solomon built on that political strength. However, this is an unacceptable proposition to many of today's Bible sceptics including national leaders and politicians in the Middle East.

Hiram king of Tyre was David's friend and ally. Tyre was a Phoenician city on the Mediterranean coast to the north of Mount Carmel from where David's carpenters and stone-masons came. During the dig it was not long before the remains of a massive stone structure was found which looked like a fortress, but it also had the unmistakeable



The massive stepped stone structure believed to be part of David's palace

features of a Phoenician style of construction. Furthermore, it dated exactly to the time of David c 1000 BC.

Dr Eilat Mazar was convinced she had found the remains of David's palace. Ancient seals used by court officials were unearthed within the structure, together with a number of utensils carved from ivory. These were clues that indicated it was a king's house, as they would have been far too expensive for an average household to own and use.

She also found a clay bulla (a type of seal or impression) from a later

period with ancient Hebrew lettering bearing the name Jehucal, son of Shelemiah, son of Shovi. Jehucal was a high ranking official mentioned twice in the Bible (Jeremiah 37.3 and Jeremiah 38.1). In July 2008 another bulla was found close to the first, belonging to Gedaliah son of Pashhur, also mentioned alongside Jehucal in Jeremiah 38.1.

Even more exciting than this was the announcement in early December 2015 that a clay bulla or seal impression belonging to King Hezekiah had been found. This sensational and unique discovery proved beyond doubt the veracity of the historical record of King

Hezekiah as recorded in the books of Kings and Chronicles and by the prophet Isaiah in the early seventh century BC. The claim is unmistakable – it reads ‘Belonging to Hezekiah son of Ahaz, king of Judah’.

The Bible’s commentary on this good king reads like this:

‘He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any who were before him. For he held fast to the LORD; he did not depart from



King Hezekiah's royal seal

following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses’.

2 Kings 18.5,6

This remarkable artefact is as close as we can get to the real king himself!

In 2010 more evidence of ‘royal ruins’ were discovered. A city wall built by Solomon is referred to in the First Book of Kings:

‘Now Solomon made a treaty with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and married Pharaoh’s daughter; then he brought her to the City of David until he had finished building his own house, and the house of the LORD, and the wall all around Jerusalem’ 1 Kings 3.1

The dig revealed evidence of a massive wall 78 metres long and 6 metres high. This was a section of wall connecting the old City of David with the new Temple Mount, where Solomon built the magnificent temple planned by his father. The city was being extended to the North. Carbon dating of small pieces of pottery indicated the late 10th century BC, and the detailed design of fortifications points to Solomon in the late 10th and early 9th centuries BC. Dr Mazar used these words to described this find: ‘It’s the most significant construction we have from First Temple days in Israel...It

means that at the time, the 10th century, in Jerusalem there was a regime capable of carrying out such construction'. This 'regime' was the ancient kingdom of Israel at the zenith of her power and influence according to the Bible.

We read concerning Solomon's reign: *'And Solomon had twelve governors over all Israel, who provided food for the king and his household; each one made provision for one month of the*

Dr. Mazar in front of Solomon's city wall



year' (1 Kings 4.7). Evidence of this provision was found inside the gate dating from the period: labels from jar handles inscribed 'To the king', and large grain storage jars from the royal bakery. One inscription reads 'To the Minister in charge of the bakery'.

Dr Mazar's approach, which is unpopular and decried by many, is demonstrated by her statement 'I work with the Bible in one hand and the tools of excavation in the other, I try to consider everything'. A literal reading of the Biblical text dominates her work. She was confident that she would find David's palace. She did, and her faith was rewarded!

Similarly, readers of this magazine are encouraged to have confidence in the Bible for it has a vital message for us today. It speaks of a time coming soon when God will reward those who believe in His Word and His promises, and have a true understanding of the gospel message. For God's kingdom will be established on the earth, with Jesus reigning as God's appointed king on the restored throne of David in Jerusalem.

Justin Giles London, UK

GOD'S INTERACTIVE PLAN

PART 1

This is the first of four articles demonstrating God's interactive plan for this world and how we can benefit if we choose to recognise it. The subject titles are:

1. The power of the visible is the invisible.
2. The ultimate experience.
3. Destiny is not a matter of chance.
4. Many receive advice, only the wise profit from it.

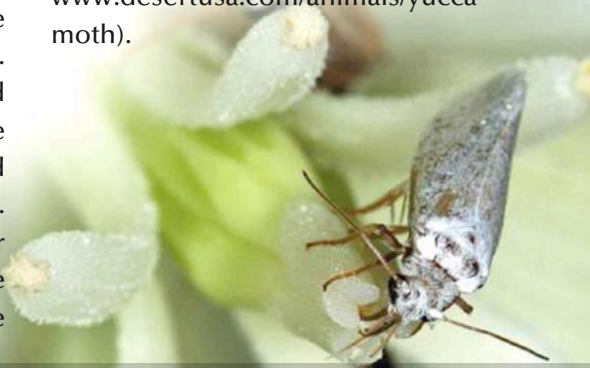
THE POWER OF THE VISIBLE IS THE INVISIBLE

We take many things in our environment for granted. We accept at face value that essential powerful forces exist and are maintained which cannot be seen. The regulation of the natural world is based on conditions which the population of the earth enjoys and which permit life to be maintained. Its inhabitants depend on them for both their very existence and the continuity of life (see article

entitled 'The Goldilocks Planet' volume 27.3 page 19).

By practical experiment we can observe the presence of these forces at work, such as gravity, electricity, static, magnetism, ocean currents, the atmosphere, none of which we can see. These experiments can be repeated which then constitute scientific laws by which further study can be undertaken.

