



Light

...on a new world

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

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The Christadelphians believe the Bible (Old and New Testaments) to be the wholly inspired and infallible Word of God. Its principal theme is the salvation of mankind through the saving work of Jesus Christ and the setting up of the kingdom of God under his rulership when he returns to the earth.

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Note:

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

COVER:

A funeral procession winds its way across the Mount of Olives towards the Hebrew cemetery. This was very familiar territory for Jesus and his followers – it was here that he gave what has become known as the Mount Olivet Prophecy (see pages 30 and 38)

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important Bible words

In considering any subject it is important at the outset to define the terminology used. The Concise Oxford Dictionary definition of 'sacrifice' implies two distinct shades of meaning:

- ❖ Slaughter of animal or person; surrender of possession as an offering to a deity
- ❖ Giving up a thing of value for the sake of something else

The first definition of sacrifice is totally alien in today's western society. However, in Bible times animal sacrifice was an integral part of the worship of God. In New Testament times, after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, animal sacrifice had no place in the Christian's approach to God. This was not because sacrifice was no longer important but that the sacrificial work

sacrifice

of Jesus in laying down his life was a totally effective, once-and-for-all sacrifice. This made the offering of animals an unnecessary ritual.

The second definition of sacrifice is a concept much more familiar to people today. It is a familiar cry of parents who have gone without certain pleasures in order to provide better things for their children. In this usage of the word, the sense is of giving up something that we value or enjoy in order to give to someone else. We shall see as we progress, these two aspects of the subject come together in the Law of Moses. The offerings that were made to God had to be of the very best, something valued and treasured by the giver, as a token of the love and respect the person showed to God. In a similar way, the Christian concept is one of self-sacrifice, a giving of ourselves to God's work, when again, only the very best of our efforts will be acceptable.

This article will now trace the Scriptural teaching concerning sacrifice as it is presented to us in both Old and New Testaments.

Such an exercise is not an academic study of the religious ritual of an ancient civilization. It is a practical illustration of the way in which the Christian should learn to approach God and to serve Him.

The need for sacrifice

Animal sacrifice is not a practice that mankind devised, but was ordained by God Himself as an essential requirement for men and women to approach Him acceptably. The reason for this is described in the early chapters of Genesis. God created Adam and Eve and placed them in the Garden of Eden to tend it and care for it. They enjoyed idyllic surroundings with only one restriction placed on them. This restriction was a test of their obedience to God's clear commandment not to eat the fruit of a particular tree (Genesis 2.16, 17).

The punishment for disobeying this instruction was equally plain – it was death. Adam and Eve disobeyed God and, in so doing, they sinned. God was true to His Word and man was punished for his disobedience. However God, as well as being a God of justice, is also a God of mercy. Although condemning man to die, God also opened up a way for the human race to escape the consequences of sin and live for ever. This process of reconciling men and women to God is the essential message of the Bible and sacrifice is a vital ingredient of that message.

After eating of the fruit of the tree, the record tells us that Adam and Eve became ashamed of their nakedness and tried to cover themselves with aprons made of fig leaves. This was inadequate and it was God Himself who provided an appropriate covering which was made from the skins of animals. This obviously required that the animals must first be killed and so death, as the consequence of sin, first came within Adam and Eve's experience

This simple account of what happened to our first parents

The fig leaves which Adam and Eve chose to cover themselves were quite useless as a covering for sin



reveals some fundamental principles about the way that God deals with men and women.

God required them to demonstrate obedience to His laws of their own freewill:

- ❖ The covering they devised for themselves was totally inadequate.
- ❖ God provided a covering for their sinful nature.
- ❖ This covering involved slaying an animal and the shedding of blood.

The killing of the animal would impress upon Adam and Eve the punishment that would now come upon them. They too were destined to die as a result of their disobedience. Because of their guilt the animal had to be killed. This would act as a powerful reminder of their true position before God and their need for His mercy and compassion, if they were to become acceptable to Him.

The general principles that are outlined above were later formally incorporated into a very strict code of laws. These were to govern the daily life of the Jewish people. This code has become known as the Law of Moses.

sacrifice under the Law of Moses

Although generally known as the Law of Moses, the various regulations and commandments were not the work of Moses but the revealed will of God (Exodus 19.3-7). The terms of the Law were the conditional clauses in a covenant or agreement that God entered into with the nation of Israel. After delivering them from slavery in Egypt, God gathered all the people to Mount Sinai and there spoke to them through Moses:

‘Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to me above all people...And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation...’

Exodus 19.5,6

This promise of God is a very important part of His purpose with the human race. He declared His intention to separate out from all the people in the world a group of men and women who would obey His commands. In Old Testament times these were set out in the Law of Moses, that revealed a code of conduct and morality which if followed, would result in Divine favour and blessing.



The Law of Moses covered every aspect of life and it was impossible for men and women to keep it perfectly. It made provision for man to recognise his failings and then to approach God to seek forgiveness. Just as in the case of Adam and Eve, this required the shedding of blood in recognition of the divine punishment – that death is the consequence of sin. The weakness of the Law of Moses was that man was continually breaking that Law and therefore repeatedly coming under the curse that the Law contained. So there was a continual need for sacrifices to be offered, sin to be recognised and repented of, and divine mercy to be asked for. As well as the sin offerings the Law provided for a number of other offerings to be made. Many of these related to services of thanksgiving to God, for example, following the

A reconstruction of the Tabernacle in the wilderness with its altar of sacrifice

ingathering of the harvest, the birth of children etc. In everything the Israelites were reminded of their dependence upon God for the blessings of this life and of the need for mercy, that they might inherit a better life in the future.

the quality of the sacrifices

The Old Testament books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy show that the Law very carefully prescribed the types of offerings that were to be made, according to the occasion and the circumstances of the offeror. One aspect of this specification is repeated time after time in the Law. The animal that was to be sacrificed had to be '*without blemish*' and the offerer was required to put his hand

on the head of the animal. In this way he became associated with the sacrifice of the animal in recognition of his need for the forgiveness of sin (Exodus 12.5; Leviticus 1.3,4).

This establishes a very important principle in relation to the things we offer to God. The offering must be of the very highest quality. There was no tolerance of the attitude 'that animal is superfluous to my needs – it will do for God!' On many occasions during their history God condemned Israel for this attitude: *"And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favourably?" says the LORD of hosts* (Malachi 1.8).

more than sacrifice is required

The quality of the offering presented to God was important, but so much more important was the quality of the heart that gave it. A simple story from the life of King Saul will illustrate the principle. Saul had been given a clear commandment from God to fight the Amalekites and to utterly destroy them. Saul obeyed God in part but decided not to kill all

the livestock that had been taken as booty. Instead of destroying them, he offered the best of the captured flocks as a sacrifice to God. Again, this attitude was roundly condemned by God through His prophet Samuel who said to him: *'...Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams'* (1Samuel 15.22).