We can also observe symbiotic relationships which exist so frequently in nature. These involve the interaction between different living organisms that live in close proximity and are entirely dependent on one another for their existence. A good example of symbiosis is the Yucca moth (see www.desertusa.com/animals/yucca-moth).





In addition to providing the air that we breathe, the earth's atmosphere performs many other vital functions. It stores huge quantities of energy, stabilising temperatures on earth. Its various layers protect the planet's surface from damage by space debris and harmful radiation. It has been designed by the Creator to protect and nurture life on earth.

10 God's interactive plan

Collins Dictionary says: 'Science is the systematic study of the nature and behaviour of the material and physical universe based on observation, experiment and measurement'.

The Apostle Paul told the Athenians about the God who created everything. Men and women should *'seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us; for in him we live and move and have our being...'* (Acts 17.27,28).

Paul's point is that these forces clearly speak to us of design, planning and a supreme Creator. He has brought these factors together to provide all the life support systems that our planet needs. Through these we can understand God's hand at work and begin our search to find Him.

THE CREATOR

We are told in the book of Genesis that all life was created by God and carried out by the angels. Jesus endorses this record of creation in his last message:

'You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and

power; for you created all things, and by your will they exist and were created' Revelation 4.11

King David referred to God's creative work in the heavens:

'When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have ordained, what is man that you are mindful of him...'

Psalm 8.3,4

Job was an early Old Testament character. The book which bears his name records how God challenged him with questions about the creation of this planet and those invisible forces which control our environment. God said to Job:

'Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its corner-stone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?' Job 38.4-7

This challenge to Job is also a challenge to us, as the Apostle Paul reminded his readers at Rome:

‘For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse’ Romans 1.20 NIV

We can marvel at the innumerable examples that exist in the world around us showing the intricacy and design associated with all living things. Plants and animals have their own individual and special characteristics to live, grow, feed and reproduce. So whether we study aspects of life through a microscope or use a telescope to

explore the universe, the same amazing complexity and design are evident.

If we were like Robinson Crusoe and found a footprint in the sand on an island that we thought was uninhabited, then we would soon conclude that somebody else was walking around unseen by us. By using the same logic we know that a Creator made the world, because we have countless footprints as evidence of His creative power.

PRECISION IN THE UNIVERSE

The appearance in 1996 of the Comet Hale-Bopp was a reminder of the vastness of the universe as the comet came racing into our solar system. We were able to see for ourselves this spectacle in the sky, which had a nucleus between 25 and 50 miles wide and a tail of gas and dust that was millions of miles long. Although we cannot see this comet now, it continues on its orbit which will take about 2,370 years before it comes back into the earth’s solar system (source: Wikipedia).

Scientists are able to predict the movement of planets with great precision as we have witnessed.



The journeys of space probes are carefully calculated to arrive at their destination at a precise time in the future because the heavenly bodies orbit to a defined timetable that is entirely predictable.

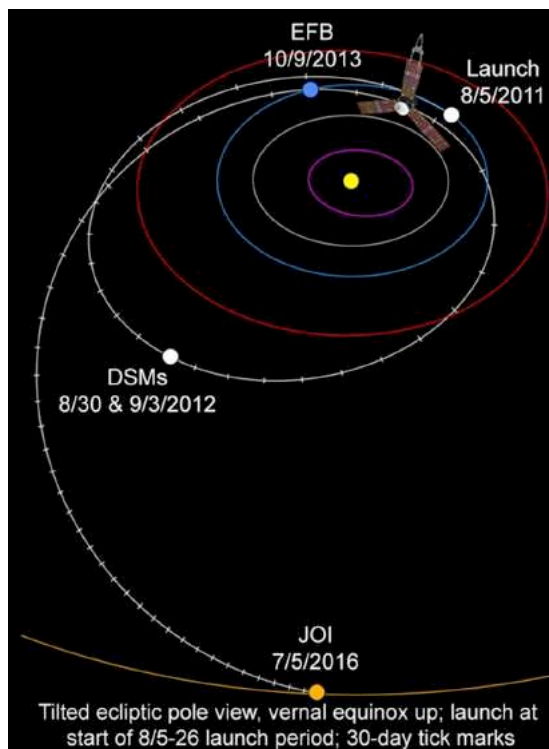
NASA's Juno probe went into orbit around the planet Jupiter on 5th July 2016, the culmination of a five-year journey, accelerating to speeds of up to 130,000 miles per hour as it came close to the giant planet. Its journey covered a total distance of 1.74 billion miles (source: Wikipedia). Juno's scheduled destination was only reached because the planet's precise orbit around the Sun, the journey time and trajectory could be calculated mathematically.

GOD'S PURPOSE

Logic tells us that if there is a Creator and the whole of His work has been to provide a special place for life, then it would be inconceivable that it has been done thoughtlessly and with no ultimate purpose. The Prophet Isaiah records the precise statement of the Almighty when he says:

'I have made the earth, and created man on it. It was I — my hands that stretched out the heavens,

and all their host I have commanded' (Isaiah 45.12). The prophet then adds some important words: (God) *'...did not create it in vain...(He) formed it to be inhabited...'* (Isaiah 45.18).



The astonishing 5 year journey of the spacecraft Juno to orbit around Jupiter. The physicist Isaac Newton regarded the absolute precision of the solar system as the work of the Creator.

We live in a very special place that God has designed for us and yet when we look more closely at our world we can see that it has

suffered from misuse. There is little consideration being given to its long term sustainability by mankind in general. This causes alarm to many scientists, governments and worldwide organisations that are for example trying to stop the pollution of the planet.

Yet as we have already noted, there must be a purpose if there is a Creator. The Prophet Habakkuk defined God's purpose in creation in this positive statement:

'For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea'
Habakkuk 2.14

Mankind was the pinnacle of God's Creation. It is to us that He reveals His ultimate purpose to populate the earth with those he chooses and fill it with His glory. We will consider this aspect in more detail in the next article.

GOD THE COMMUNICATOR

So, if the Creator has a plan for the earth to be filled with His glory then it has to be interactive – we have to respond to Him. Whilst He has provided all the essential ingredients, it requires people to

respond, to acknowledge Him and to interact with Him.

This two-way process requires us to commit ourselves to working with Him, to:

- ❖ communicate with Him
- ❖ recognise the benefits He promises
- ❖ accept our accountability to Him
- ❖ confirm our intent and commitment

These aspects are all dealt with in God's revelation to us in the 66 books which make up the Holy Bible. These have been recorded for our benefit and will be considered in the three following articles in future issues.

God's offer to men and women is like any special offer; it is essential that hopeful participants are aware of the conditions which apply. For this reason it is necessary that the terms and conditions God has revealed in the Scriptures are read and understood. The more that we are able to understand the background and the message of the Bible, the more we will become interactive in God's purpose with the earth and mankind. The Apostle Paul tells us that :

‘All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work’ 2 Timothy 3.16,17

There are many lines of evidence which can be used to confirm the Bible’s divine authorship and these are worth individual study.

Why not send for a special issue of ‘Light on the Bible’ which considers some of this evidence? Send your request to the correspondence secretary by email or write to the address inside the front cover.

CONCLUSION

The power behind what we see is the invisible hand of God and His angels regulating our world and providing the means to sustain life.

We believe in the existence of wind, gravity and electricity because of the evidence presented to us by their effects – we cannot actually see them or touch them but we know they are there. They reveal themselves by simple experiments and our experience demonstrates their existence so we

believe and accept them without question.

Finally, consider this. Some time ago my patio window was removed and goods were stolen. The police and I accepted that a burglar had entered the property and was long gone. But nobody saw the individual concerned or questioned that there might be another explanation. The removed patio window, the missing goods and articles thrown and left on the floor during the burglary was overwhelming evidence that we had been burgled and someone unidentified had been in our home. This conclusion was accepted without question at face value.

In the same way we can believe in the existence of God; there is overwhelming evidence of His creative power all around us. He does have a purpose and we can be interactively involved with Him and His plan if we choose to.

It’s the same leap of faith!

John Carpenter,
Kent, UK

Over the last few years there has been an attempt to degrade the meaning of the word 'faith'. Faith, we are told, is belief without evidence – worse, it is belief in spite of the evidence. That is not and never has been the meaning of faith.

Our faith is founded on evidence. Our belief in the Bible is grounded on its unbroken theme through 66 different books, its consistent and demanding morality, its prophecies still coming true in our own day and its accuracy and authenticity as demonstrated by secular history and archaeology. It tells us all we need to know about the human condition and God's plan to change the world dramatically.

We claim no new revelation. We have no inspired prophets of our own. We believe simply that we need to strip Christianity of its accumulated traditions and human influences and return to the pure stream of the original faith, the faith of the apostles.

This is our faith, based on *'the evidence of things not seen':*

(Hebrews 11.1)

our faith is unshaken



- There is one eternal and all-powerful God, who created and sustains the entire universe and all life on earth. He remains actively involved in His creation and He has a plan for the earth and mankind which is still progressing in our own time.
- The Spirit of God is His power. It is described as the Holy Spirit when focused on special objectives such as the inspiration of the Scriptures, prophecy and miracles.
- Men and women are a special creation by God, distinct from animals, given unique qualities and the responsibility of recognising and loving God (our 'Father'). We are not the result of the undirected, random process of change known as 'evolution'.
- Adam and Eve, the first human couple, disobeyed God's command in Eden and were punished with death. All their descendants inherit their mortality and tendency to sin against God.
- God in His love for the human race has provided a way of escaping death, conditional on our faith and obedience to Him.
- Throughout history God has made Himself known to men and women through angels, prophets, apostles and above all through His Son, Jesus Christ. The Bible is the record of that revelation, and the original text is completely inspired and error-free. It contains all that we need to know for salvation.
- God chose the Jewish people to receive His revelation and to be witnesses to His existence. He made promises to the early fathers of the Jews which were partly fulfilled in the coming of His Son, Jesus.
- Jesus is the Son of God, born of the action of the Holy Spirit on his mother Mary, through whom he inherited human nature; but unlike everyone else he obeyed God perfectly. When he offered himself as a perfect sacrifice on the cross and then rose again, he made possible the salvation of all who put their faith in him.

LEFT: '*...rooted and built up in him and established in the faith...*'

Colossians 2.7

- Jesus promised to return to the earth to judge the righteous and the wicked. He will reign over the kingdom of God on earth.
- To follow Jesus now is to believe his words and try to obey his commandments. Righteousness is something we can never achieve for ourselves – God will credit it to us on the grounds of our faith.
- The first steps toward salvation are to put behind us our previous sinful life ('repentance') and to be baptized by full immersion into Jesus. Baptism is a symbol of his death and resurrection.
- To live as Christians we must follow the highest moral standards, place others before ourselves, reject and separate ourselves from the godless world of unbelief and depravity.
- The worship of God in our daily lives is based on prayer and praise to God, remembering Jesus as he commanded, in a regular re-enactment of the Last Supper ('breaking of bread') and love for others.
- The punishment for sin is to remain eternally unconscious in the grave. The reward for righteousness is to be raised from the dead when Jesus returns and be given immortality and perfection, to be enjoyed in the kingdom of God.
- The history of our times, the political turbulence, violence and moral decline, and in particular the survival and return of the Jews to their land, are powerful signs that that we are close to 'the time of the end', when Jesus will come back in great power.
- In the final act of God's plan, Jesus will surrender his authority to his Father, so *'that God may be all in all'* (I Corinthians 15.28).