It was a similar failing that caused Jesus to condemn the Pharisees. They were punctilious about keeping the ritual of the Law but were often oblivious to the spirit enshrined in the Law. Jesus approved the comment of one of the scribes:

'...You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but he. And to love him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbour as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices'

Mark 12.32, 33

This level of appreciation caused Jesus to say that the scribe was *'not far from the kingdom of God'*. This attitude is the platform from which

all sacrifice must be offered. If we love God with all our heart and mind, then we will give Him of our very best. If we love our neighbour as ourselves, then we will share all that we have with him. This brings the consideration of sacrifice and offering firmly into the Christian way of life. We can do no better than to consider Jesus' own giving of himself in sacrifice.

Jesus Christ - the lasting sacrifice for sin

We have already noted how that in the beginning our first parents sinned by disobeying God's command and as a consequence were condemned to die. This fact clearly suggests that the only possible way to eternal life is through perfect obedience to God's will. It was just such a life that Jesus led, for he had a perfect understanding of the divine requirements that led him to great trial and personal tragedy. But he remained perfectly obedient to the very end.

It was this perfect life which ensured that Jesus could be raised from the grave to enjoy eternal life. But Jesus' life of obedience was much more than a personal triumph, it was a triumph in which all of us can share. The sacrifices of the Law of Moses were not effective in permanently covering sin – the animal had no conscious awareness of good or bad. The death of the animal merely reminded the offeror of his own subjection to sin and death and his reliance upon God's mercy. In contrast, the willing offering by Jesus of his life was a perfect sacrifice, a sinless life being freely given for the benefit of others. The perfect sacrifice of Jesus fulfilled the requirements of the Law of Moses and took away the need for daily sacrifices as Paul wrote to the Colossians: *'he has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross'* (Colossians 2.14).

Abraham's sacrifice of his son Isaac was a parable of God's offering of His own son Jesus as the perfect sacrifice (see Genesis 22).



The Letter to the Hebrews tells us about the imperfections of the Law of Moses and contrasts this with the perfection of Christ's offering:

'...every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down at the right hand of God...For by one offering he has perfected for ever those who are being sanctified.'

Hebrews 10.11-14

Firstly, there was the need for an unblemished animal to be offered. This essential characteristic of the animal pointed forward to the only sacrifice that could ever be effective. Jesus was called by John the Baptist, *'The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world'* (John 1.29).

Secondly, the person making the sacrifice had first to recognise his or her fault and then be associated with the death of the animal. The message in New Testament times was exactly the same and is equally valid today: *'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...'* (Acts 2.38).

This was the Christian message

proclaimed by Peter on the day of Pentecost. Paul, in writing to the believers at Rome, powerfully shows how true Christian baptism by total immersion in water, is a symbolic association of the believer with the death and resurrection of Jesus (Romans 6.3-5). By such a close association with the sacrifice of Jesus, his offering can be fully effective in covering our sins and opening up the way to everlasting life. However, the New Testament makes it very clear that the hope of eternal life is not achievable by a once-off association with Christ through baptism. Baptism is essential but not sufficient of itself. It marks the beginning of a new life like that of Jesus, given as an offering to God.

sacrifice in the Christian era

In an appeal to the believers in Rome, Paul wrote:

'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service'.

Romans 12.1

Paul is not instructing them to make a literal sacrifice as Jesus did, but to develop in their lives the essential characteristics of an offering

acceptable to God. In the same chapter of Romans, Paul itemises the characteristics that God finds pleasing – to be charitable, kind, zealous, patient, prayerful, humble, forgiving – indeed the very characteristics that marked Jesus out as the perfect man. Very often, exhibiting these virtues involves us in real sacrifice, a giving of ourselves to benefit others.

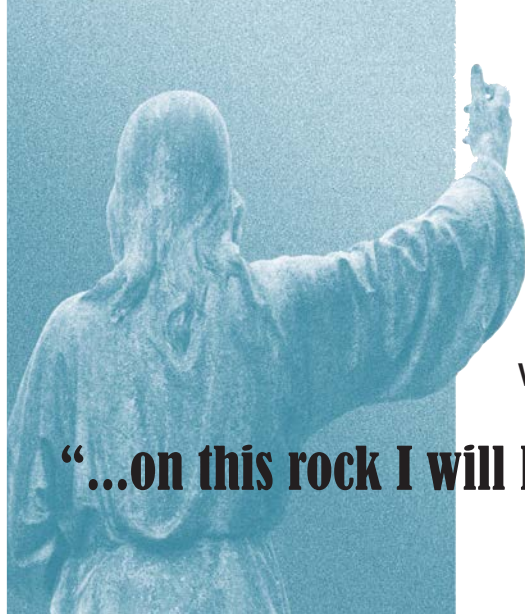
All men and women are basically selfish, with a primary concern for their own well-being. The Christian way of life should be the reverse; God and Christ must come first, our fellow men and women second and ourselves last. This way of life is contrary to every natural instinct and to develop the right attitude demands a determined disciplining of mind and action. Our brief study of the requirements of the Law of Moses shows that our approach to such discipline must not be half-hearted. A token gesture of following Christ is comparable to offering a crippled or lame animal from the flock, an unacceptable response to someone who has given us everything.

At the beginning of this article we mentioned parents who make a sacrifice for the benefit of their children. Such a consideration is

more than a simple analogy; it is a literal expression of what God has done. We are all disobedient, ungrateful and undisciplined children, worthy only of punishment. Yet our Heavenly Father has provided a means of becoming reconciled to Him.

This involved the provision of Jesus, who willingly laid down his life as an effective sacrifice for sin. God allowed His only son to be crucified by wicked men in order that we might benefit. That benefit is not just a passing fancy or a temporary advantage, it is the supreme blessing of everlasting life to be enjoyed on a beautified earth. This is what the calling of God is – He has shown us His purpose through His Word; He has provided for the forgiveness of our sins through Jesus Christ but He also demands a response from us.

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what did Jesus mean?

“...on this rock I will build my church...”

Matthew chapter 16 contains a verse that is often misinterpreted:

‘And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it’

Matthew 16.18

To give some context, Jesus was speaking to his disciples, and they were in conversation regarding who exactly Jesus was. Peter made the clear declaration that *‘You (Jesus) are the Christ, the Son of the living God’* (verse 16).

In response to this declaration, Jesus blessed Peter and made the statement in the verse we are considering. Many churches and in particular the Roman Catholic Church, interpret this verse to mean

that Peter himself is the rock upon which the church would be built. Because of this, the Catholic Church believes that Peter was the first Pope. However, as we shall see in this article, this notion is incorrect, and Jesus meant something quite different.