For a much fuller explanation of our faith and the Scripture on which it is based, please send for the booklet 'Declaration'. Use the postal address on the inside front cover, or the e-mail address on the back page.



WE ARE ALL JEWS HERE



Roddie Edmonds (1919–1985) came from South Knoxville, Tennessee. He fought in World War II as a United States army Master Sergeant in the 422nd Infantry Regiment, and was captured by German forces in December 1944 during the Battle of the Bulge. He and his men were interned in the Stalag IX A Prisoner of War (POW) camp in Germany (see photo above taken in 1942). Here in the camp he had to find extraordinary personal courage in defence of his men.

The German Wehrmacht had a strict anti-Jewish policy and segregated Jewish prisoners of war from non-Jews. On the Eastern (Russian) Front, Jewish soldiers captured from the Russian Army had been sent to extermination camps. As the war neared its end, Jewish American POW's were being sent to slave labour camps where their chances of survival were slim.

As the highest ranking non-commissioned officer, Edmonds was responsible for more than 1,000 prisoners in the camp. Late in January 1945 he was instructed by the German Commandant to require all Jewish soldiers to turn out on parade the following morning. The implications were obvious.

The next day (January 27th) on Edmond's instructions the entire camp of over 1,000 men turned out. When the German Commandant

comment

questioned him, Edmonds replied, 'We are all Jews here'. The officer put a pistol to his head and threatened him with immediate execution. Edmonds refused to give in, instead threatening to expose the German as a war criminal. The Geneva Convention required prisoners to provide only name, rank and serial number; their ethnic origin was not a legitimate demand.



Master Sgt. Roddie W. Edmonds

The German backed down and walked away. Edmond's action, at the risk of his life, saved around 200 Jewish-American soldiers from deportation and probable death. Some three months later he and his men were liberated from the camp. He died in 1985, never having revealed this incident to his family. The story and the people who witnessed it have only come to light since his death.

'We are all Jews here'. Whether he knew it or not, Edmond's words are a remarkable echo of some words of the Apostle Paul in the New Testament. Among faithful men and women who accept Jesus Christ as their saviour, all ethnic, social or gender divisions are abolished – they can say 'we are all Jews' because they share the faith of Abraham, the ancestor of the Jewish people. Paul says:

'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise'.

Galatians 3.28,29

So what about the Jewish people themselves? They have suffered many atrocities over the centuries and during the Holocaust. Even today they are still subject to racial hatred. Some Christians think that God no longer has any plan with the Jews; that the Jewish nation has been entirely replaced by the faithful in Christ, and that spiritual Jews have supplanted ethnic Jews. It is not a new idea – in fact it was probably around in the first century, which is why the Apostle Paul went out of his way to contradict it:

‘...has God cast away his people? Certainly not!’ Romans 11.1

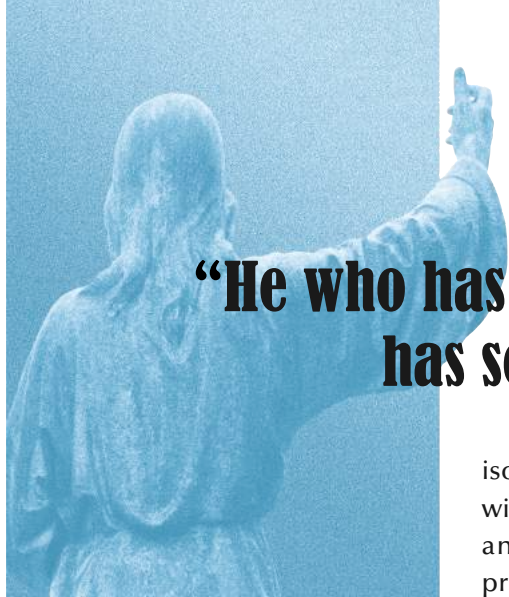
In the words that follow Paul shows that the future blessing and restoration of the Jewish people, when they accept Jesus as their Messiah, is bound up with the salvation of all the righteous, Jews and Gentiles alike – the two are distinct but inseparable. Both blessing and restoration will be achieved on the glorious day of Messiah’s return.

Roy Toms Norfolk UK



'The Garden of the Righteous' at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem with its 'Wall of Honour'. Roddie Edmond's name is now inscribed on the wall as one of the 'Righteous among the Nations', those who risked their lives to help the Jews during the Holocaust.

comment



what did Jesus mean?

“He who has seen me has seen the Father”

isolation, but set it against the wider teaching of the Scriptures, and in particular the context provided by John’s gospel.

Was Jesus claiming to be God Himself? This article explores and explains what Jesus was really saying about his relationship with his Father.

Without doubt, John’s gospel contains some passages that at first reading are difficult to comprehend. One of these is the exchange between Philip and Jesus recorded by John:

‘Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us”. Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father...”’

John 14.8, 9

So what did Jesus mean? As always, we must not look at the passage in

no one has seen God

To begin, we will look at two passages that will help us with the interpretation. Moses was privileged to see God’s glory, but was warned: *‘You cannot see my face; for no man shall see me, and live’* (Exodus 33.20). The possibility of men seeing God did not change with the coming of Jesus, for Paul, in his letter to Timothy, wrote that God *‘alone is immortal and... lives in unapproachable light, whom no-one has seen or can see’* (1Timothy 6.16 NIV). Based on these two passages, one would expect Jesus to say that it was impossible to meet Philip’s request, but in fact he says that Philip had seen the Father through his contact with Jesus. So there is more to this exchange than meets the eye!