Peter’s calling

Let us look at some background information about Peter. Peter’s given name was Simon, as we note from Mathew’s account of his calling to be one of the twelve apostles. We read: *‘Now Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen’* (Matthew 4.18). As Jesus’

The so-called “Fisherman’s Ring” (‘annulus piscatorius’) which is part of the Pope’s regalia, showing the Apostle Peter fishing. The Pope’s claims to authority are completely unsupported by Scripture

ministry progressed, Peter became part of the inner circle of three apostles. Along with James and John, they are referred to as ‘pillars’ by the Apostle Paul (Galatians 2.9). We also get the impression that Peter was the leader of the twelve apostles because of his prominent role as the spokesman of the group and also based on his speech on the Day of Pentecost (see Acts chapter 2).

a word study

The key to understanding Matthew 16.18 is to analyse the specific words that Jesus used. We will see that there is a play on words here in the meaning of Peter’s name, and it is only by looking at the original Greek words that we can understand the meaning. As mentioned earlier, Peter’s given name was Simon. Jesus referred to him as such in Matthew 16.17 which says ‘*Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah...*’. The ‘*Bar-Jonah*’ part of his name simply means ‘son of Jonah’.



Now, if we look in the Gospel of John at the record of Peter’s calling to be a disciple, we read that ‘*when Jesus looked at him, he said, “You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas” (which is translated, a stone)*’ (John 1.42). Jesus bestowed on Simon the name Cephas. We will see that this name became a key part of who Peter was, and it will also help us to understand the verse we are considering.

As we note from Matthew 16.18, Jesus referred to Simon as Peter, the name by which he was commonly known. The name Peter is the Greek word ‘*petros*’. This word is always translated as the name ‘*Peter*’, except for one occurrence – in John

1.42 (above) where we note that it is translated as Cephas meaning 'a stone'. As we continue through Matthew 16.18, we encounter the word 'rock'. The original Greek word for this is '*petra*'. As the English word suggests, this Greek word '*petra*' literally means 'a rock'. These two Greek words share the same root, and are therefore clearly related, but they are in fact different words. With this in mind, we can start to understand the meaning of Jesus' reply to Peter.

what is the rock?

Many Christians believe that Jesus was making a statement that the church would be built on Peter himself, hence the concept of Peter being the original Pope. However, the correct understanding is that Jesus was referring to Peter's declaration, and not simply to Peter himself, when he called it a rock. As we noted earlier, the context of this discussion is Peter's reply to Jesus about who he (Jesus) is. Peter gave the profound reply: '*You (Jesus) are the Christ, the Son of the living God*' (Matthew 16.16). It is this statement about Jesus that would become the rock-solid foundation of the church, and not the individual (Peter) giving the reply.

The '*rock*' refers to Peter's statement, not Peter himself!

When we understand this absolutely critical difference, we get a very clear appreciation of what this verse is all about. Even though Peter was an important individual in the furtherance of the gospel message, he was simply a man, and we should not elevate him to a greater position than he is due.

To clarify the point further, we see an additional use of the word '*Rock*' by the Apostle Paul in reference to Jesus: '*For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ*' (1 Corinthians 10.4). Both instances of the word '*Rock*' here are a translation of the Greek word '*petra*'. Paul refers to Jesus as the '*Rock*' in this reference, and Jesus uses the same word in Matthew 16.18 in his reply to Peter. Undoubtedly there is a connection here. As we have seen, the context of Jesus' reply is Peter's confession about who Jesus was, so it becomes clear that Jesus' own reference to the '*rock*' is to Peter's confession, and not to the man Peter.

relevance to us

What does this mean for us? Peter made a very clear and comprehensive statement which has been recorded in Scripture for our benefit. We know that all Scripture *'is profitable for doctrine...for instruction in righteousness'* (2 Timothy 3.16), and Peter's statement certainly falls into that category. It is important to realise that the Old Testament was pointing forward to the advent of a

A climber scrambles to the top of a great granite rock in the Sinai Desert. Israel wandered here for 40 years, sustained by a miraculous stream of water that flowed from a rock at Moses' command. Paul tells us that rock represented Christ (see previous page).

Messiah. There are many direct references to his coming, and many more indirect references and allusions. Peter and his fellow apostles, and the Jews in general, were extremely familiar with the Old Testament as it was essentially their Bible.

Peter would have been watching for the Messiah that he had heard so much about, and he would have known of his imminent arrival because of the preparation work performed by John the Baptist. Through his interaction with Jesus over the course of his ministry, he came to realise that Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah. The word *'Christ'* that Peter used is the Greek word *'Christos'* and simply



means 'Anointed'. By using this word in his confession, Peter is confirming that Jesus was the person he had been looking for.

Can we make such a statement as well? Absolutely! And so we should. Recognising that Jesus is the Son of God brings us into close contact with God, and puts us on the path to sharing in the inheritance that was promised long ago to Abraham. Jesus is the embodiment of God's purpose here on earth. Recognising his role and his relationship to God are all part of understanding God's plan and purpose with the earth. But what does it mean to make this statement about who Jesus is?

Words lead to action

Making a statement like Peter did only has meaning if our actions support it. God is not looking for us to simply acknowledge who Jesus is, but He wants us to actually display it through our actions. This is much more powerful than mere words. We are in a constant battle with our sinful nature, but we are to strive to develop the '*fruits of the spirit*' – these are listed as '*love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*' (Galatians 5.22,23). This is how we turn our words into action.

We recognize Jesus' role as the Christ by emulating his life of righteousness.

We will of course fall short of the perfect mark set by Jesus, but this is still the goal we are aiming for. If we do so, then we can become part of the true church that Jesus talks about in Matthew 16.18. From our word study in this article, we now understand that the church is built upon the understanding and belief that Jesus is the Christ.

By joining Peter in making this declaration, we can become part of this church of Christ as well. It is also important to understand what is meant by the word '*church*'. It is used in our verse and over 100 times in the New Testament. The original Greek word is '*ekklesia*' and a more direct English translation is '*ecclesia*' rather than '*church*'. A church is usually thought of as the physical structure where a congregation meets, but the true meaning of the word '*ekklesia*' has to do with the group of believers who are meeting together and not the physical structure of the building. In the verse we are considering, Jesus is stating that a group of believers will be built and established on the foundation that is Christ.



establish our faith in the same rock-solid way to combat the ups and downs of life. The cornerstone of this solid foundation is for us to make the same declaration Peter made, and we should make this declaration with both our words and our actions!

The 'ekklesia' is not a church building but the community of believers

It is relevant that a rock is used, as this is a very descriptive word. It shows us how solid the foundation of the church is. We can think of the comparison between rock and sand that is used by Jesus earlier in Matthew's record:

'Therefore whoever hears these sayings of mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.'