The majority of Christians will take Jesus' words as evidence that Jesus and God are co-equal parts of the Trinity, but as we look at the context supplied by the rest of John's gospel, we find this view is not supportable. To pick up the threads, we need to consider an incident where Jesus is involved in one of his many verbal encounters with the Jews. They challenged Jesus to declare outright whether or not he was the Jewish Messiah. Jesus replied that the works which he had demonstrated through many great miracles were all that they needed to confirm that he was the Messiah. He went on to say that they would not heed that witness because they were not Christ's true followers, who he called *'my sheep'*:

'But you do not believe, because you are not of my sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow

me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.'

John 10.26-30

The Jews were angered by this reply and threatened to stone Jesus. On being asked the reason for their antagonism, the Jews accused Jesus of blasphemy, because they said he was making himself God (John 10.33). In reply, Jesus made clear that he never claimed to be God, but confessed that he was the Son of God (John 10.36). He then appealed to the Jews to reconsider the evidence of his miracles and their implication:

'If I do not do the works of my Father, do not believe me; but if



I do, though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him’.

John 10.37,38

was Jesus God?

Here is the link with Jesus’ reply to Philip, for Jesus is encouraging the Jews to acknowledge the unique relationship that existed between him and his Father, namely *‘that the Father is in me, and I in him’*. Having tried to set his statement into its context, what are we to make of it? Will we come to the same conclusion as the Jews and feel that Jesus was making himself God? We need to carefully read the words to see if there is any justification for the Jews’ claim that Jesus had made himself God.

Let us examine some details about the relationship that Jesus was describing. He said he had received a command from God (John 10.18). Now those of the same rank do not issue commands to one another; always the lesser is commanded by the greater. Then Jesus said that he had worked in his Father’s name (John 10.25). If you sign a letter on behalf of the firm you are employed by, it is signed in the company’s name, but

you are not the company. You have to follow company policy and work within your limits of authority. In a crude sense, this is what Jesus is saying here – he was following the policy set out from a higher authority, namely that of his Father.

Then we read that the Father had given the sheep to Jesus (John 10.29). Here there is a relationship of giver and receiver; there is no hint of equality. In the same verse we read that the Father was greater than all. Here is a very clear statement by Jesus that God was superior to all, and by that we can only assume that the inclusive ‘all’ included Jesus himself.

Jesus was the Son of God

So how did Jesus respond to the accusation of the Jews that he made himself God? He made three points about his relationship with the Father:

‘Do you say of him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, “You are blaspheming”, because I said, “I am the son of God”’.

John 10.36

The first point is that God sanctified him. To sanctify or conse-

crate someone is to appoint them for a special and dedicated purpose. You are never appointed by an equal, always by a superior.

The second point is that the Father sent Jesus into the world. That 'sending' was the dedicated purpose that Jesus had been consecrated for. Again, a servant is sent by a master.

The third point is that Jesus emphasises what his claim actually was – *'I am the Son of God'*.

We are building up a completely consistent picture here. Jesus was indeed someone special; he had a unique position as someone appointed by God to perform a very important task for Him; he was not God, but was God's Son. Jesus

concludes his appeal to the Jews with the words we quoted earlier: *'... though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him'* (John 10.38).

The miracles Jesus performed were the irrefutable evidence that God was working through him. Those mighty 'works' demonstrated that Jesus was the one who was revealing God's ways and His purpose to those who would see and listen. He was God's ambassador, appointed to represent his Father so that others might come to know God.

The miracles were the credentials that proved his appointment as God's representative. In essence, Jesus was making the same point to Philip, that in seeing him, he was seeing a reflection of God's character – not God in person, for no man has seen God, nor can see Him. Philip saw the works of God, for as Jesus said: *'The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me'* (John 10.25). What Philip heard was God's message, for as he also said *'...the word which you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me'* (John 14.24).

The miraculous loaves and fishes



The unity between Father, Son and believer

There is another aspect that confirms this understanding. We saw how Jesus said that *'the Father is in me, and I in him'* (John 10.38). This unity of purpose was not to be limited to the relationship that existed between the Father and Son. It was to be extended into the lives of Jesus' disciples; not just the twelve, but all who would come to believe the message of the gospel. John records Jesus' moving prayer for his disciples not long before his crucifixion and it includes this petition:

'I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in me through their word; that they all may be one, as you, Father, are in me, and I in you; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And the glory which you gave me I have given them, that they may be one just as we are one: I in them, and you in me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that you have sent me, and have loved them as you have loved me' John 17.20-23

This passage clearly demonstrates that the oneness which Jesus had with God is to be the same unity that must bind Christians together. Further, it is self-evident that the unity that should exist between believers is not an equality of identity, it is a oneness of mind, a oneness of values, a oneness of motives and a oneness of purpose. No man dare claim equality with God, but Jesus' prayer says we can be one with God, meaning that the Father, the Son and true believers can share that same unity of mind and purpose.

in Jesus, we see the Father

One writer makes an interesting observation. In his reply to Philip, Jesus says that in seeing him, the disciples could see the Father; he does not say that in seeing Jesus, they could see God. He makes the point that the concept of God as a Father reflects a particular view of God that emphasises His love and compassion. Acknowledging God as our Father is to build a personal relationship with Him based on mutual love, something we see to perfection in the life of Jesus. But God has other attributes which we do not see exhibited in the life of Jesus. For example:

❖ God is all powerful, yet often Jesus was weary, he was old before his time. At the end of his life he was on the point of physical collapse, for we read that in Gethsemane *'his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground'* (Luke 22.44).

❖ God is all-knowing, yet there were things Jesus did not know, including the day when he would return to establish the kingdom of God on earth. As he said to the disciples: *'But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father'* (Mark 13.32).

There are many characteristics of God that we can never understand, for the finite mind cannot comprehend the infinite. But we can begin to understand and appreciate the love of a Father for his children, and to realise this is the relationship that Almighty God wants to enjoy with men and women. As Paul said to the Athenians, God wants all men to

'seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us' Acts 17.27.

The relationship God wants to share with us is the relationship that was seen in perfection between Jesus and the Father. That surely is the crux of the matter. As mortals, we cannot possibly understand God in all His fullness. But we can understand those Divine attributes that God has placed in man and man alone. We can understand the capacity to respond other than by instinct, the capacity to show understanding and sympathy, the capacity to build a relationship based on love and mutual respect.

In Jesus' earthly life we see all these divine characteristics fully and consistently displayed. Those same characteristics should be seen in us, so that we may have a real personal relationship with God and His Son now, to the end that this relationship might be perfected in the future. Surely, by learning about Jesus' life and works we too, like Philip, can come to see and know the Father.

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“marvellous are your works”

rise and shine!

The expression ‘rise and shine’ appears to have originated from a prophetic passage in the Old Testament, foretelling the coming of Jesus as the light of the world (Isaiah 60.1). It has also been used as a means of rousing serving soldiers from sleep and has come into general use as a wake-up call. But have we ever thought about what happens to our bodies when we get up after a night’s sleep?

There is a simple yet fundamental process that goes on every day, being one of many processes that God has designed to keep us fit and healthy. We know that our heart is always pumping blood around our bodies to keep us alive. When we are lying down in bed, for example, the blood flows easily up to our heads and down to our feet and hands, because we are horizontal.

However, we have to get up to go about our daily lives. Then it is

suddenly much harder for our heart to get the blood up to our head! Nor do we want all the blood collecting in our feet and hands and not being able to get back up to our heart! But we have an in-built control to counter these effects of gravity.

As we stand up, this fall in blood pressure is detected and the brain stimulates the heart to pump harder and faster. Also, special sensors in our kidneys release an enzyme into the blood that starts a chain-reaction culminating in release of hormones. These increase our blood pressure by making narrower the little tubes (capillaries) that the blood flows through in our organs in the same way that a narrow pipe raises water pressure. Also the amount of water we lose from our blood through the kidneys is reduced, thus increasing our blood volume. By these means our body maintains enough pressure to get blood from our heart to our organs and back again.



Most of us are not aware of all this because normally our bodies re-adjust immediately we change position. Only very occasionally might we notice feeling dizzy or faint if these processes are not working as efficiently as designed.

Another process is needed when we wake up in the morning. Then we suddenly need energy and alertness, compared to our subconscious sleeping state. This is achieved by release of the hormone called 'cortisol' about six to eight hours after we fall asleep. Our brain has finely tuned timing, just like an alarm clock. It is programmed individually — one person's cortisol release will be at a different time from another's but will be at the same time every day. Cortisol increases our energy levels ready for us to get up by breaking down fats and the components of proteins and by the

formation of glucose (sugar). Cortisol also increases our blood pressure to aid the mechanisms described above.

Cortisol also has anti-immune system effects, which is why synthetic versions of cortisol (hydrocortisone or 'steroids') are given as medicine to patients in certain situations. However, if we had high levels of cortisol all the time, our immune system would not work at maximum capacity. So God has designed us with a cortisol peak in the morning; then its level in the blood gradually decreases during the day, until we feel tired and go to bed. There is hardly any cortisol in our blood at midnight unless we regularly stay awake until then. While we sleep, our body repairs itself, fights infections and illnesses and also, in the case of younger ones, does most of its growing.

These are further examples of God's wonderful wisdom and the intricate design He incorporated into our bodies. As the Psalmist says: *'I lie down and sleep; I wake again, for the LORD sustains me'* (Psalm 3.5 RSV).

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ILLNESS and DEATH

There is probably no one in the world who doesn't experience illness at some time in their life. Some will live apparently healthy lives but still have the occasional ailments such as coughs and colds. Others have to live for many years with crippling disabilities or poor health. Across the world vast sums of money are spent providing medical facilities and massive

amounts of drugs and medicines to combat disease.

Although modern healthcare is helping many people in the western world to live longer or more comfortable lives, there is the one certainty that we all face; we all know that one day we will die. Whatever the standard of healthcare in a country it cannot

ultimately prevent death. But where do these things fit into the teaching of the Bible?

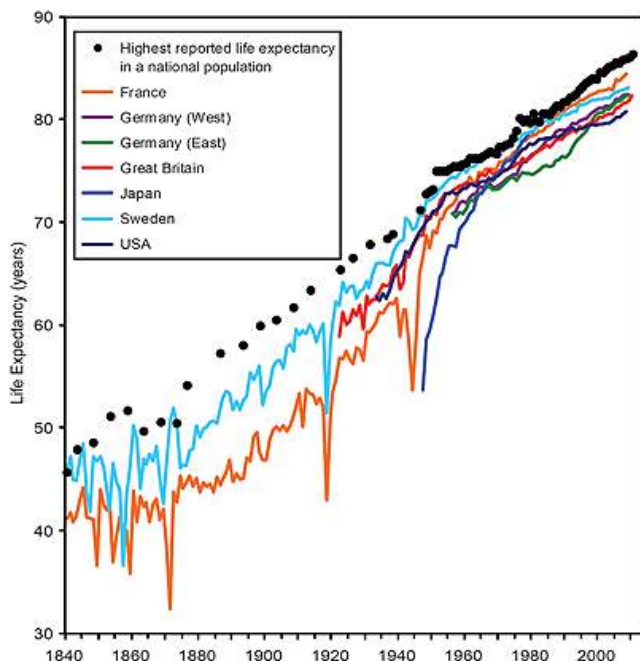


Chart showing the astonishing increase in human lifespan (nearly a doubling) over the last two centuries in the western world. This is largely due to advances in modern medicine and health care. It has brought with it huge problems in supporting aging populations.