Matthew 7.24,25

The word for rock here is the same word '*petra*' that we have been looking at. In the same way that a house built on a solid foundation of rock can withstand storms, we can

summary

An analysis of the words used in these verses gives us a clear understanding of exactly what Jesus meant with his response to Peter's confession. We see now that it is Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ, and not Peter himself, that became the foundation of the church. This is very relevant to us, because we too can be associated with Jesus and his church if we make the same confession as Peter. This is an exciting proposition for us, as we start to see how we can be associated with God's plan of salvation for the earth.

Mark Kershaw
Ontario, Canada

The pool of Siloam

PICTURE:

This is **not** the pool of Siloam referred to in the gospels!

For many years this was believed to be the pool, but it is now known this structure is much more recent.

The original pool has now been discovered – see overleaf.

There is an ancient spring on the East side of the old City of David, which was the reason why the Jebusites originally built a settlement on the site of what we know today as Jerusalem. A reliable clean water supply was always essential when founding a settlement. The spring is known as Gihon or Virgin's Fountain and the waters flowing from it are called Siloam. In Old Testament times they were called Shiloah. In 2004, however, an amazing discovery was made in connection with this

the Bible stands THE TEST OF TIME

water. But first let us fill in the Biblical background. In the days of King Hezekiah, approximately 700 years before Jesus was born, reference is made to this spring. Hezekiah was in trouble. The Assyrians were threatening to besiege Jerusalem.

The spring was open to foreigners as it was outside the city wall, who could divert the water, pollute it, or use it for their own armies. In response to this grave threat the king stopped up the open water courses and the canal flowing into the city or down to the Kidron River below. The second book of Chronicles records that Hezekiah *‘took counsel with his leaders and commanders to stop the water from the springs which were outside the city...many people gathered together who stopped all the springs and the brook that ran through the land, saying, “Why should the kings of Assyria come and find much water?”’* (2 Chronicles 32.3,4).

Evidence of this ‘stopping up’ was found by a treasure hunter, Montagu Brownlow Parker, 5th Earl of Morley. He led a secret expedition between 1908 and 1911 to try and find King Solomon’s treasure in the tunnels and chambers beneath Jerusalem’s old city! Though unsuccessful in his quest and only just escaping with his life, the adventuring Earl mapped many very ancient underground chambers and watercourses that penetrate the substrata of the old city. 100 years

on, today’s expert archaeologists on the chambers, Ronny Reich and Eli Shukron, acknowledge their accuracy.

When Hezekiah’s engineers bored that amazing twisting tunnel from the water source back under the city, the Assyrians were foiled and the people of Jerusalem were secure for water. The tunnel only drops about 5 cm over its entire length of 540 metres. Thus the gradient is minute, and therefore the water flow is very gentle. The conduit was called Shiloah in Hebrew which means ‘sender’. The water, now flowing unseen into the city was like a miracle, being sent to save the people and securing their lives from thirst and certain death in times of trouble.

The Prophet Isaiah referred to the canal in spiritual terms, likening the folly of Israel’s refusal to heed God’s word to refusing the gentle life-saving waters of Siloam - *“the waters of Shiloah that flow softly”*. He wrote that as a result they would suffer the uncontrollable, overflowing flooding waters of the king of Assyria! (Isaiah 8.4-8).

We read in John chapter 9 that Jesus performed a remarkable miracle – he healed a blind man. *‘...he spat on*



the ground and made clay with the saliva; and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And he said to him "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing' (John 9.6,7). The man's own testimony is given in verse 11 'A man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, "Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash". So I went and washed, and I received sight'. The pool that the tunnel waters flowed into has now been discovered!

Hezekiah's entrance to the tunnel, and the now famous plaque

a small section of the large pool now identified as Siloam, with a modern canopy to protect onlookers. The steps are 72 metres long.

inscribed by Hezekiah's engineers, was discovered by bathers in 1880 and the open pool known for centuries as Siloam was thought to be the Biblical pool of Siloam. The traditional identification appears as a trough of water down steep stone steps, and is pictured in many reference and guide books marking where the tunnel emerges from under the ground (see photo page 15). Recent research has now revealed that this is actually the

basement of the ruins of a much later Byzantine church, built over the watercourse.

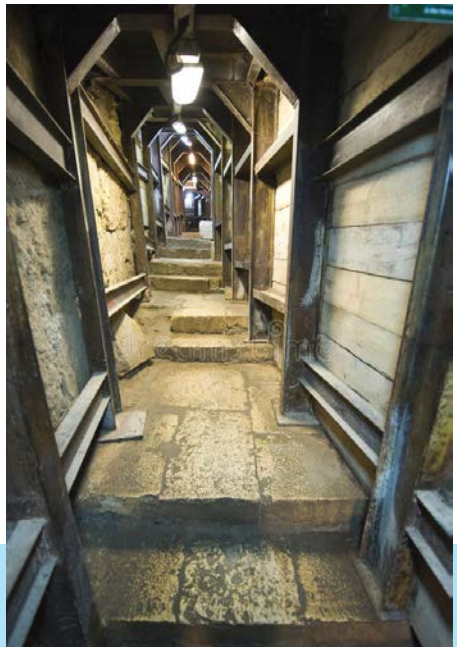
In 2004, in a locality south of the Temple mount, evidence of an ancient structure was uncovered. During construction work to repair a large water pipe, deep below current street level, evidence of long stone steps was revealed; not only that, but also a corner of what had evidently been a huge pool in the time of Jesus. The location was at the South Western end of the ridge known as the City of David, where archaeologists Ronny Reich and Eli Shukron identified these two ancient stone steps as part of a huge pool (see picture on previous page).

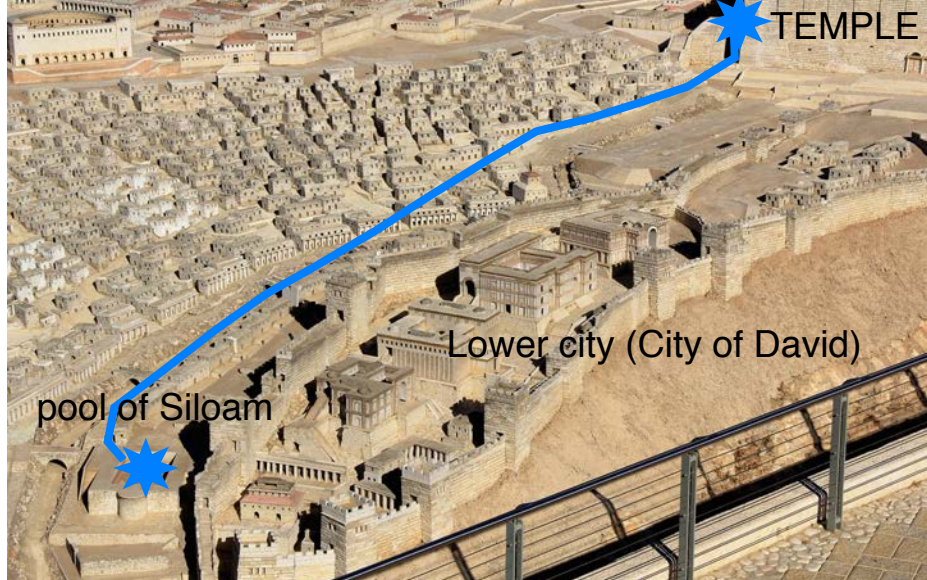
Excavation confirmed that they were part of a monumental pool from the Second Temple period (530 BC to AD 70) which includes the time period in which Jesus lived. The structure Reich and Shukron discovered was impressive. 225 feet long (72m), with corners that are slightly greater than 90 degrees, indicating a trapezoidal shape. It has only been possible to excavate a small section of the pool, well below current street level. However, the size, scale and quality of the

stonework indicate a huge public bathing place. All the indications are that this was where the gentle softly flowing waters cured the man of his blindness at Jesus' bidding.

A further discovery was made. Steps leading to an underground walkway just below street level revealed a narrow path that leads right up to the Temple itself. A most interesting connection can be made here. According to ancient Jewish writings known as the Talmud, there was a tradition that, on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, when the feast reached its climax, water was drawn in a golden vessel from the pool of Siloam, and the High

The walkway that connects Siloam directly to the Temple Mount





model of ancient Jerusalem showing the route by which the priest took the water from Siloam to the Temple altar

Priest led a procession from the pool to the Temple, to pour out a libation (drink offering) on the altar.

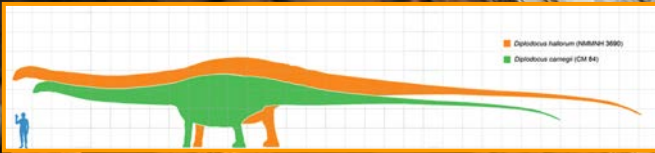
Once again, recent archaeological discoveries have confirmed the reliability of the Biblical record. More importantly, in John's Gospel record we can see how Jesus turned this into a spiritual lesson about the water that he can give. He represents *'the waters of Shiloah'*, (Siloam), the life giving 'water' sent from God. We see his response to what was going on around him in the Temple. He was there on the last day of the feast, the procession was passing and the water offering about to be poured. We read: *'On the last day, that great day of the*

feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water"' (John 7.37, 38).

The waters of Siloam meaning 'sent', point to the one who was 'sent' – Jesus Christ. He was sent to cleanse us from sin through baptism, sent to cure spiritual blindness and sent to give 'water' leading to eternal life. Just as the blind man washed in Siloam to be cured of his blindness, so the invitation is open to all:

"Go, wash in the pool of Siloam".

Justin Giles
London, UK



“moving



a dinosaur is never easy..."

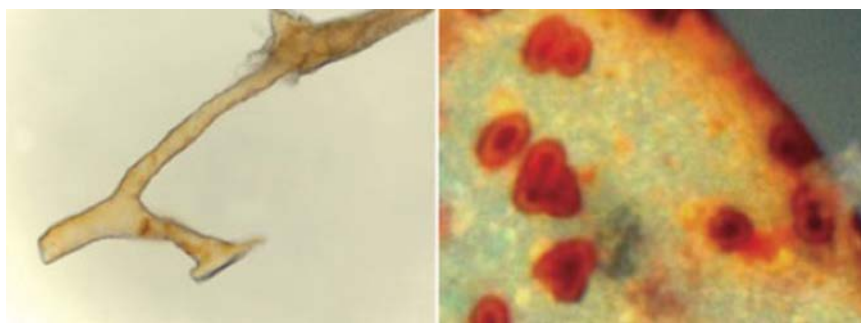
So says the Natural History Museum in London, and they should know. Since 1979 the entrance hall of the Museum has been dominated by a huge 25-metre-long skeleton of the dinosaur 'diplodocus'. But this year 'Dippy' has been dismantled and replaced by an equally huge skeleton of a blue whale. Dippy is now being restored prior to going on an extended tour of various venues in the UK, including a visit to Norwich Cathedral planned for July – October 2020. Dippy is in fact a plaster cast of an original fossil found in Wyoming in the United States in 1898.

According to the Museum, diplodocus lived about 150 million years ago. Or did it?

Over the last twenty years or so some remarkable discoveries have been made that throw serious doubt on the age of the dinosaurs in general. These discoveries are highly relevant to those who reject the reigning orthodoxy of evolution and take the Genesis account of creation seriously. There have been many reports recently of scientists finding material in dinosaur fossils which just shouldn't be there if dinosaurs are one hundred million years old or more.

This material is described as ‘soft tissue’, which is still pliable. It retains some of the character of its biological original; things like blood vessels and blood cells, connecting tissue and various proteins. This material could not have survived intact for millions of years. Research on Egyptian mummies suggests 10,000 years as the longest the original molecules could survive.

In 1995, a team led by Mary Schweitzer reported in Science magazine on soft tissue from the dinosaur known as ‘T. rex’ and there have been many more reports (over 50) down to 2017. It now seems you only have to look for soft tissue to find it! There are many different dinosaurs out there, but so far a fair cross-section of them show the same results, including the better known names like the Hadrosaur, Titanosaur, Triceratops, T. rex and Archaeopteryx. (For an exhaustive list of the published information see kgov.com/dinosaur-soft-tissue-original-biological-material).



Blood vessels and blood cells from the T. rex dinosaur

Why has this ‘soft tissue’ only been discovered so recently? Because scientists have not been looking for it, and the earliest finds seem to have been accidental.

So why have scientists not been looking for it? Because most of them are committed to the generally accepted picture of slow

evolution over vast periods of time and dinosaurs need to be very old to fit into that scenario. The last thing many scientists expect and want is evidence that the dinosaurs are only thousands, not millions of years old. The popular media support the same world view, which is why you may well not have heard of this before. There have been serious attempts to discredit the evidence by describing it as some form of bacterial contamination, but these have failed. There is no known mechanism by which this material could have survived for a hundred million years or more.

If you take the book of Genesis seriously (and you should – it is the foundation for God's plan of redemption through Christ), you are presented with a very different world view. This is a world that owes its existence not to chance but to a purposeful and comparatively recent seven-day Creation by God. The dinosaurs would have been the work of the fifth and sixth days (Genesis 1.20-31), and their extraordinary diversity and power witness to the power and wisdom of their Creator. With man being created on the sixth day, the dinosaurs would have been contemporary with mankind until, for some unexplained reason, the dinosaurs died out.

This scenario also explains another fascinating feature of the dinosaurs: their existence and impact on human culture is reflected in many different civilisations across the globe, and possibly in the Bible itself. The discovery and classification of dinosaur skeletons is something that has only happened in the western world over the last two hundred years, so any earlier depiction of dinosaur-like creatures can only spring from direct experience or vivid collective memories of an earlier age. (For a broad survey of examples, see www.genesispark.com). The evidence suggests that past civilisations knew and interacted with some of the remaining dinosaurs.

comment



A creature remarkably like a stegosaurus on a carved relief from a Bhuddist temple in Cambodia c. AD1200



LEFT: an animal like a dinosaur shown on an Inca burial stone from Peru (100BC – AD800) also see opposite.