(chart: www.nih.gov)

Naaman the Syrian

No one is exempt from illness and death. It does not matter whether we are old or young, rich or poor, or what our status in life is. We read in the Bible the account of Naaman who was a commander of the army of the king of Syria. He is described as *'a great and honourable man in the eyes of his master'* and *'a mighty man of valour'*. He was a leader of the army who had achieved, with God's help, a victory for Syria. (2 Kings 5.1). Then we read the simple comment that *'he was a leper'*. This great man faced an ongoing and disfiguring illness that must have caused him much distress. Despite his high rank, he was unable to find any way of relieving his illness until a servant girl from Israel encouraged him to visit one of God's prophets. She was sure that the Prophet Elisha would be able to cure him. The rest of the chapter contains the account of his journey and his miraculous cure.

King Hezekiah

Later on we read the account of King Hezekiah, another very important man, who *'In those days...was sick and near death'* (2 Kings 20.1). It seems likely that he

was suffering from some sort of ulcerated sore that may have become infected. God instructed the prophet Isaiah to tell Hezekiah that he would not die but would live for another fifteen years. Isaiah told Hezekiah's carers to *"Take a lump of figs"*. So they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered' (2 Kings 20.7). God's hand was clearly at work in these events but we know that such rudimentary means of dealing with ailments were available at that time.

Even God's prophets could experience poor health. We read in the book of Daniel: *'... I, Daniel, fainted and was sick for days; afterwards I arose and went about the king's business...'* (Daniel 8.27).

Jesus the healer

In the time of Jesus, illness was a significant problem but he was able to help many by healing them. We read in the gospel record:

'Now Jesus went about all Galilee...preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people...and they brought to him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments,

and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and he healed them'

Matthew 4.23, 24

What a wonderful thing this must have been for those people who were cured! Just imagine meeting someone today who could genuinely cure any illness or disease. We would say it was miraculous and that is just what Jesus did - he performed miracles through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps this raises a question in our minds – why does God allow illness and suffering to exist and why has He done nothing to eliminate it? The answer to this question is found in the book of Genesis. It concerns events that happened after the creation of the world. Many people find it easy to dismiss the early chapters of Genesis as mere fables. Closer study shows that they form the foundation of God's plan with the earth and of the better future that we can look forward to if we have faith. However, if we dismiss the Genesis record, where can we find a valid explanation of the origin of illness and death?

the beginning of God's plan

Genesis is a Greek word that means 'origin' or 'beginning'. Genesis chapter one tells us that in the beginning God provided the ideal conditions for life on this planet. When His work was completed we read that '*God saw everything that he had made, and indeed it was very good*' (Genesis 1.31). There was nothing in His creation that would mar His work, but sadly this was to change.

We are then told how the first man was created: '*And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being*' (Genesis 2.7). This is a simple yet significant account. God took some of the dust and fashioned it into the first man. To begin with the man (called Adam) was alone. God said that he should have a helper that was suited to him. God brought all living creatures to Adam to be named but none of them was found suitable as a companion. Instead, God took a rib from Adam and from it created a woman (Genesis 2.18-25).



events in Eden

God put Adam and the woman (Eve) into the garden He had planted, called the Garden of Eden' (Genesis 2.8,15). In the middle of the garden were two particular trees; one called the tree of life and the other the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God gave just one instruction in relation to these trees. He said:

'From every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat the fruit of it you shall surely die' Genesis 2.16,17

One would have thought this was a simple enough instruction to follow and that the warning of death as a punishment for disobeying would be an adequate discouragement. One of the creatures that God had made was a serpent, described as being *'more cunning than any beast of the field that God had made'* (Genesis 3.1). The cunning serpent thought differently. It had been given the power of speech and said to Eve:

'You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat it

your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil' (Genesis 3.4,5).

Eve was deceived and looking at the tree, she saw that the fruit was very enticing. Ignoring God's commandment she picked the fruit and ate it. She also gave some to Adam and he ate. Having eaten the fruit something immediately happened. The record simply says *'the eyes of both of them were opened'*. They now had the knowledge of good and evil as the serpent had said. They also realised that they were naked and that they should cover themselves (Genesis 3.6,7).

God knew exactly what had happened and said: *'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?'* (Genesis 3.11).

Then follows what might be called the first instance of 'passing the buck' in the history of the human

race. Adam blamed Eve for giving him the fruit. Eve blamed the serpent for deceiving her. Neither of them accepted that they were at fault but in God's eyes they had sinned against a very specific command and consequently they were punished.

Adam's punishment

That punishment from God brought illness and death into the world. He told Adam:

'Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, "You shall not eat from it": Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat from it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.

Genesis 3.17-19

Throughout history, farmers have wrestled with the *'thorns and thistles'* of God's curse on the ground in Eden.

Those words *'to dust you shall return'* meant that Adam would die and return to the dust of the ground from which he was created. That is what happens when someone dies – the body decays until eventually nothing but dust is left. Meanwhile, Adam was to suffer the *'thorns and thistles'* – in other words, the earth would no longer be as fertile as it had been when God created it. All man's efforts would be a struggle for survival and eventually result in his death.