Hunters with spears surround a long-necked dinosaur- like animal – ancient wall painting from North Peru



ALSO SEE back cover – is this an iguanadon?



The book of Job is one of the oldest books in the Bible. In the last few chapters of that book (Job 38 – 41), God challenges Job to review the

Creator's power and wisdom as exhibited in the natural world that He created. Many well-known animals are mentioned (lion, raven, ostrich, horse etc.), and also two special creatures named as Behemoth and Leviathan. Clearly these were real animals within Job's experience or memory, otherwise the argument would be pointless – but many have pointed out the remarkable similarities to some of the dinosaurs:

'He moves his tail like a cedar;
The sinews of his thighs are tightly knit.
His bones are like beams of bronze,
His ribs like bars of iron.
He is the first of the ways of God;
Only he who made him can bring near his sword'. Job 40. 17–19

So maybe we **have** moved a dinosaur – moved it from a 150 million-year-old product of evolutionary blind chance to an amazing and even stupendous component of the Creator's handiwork for our admiration. That original creation, dinosaurs and all, was declared by God '*very good*' (Genesis 1. 31) – then it was disrupted by human sin and the curse that followed. Some of those '*very good*' things vanished from the earth. But maybe, just maybe, when the earth is restored to its original purity and fruitfulness, some of these magnificent creatures will graze again on the plains of God's kingdom.

Roy Toms
Norfolk UK

comment



from the editor

‘An event of Biblical proportions’

When I wrote this editorial, I noticed an article in the American press with the above eye-catching headline. This referred to the total eclipse of the Sun which was witnessed by millions of Americans across the U.S. the day before, on 21 August 2017.

An eclipse of the Sun occurs where the Moon's orbit takes it between the Earth and the Sun, causing a

shadow to be cast over the earth. The eclipse which occurred on 21st August resulted in total darkness in a 70 mile wide band right across the U.S. from Oregon on the Pacific coast to Charleston, South Carolina on the Atlantic coast. This was the first coast-to-coast eclipse since 1918.

The headline may sound dramatic like many headlines in the news

media, but is there more to it? Does the Bible have anything to say about such events?



The path followed by the total eclipse across North America

The record of creation in the first book of the Bible tells us ‘...*God said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years... and it was so”*’ (Genesis 1.14,15). The creation of the Sun, Moon and stars had a beneficial effect on planet Earth. Its precise orbit around the Sun gives us day and night, summer and winter and facilitates the regular pattern of changing seasons. These things speak of the creative work of a master designer, who provided the right conditions for life in all its many forms to flourish on this planet.

They were also to be for ‘*signs*’; in other words they were divinely appointed symbols which represented something else. A simple example is found in the life of Joseph who had a dream about the Sun, Moon and eleven stars bowing down to him. His father understood the significance of the dream and said to Joseph: ‘*Shall your mother (the Moon) and I (the Sun) and your brothers (the eleven stars) indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?*’ (Genesis 37.9,10).

Just as the Sun can be described as ruling the day and the Moon and stars ruling the night, in a broader sense the Bible uses the Sun, Moon and stars to represent kings, queens and lesser rulers. The Old Testament prophets often referred to future events in a dramatic way by comparing them to an eclipse of the Sun and the Moon. The prophet Isaiah is a good example of this. He foretold the overthrow of the Babylonian Empire in these words:

‘Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate...the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine’
Isaiah 13.9,10

This descriptive prophecy uses the idea of an eclipse of the Sun to foretell the fall of the kingdom of Babylon to the Medes and Persians which took place in 539 BC. The last king of Babylon was Belshazzar who was slain and Darius the Mede became king. The prophet Daniel was a captive in Babylon and witnessed these events (see Daniel chapter 5).

'The day of LORD' described in the passage from Isaiah is a phrase that is often used throughout the Bible. It usually refers to a time of divine judgement on nations as in this example of the overthrow of Babylon. The prophet Joel described a future *'day of the LORD'* when the Sun will be eclipsed in these words:

'...the day of the LORD is near... The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness. The LORD also will roar from Zion and utter his voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake;' Joel 3.14-16

Read this chapter from Joel's prophecy and you will see that the context refers to a time when God's chosen people, the Jews, will return to their ancient land after centuries of dispersion, an amazing event that has been witnessed in our times. It will be followed by a gathering together of nations against Jerusalem. This in turn will be followed by divine judgement and the setting up of a new world order. The Sun, Moon and stars representing present ruling powers, will be eclipsed and replaced by one described by another prophet as the *'Sun of Righteousness'* (Malachi 4.2).

In the New Testament, these world-shaking events that will affect everyone are described by Jesus in the Mount Olivet Prophecy:

'...the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken... and they will see the Son of Man (Jesus Christ) coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory'

Matthew 24.29,30

How will this affect you and me? Jesus went on to describe his second coming as an event that will be totally unexpected. He warned his disciples in every age to watch for the signs of his coming and prepare for that time of great change. He said *'Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect him'* (Matthew 24.44).

Unlike the recent eclipse of the Sun in America, this will truly be an event of Biblical proportions, heralding far-reaching changes that will affect the whole world. But...

...will you be ready?

Editor

DESTINY IS NOT A MATTER OF CHANCE

In this third article in the series we turn our attention to how we can be sure that God has a plan and purpose with this earth. The key points made in the first two articles were that in a similar way to which wind and electricity exist as unseen forces, so too God exists. We can discern His power and might around us if we choose to take notice. Also in the second article we saw that amongst all mankind's striving for the 'ultimate experience', there is embedded into God's plan an 'ultimate experience' on offer to all people.

As is often pointed out in the pages of this magazine, the Bible is not just a single book. In fact it is 66 separate books divided into 'Old Testament' (39 books) and 'New Testament' (27 books). They were written over a period of about 1,500 years by 40 different writers, who lived in various locations throughout an area of the ancient world now known as the Middle East. On closer examination we find that there is a consistent message

from God via these 40 authors. Our English word 'Bible' comes from a Greek word 'biblos' meaning book. In this sense it is a book from God with a unique and compelling message for any individual who cares to take time and a humble approach to understand its meaning.

Within the 66 books of the Bible there are a number written by prophets. This article examines who they were, some aspects of what they had to say and how the message was revealed to them.

WHO WERE THE PROPHETS?

The records of the prophets are found predominantly in the Old Testament. They were ordinary people from different walks of life with whom God chose to communicate. They delivered God's message concerning His plan and purpose. Often they would be guided to speak words of condemnation against the Jewish

nation and sometimes against the nations around them. They also communicated information about the future concerning God's long-term plans, culminating in the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth.

Many of these prophets lived at different times from one another and never met or even knew each other. Some of them wrote dedicated books, headed with their name, containing the message they were inspired by God to write. Others were involved in Jewish events and, whilst they were named as prophets, they did not produce a written book.

HOW WAS THE MESSAGE REVEALED TO THE PROPHETS?

When the prophets were moved to prophesy, the message was significant and had some bearing upon a person or group of people, or even whole nations. The Apostle Peter wrote about them like this:

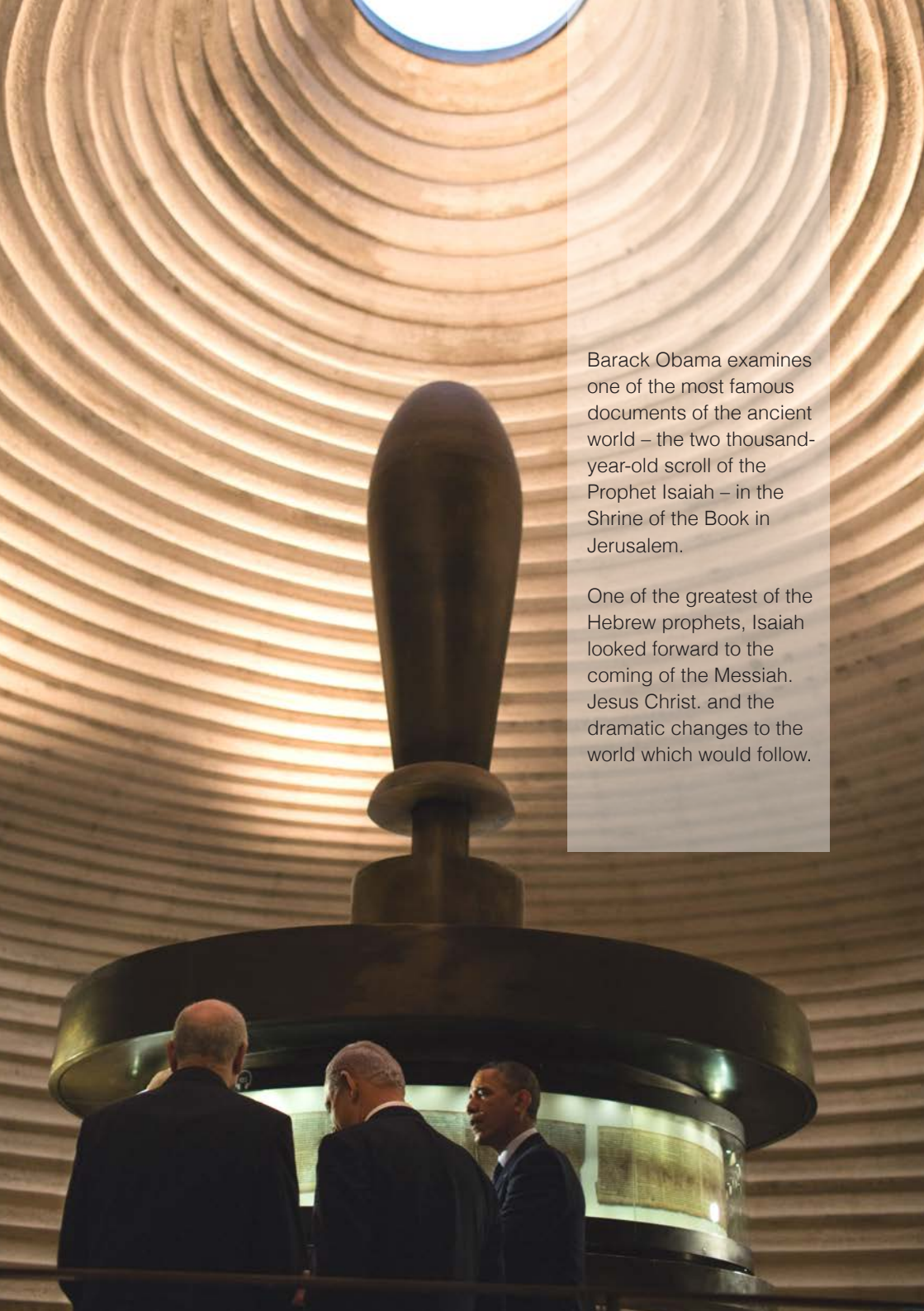
'...We also have the prophetic word made more sure, which you do well to heed as to a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star

rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.'

2 Peter 1.19-21

From this passage we understand that God, using His power, the Holy Spirit, moved these men to prophesy and write down their prophecies. We note from Peter's words that prophecy is not open to '*private interpretation*' or as the NIV puts it '*no prophecy ...came about by the prophet's own interpretation*'. The prophets were driven by God's power to undertake their work. We can see this demonstrated with some force in the prophecy of Jeremiah:

'O LORD, you induced me, and I was persuaded; you are stronger than I, and have prevailed. I am in derision daily; everyone mocks me. For when I spoke, I cried out; I shouted, "Violence and plunder!" Because the word of the LORD was made to me a reproach and a derision daily. Then I said, "I will not make mention of him, nor speak anymore in

A photograph of Barack Obama and other men in suits looking at a large, ancient scroll displayed in a circular, modern-looking structure. The structure is set against a large, circular, ribbed ceiling that resembles a dome. The lighting is warm and focused on the scroll and the people.

Barack Obama examines one of the most famous documents of the ancient world – the two thousand-year-old scroll of the Prophet Isaiah – in the Shrine of the Book in Jerusalem.

One of the greatest of the Hebrew prophets, Isaiah looked forward to the coming of the Messiah. Jesus Christ. and the dramatic changes to the world which would follow.

his name." But his word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not.'

Jeremiah 20.7-9

The resultant language of the prophets was typically prefaced, '*Thus says the LORD...*' (See for example Isaiah 45.1,11,14,18 and Jeremiah 31.2,15,16,23).

The chart opposite shows the prophets and the kings of Israel against a timeline. This makes it easier to understand where they all fit in, because the books which make up the Bible are not bound together in chronological order.

WHAT WAS THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHETS?

The prophets had various messages to pass on to differing audiences. In many cases they were sent to prophesy against Israel because of their failure to obey the commandments of God. In other cases they would prophesy against the nations surrounding Israel because of their aggression towards Israel.

Sometimes the fulfilment of a prophecy would be almost immediate, and sometimes it would

be many centuries or millennia in the future. Some prophecies are extremely detailed and others are very broad and give outline information, especially if they are long-term predictions.