Eve's punishment

Eve was also punished, for God said to her:

'I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you'

Genesis 3.16





Eve would have children yet her joy in doing so would be tempered by the pain that she would suffer through child-bearing. It is because of the sin of Adam and Eve in disobeying God's simple command that all their descendants became sinners, suffering pain and illness in life followed by death. Paul explained to the Christians at Rome that *'just as through one man (Adam) sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned'* (Romans 5.12).

will illness and death continue for ever?

How dreadful it would be if that was the end of the story. But despite the failure of our first parents to obey Him, God also

Huge advances in modern pre-natal care have done much to ensure the safety of mother and child, but childbirth remains a painful and even traumatic experience.

provided a way of escape – a way for us to be reconciled to Him.

You may be surprised to learn that the way of escape was contained in some words addressed to the serpent who was cursed by God (Genesis 3.14,15). This curse also contained a promise that one day sin and death would be defeated by the saving work of a descendant of Eve.

The Prophet Isaiah foretold the way in which God would bring about this reconciliation through the work of Jesus:

'...he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was

upon him, and by his stripes we are healed' Isaiah 53.5

This chapter is a detailed prophecy of the work of Jesus Christ as the Saviour. Through his death and resurrection, there is hope for the future – of finding true peace and healing. This healing process begins with recognition of our natural state as sinners and belief in the saving work of Jesus. We can then become related to God's promise of eternal life.

The Prophet Daniel wrote these words: *'And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt'* (Daniel 12.2). Daniel is saying there will be a resurrection of the dead and those who are raised will be judged. Some will then be given everlasting life while others will suffer shame and contempt.

The New Testament has a similar message. The Apostle Paul confirms that there will be a resurrection. He could do so because he was confident that Jesus Christ rose from the dead after his crucifixion. Read his convincing arguments in his first

letter to the Corinthians chapter 15. Here are some of the apostle's words:

'But now Christ has risen from the dead, and has become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive'.

1 Corinthians 15.20-23

Paul knew that Jesus had died as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind. Those sins had come into the world because of Adam's disobedience. All men and women are sinners and die because of sin. By contrast Jesus lived a sinless life and so was able to offer himself as an acceptable sacrifice for our sins.

the end of illness and death

As we have seen, the first book of the Bible (Genesis) tells us how sin, disease and death came into the world. The last book of the Bible tells us about a time when the earth will be renewed; a time when the evil and suffering of this world will cease:



These children in Rayong, Thailand are victims of the worst epidemic of the modern world, the HIV/AIDS virus. They have everything to look forward to when Jesus returns.

‘And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away’ Revelation 21.4

Although we all suffer the problems of illness and death, we can have hope. The Bible shows that God provided Jesus (his name means Saviour), so that we can obtain forgiveness of our sins and be related to the hope of life. If we put our faith and trust in Jesus we can share the same hope that

Daniel had – a hope of resurrection from the dead and everlasting life in the kingdom of God on earth. We each have a choice, as Paul reminded the Christians at Rome:

‘For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.’

Romans 6.23

What will your choice be?

John Hitches
Norfolk, UK

For further information about the promise in Eden, the need for sacrifice and the work of Jesus as the Saviour, send for the free special issue of Light entitled ‘Light on Jesus Christ’.

THIS MOST DANGEROUS MOMENT

continued from back cover

Natural resources: ‘With resources increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few, we are going to have to learn to share far more than at present.’

New world order: ‘We must help people to retrain for a new world and support them financially while they do so.’

As a self-declared ‘optimist for my species’, Prof. Hawking called for more humility to be shown by those leading and governing our world, to take these world-saving actions now.

Jesus says...

Jesus has a similar warning for his followers about potentially catastrophic trouble in store for mankind some time in the future:

‘Nation will go to war against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in many parts of the world... For there will be greater anguish than at any time since the world began... In fact, unless that time of calamity is shortened, not a single person will survive. But it will be shortened for the sake of God’s chosen ones’ (Matthew 24.7,21,22 New Living Translation).

So how will this huge catastrophe be avoided? Will world leaders finally come to their senses and take action? Jesus continues:

‘And then at last, the sign that the Son of Man is coming will appear in the heavens, and there will be deep mourning among all the peoples of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory’ (Matthew 24.30 NLT).

What is not in mankind’s power to achieve, God will bring about through the return of Jesus in great power. His reign as world king will bring unity, justice and prosperity, the ‘new world’ that we long for – the kingdom of God.

Prof. Hawking is ‘optimistic’, but **we** can be certain. What God has promised He will certainly bring about.

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Corrections

Several of our observant readers spotted two errors in the article 'The Goldilocks Planet' (vol. 27.3) for which we apologise. The proportions of nitrogen and oxygen in the earth's atmosphere were reversed: they should be oxygen 21% nitrogen 78%. The planet Jupiter is not 'our nearest planet' in the solar system.

Light on a new world

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THIS MOST DANGEROUS MOMENT

‘We are at the most dangerous moment in the development of humanity. We now have the technology to destroy the planet on which we live, but have not yet developed the ability to escape it.’

(Prof. Stephen Hawking, The Guardian 02/12/16)

Professor Hawking suggested that ‘widening economic inequality around the world’, together with ‘the economic consequences of globalisation and accelerating technological change’ will continue to push our world towards disaster. Knowing that we also face ‘awesome environmental challenges’, he called on us all to work together to protect our world.

In his article, Hawking offered his view of what needs to be done to reverse this dangerous trend in human affairs. In his words:

one united people: ‘We need to break down, not build up, barriers within and between nations.’

new leadership: ‘The world’s leaders need to acknowledge that they have failed and are failing many.’

continued on page 38