LONG-TERM PROPHECY

Here is a brief review of a well-known prophecy which appears in the book of Daniel. You need to read Daniel chapter two in detail to get the full picture of what happened. It is a long-term and far-reaching prophecy that highlights God's plan with the nations surrounding Israel for some 2,600 years from the time of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to our own times and beyond. It is interesting to note that until the middle of the last century there was no trace of a place called Babylon or its empire. Critics could once claim that the Bible was inaccurate on this point. However, out of the sands of the desert in Iraq the city of Babylon was discovered by archaeologists. Details like the signature of Nebuchadnezzar on the bricks of the city were found.

Many Jews were in Babylonian captivity from around 600BC. The king dreamt something but when he awoke he could not remember what

DATE	PROPHETS	KINGS		EMPIRES
BC		ISRAEL	JUDAH	
900	Eljah Elisha	Ahab Ahaziah Joram Jehu Jehoahaz Jehoash	Jehoshaphat Jehoram Ahaziah Athaliah Joash Amaziah	ASSYRIA Shalmaneser III
800	Joel Jonah Amos Hosea Micah Isaiah	Jeroboam II Zechariah Menahem Pekahiah Pekah Hoshea	Uzziah Jotham Ahaz Hezekiah	Tiglath-Pileser III Shalmaneser V Sargon Sennacherib
700	Nahum Zephaniah Jeremiah Habakkuk		Manasseh Amon Josiah Jehoiakim Zedekiah	BABYLON
600	Obadiah Daniel Ezekiel Haggai		(Zerubbabel)	Nebuchadnezzar Nabonidus Belshazzar PERSIA Cyrus Darius
500	Zechariah Malachi		(Ezra) (Nehemiah)	Ahasuerus Artaxerxes I

it was. He called for interpreters who could neither ascertain what the dream was nor what it meant. A captive Jew named Daniel prayed to God, who revealed to him what the dream was and what it meant.

In the dream there was an image made of four different metals. The metals represented four world empires. The prophecy of Daniel tells us that the head of gold was Nebuchadnezzar himself, representing the Babylonian Empire. The chest and arms of silver was the Medo-Persian Empire, the belly and thighs of bronze the Greek Empire and the legs of iron the Roman Empire. The feet were part iron and part clay representing different nations that cannot mix, diverse in their religions, political aims and culture.

The image was struck on the feet with a stone that had been cut out without hands (Jesus Christ). The image was destroyed and ground to dust which blew away like the chaff on a threshing floor (the present world order). The stone then grew and became a mountain which filled the whole earth (the kingdom of God).

Bible students understand that the feet and toes of un-mixable iron and

clay represent the condition of the nations today, following the break-up of the Roman Empire. Daniel told the king what would happen next:

‘And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold — the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.’

Daniel 2.44,45

The accuracy of the first part of the prophecy concerning the image, is something which gives us enormous confidence in the Bible. It is a matter of historical fact that the Babylonian Empire, represented by gold was the great empire of its day. Daniel confirmed this as part of the interpretation of the dream. The Medo-Persian Empire did supersede Babylon and was known

as the empire of silver, the Greek Empire was next, represented by bronze, then the Romans, represented by iron.

The Roman Empire has come and gone and today we can see the remnants of that Empire failing to mix with the varying religious and national regimes across Europe and the Middle East.

This prophecy gives us a 'fix' on our position in the Divine calendar. Daniel chapter two shows us what we might call a broad brush stroke of Bible prophecy, because it is about many nations and lands and depicts clearly what the defining point of God's interactive plan and purpose with the earth is all about, but it doesn't go down to specific detail.

Of course there are smaller, more detailed long and short-term prophecies in the Bible which space does not allow us to address in this article. The Light Magazine special issue entitled 'Light on Bible Prophecy' reviews selected Bible prophecies in more detail, examining their relevance to us today. It is freely available online at:

www.bexleychristadelphian.org/LightOnBibleProphecy_v2.pdf

golden head

BABYLON

silver chest and arms

MEDOPERSIA

bronze belly and thighs

GREECE

iron legs

ROME

iron and clay feet

DIVIDED NATIONS



UNFULFILLED PROPHECY

When we look across the narrative of the Bible in its entirety we see that there are some prophecies that are clearly not yet fulfilled. The most important example of this is the certain establishment of the kingdom of God on the earth.

We should note the accuracy of the prophecy of Daniel chapter two. Much of it has been fulfilled, in the sense that each empire successively gave way to the next – gold, silver, bronze and iron. But the end of that prophecy has not been fulfilled. Christ's 'Mount Olivet Prophecy' in Luke chapter 21, which is partly unfulfilled, confirms what Daniel predicted about the end of the days when the stone cut out without hands smashes into the feet of the image. After speaking about the signs that will herald his second coming Jesus said:

'Then will they see the Son of Man (Jesus Christ) coming in a cloud with power and great glory'

Luke 21. 27

The most stupendous unfulfilled prophecy which exists in the Bible is that Jesus will return to the earth to establish a world-wide kingdom.

We believe that the true import of Christ's words in Luke chapter 21 will soon become apparent to everyone.

CONCLUSION

We have looked at who the prophets of the Bible were and some aspects of the messages that were revealed to them by God. We have seen in particular the broad brush strokes of Daniel chapter two which gives a panoramic view across the ages of mankind from the time of Nebuchadnezzar to the establishment of the kingdom of God on the earth.

God's plan and purpose with the earth and mankind upon it is indeed interactive. The Divinely inspired Biblical record requires our active reading and we are invited to join the body of people, whom the Bible tells us, God will save eternally.

John Meadows
Norfolk, UK

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Light on a new world

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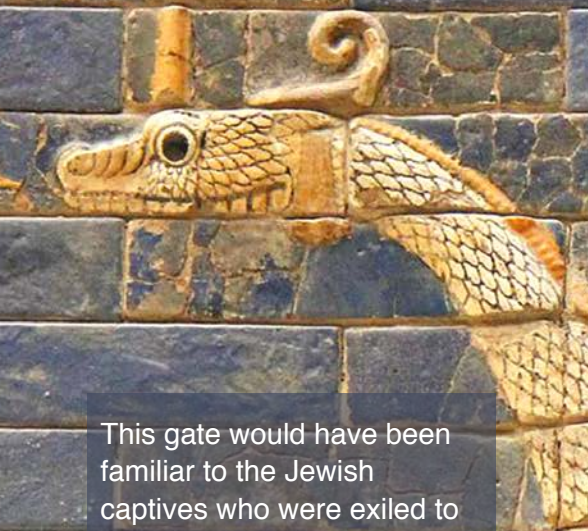
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THE ISHTAR GATE

from the ancient city of Babylon



The gate reconstructed in the Berlin Museum

This gate would have been familiar to the Jewish captives who were exiled to Babylon from 597 BC.

Its decoration in glazed bricks is remarkable. Three different animals are shown: a lion, a bullock, and this strange reptilian 'dragon' or dinosaur-like creature covered with scales. Was this really a mythical or legendary beast parading with two other quite recognisable animals? Or was it something familiar to these ancient peoples but no longer with us today?

See article inside, page 26