

Light

...on a new world

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

Volume 31.1

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Bread eaten with olive oil. Both are used as metaphors throughout the Bible – see article on the Bread of Life, page 34

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**The
Bible
stands
the
Test
of
Time**

EDOM

Industrial scale copper production – a big surprise?

EDOM was one of Israel's enemies in ancient Biblical history. The Bible records several battles fought with their quarrelsome neighbour to the south of The Dead Sea over a long period of time. Now to regular readers of this magazine, it may not come as a surprise that archaeological finds provide evidence of the existence of the ancient kingdom of Edom, exactly as recorded in Scripture. However, it did recently come as a big surprise to sceptical scientists!

Picture: The 'rose-red' city of Petra in Jordan is in the area known in the Bible as Edom (Edom means 'red')

In September 2019 'The Times' newspaper ran a headline 'Scientists find state of Edom which they thought was a Bible story'. The report concerned the discovery of evidence of large-scale copper production near Eilat, on the tip of the Gulf of Aqaba, showing that the nation of Edom existed as a significant power before Israel had a kingdom. An extract reads:

'According to the Book of Genesis, Edom was the state that existed "before kings ruled the children of Israel". Its people resisted and fought the Israelites, becoming their avowed foes. But now, it is not just the Bible that tells us so. A remarkable piece of scientific detective work has found evidence of the state of Edom that

flies in the face of many historians who have dismissed the idea as a myth.

Professor Tom Levy of the University of California, San Diego, a lead archaeologist on the project, told *The Times* his team used “cyber-archaeology”, which melds scientific disciplines including computer science and engineering.’

Two main centres of copper production, 60 miles apart, were found in the mines at Timna and Feynan (see map) and led to the following conclusion:

‘The striking synchronous agreement between the technology in Timna and Feynan, evident as early as the 11th century BCE, suggests that an overarching political body existed in the region already at this time...’

According to the scientists, that political body was the kingdom of Edom:

“‘The data has taken us to a place where the archaeological record does indeed coincide with many aspects of the Hebrew Bible and biblical Edom,” he said. “This was a surprise to us.”’

Ancient Edom lies partly in Israel and partly in Jordan today. Its terrain is rugged and rocky.

‘Haaretz’ (meaning The Land), Israel’s oldest and most respected newspaper, also carried the story,

with the headline ‘Archaeology Confirms Book of Genesis on Israel’s Arch-nemesis, the Edomites’, including this comment:

‘This, the archaeologists say, is a sign that there was a strong, centralized entity that coordinated copper production over vast distances: in other words, a state. And this in turn would mean that the Edomite kingdom was already formed by the mid-11th century B.C.E., some 300 years earlier than previously thought...’

The relationship between Edom and Israel

The book of Genesis confirms the family history of many kings and chiefs of Edom and states specifically: ‘*Now these were the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the children of Israel*’ (Genesis 36.31). Thus they were a nation well before the days of king Saul and king David, for they existed even before Israel came out of Egypt.

The Edomites were closely related to Israel, because they were descended from Esau, Jacob’s twin brother. Esau was a son of Isaac and grandson of Abraham. Esau was called Edom which means red, as he was red when born, according to Genesis. The difficult relationship between Esau and Jacob was prophesied even

before they were born and the two brothers were as different in their lives as their descendants (Genesis 25.21-28).

The hatred that Esau had for Jacob for most of his life was a characteristic of subsequent relations between the two nations. After Israel came out of Egypt, Edom refused to give them passage through their land and came out aggressively to face Israel, who turned away from them (Numbers 20.18-21). However Moses still gave the command *‘You shall not*

abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother...’ (Deuteronomy 23.7).

Edom in the time of David and Solomon

The Edomite kingdom was south of the Dead Sea, in an arid region of the rift valley called the Arabah, stretching down towards Ezion Geber (Eilat today) on the gulf of Aqaba. The Bible states that the Edomites were subsequently conquered by king David (around 1,000 BC). We read that David *‘also put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became David’s servants’* (2 Samuel 8.14).

They were a subject people under David’s son, Solomon, who built a sea port and a fleet of ships at Ezion Geber (1 Kings 9.26). Solomon’s domination of Edom was clearly marred by one particular individual, Hadad the Edomite, who was an adversary to Solomon (1 Kings 11.14-22).

So we learn that industrial scale copper production was a feature of this area, and scientists now attribute this to Edom. However, it was as long ago as the 1930’s that an American, Nelson Glueck, had first identified Edom as a major copper producer, and linked mines in the area with Solomon. But by the 1980’s these ideas had been largely dismissed. It was suggested that heavy editing of

Location of kingdom of Edom. Copper mines have been found at Feynan and Timna.





Excavators dig through more than 6 metres of black slag from copper mining at Feynan

the Scriptures in the 5th century BC had made erroneous claims.

This latest research, however, proves otherwise. Complex societies were active in the area and Khirbat-en-Nahas (in the Wadi Feynan) comprised some 100 ancient buildings, including a fortress in a 24-acre area covered by black slag, clearly visible on satellite imagery. Mining trails and mines abound, indicating large scale copper production, with a depth of waste more than 6 metres (20 feet) thick (see picture above).

In Solomon's day, the Bible records that vast quantities of bronze were used in constructing Solomon's temple. The accounts of the unlimited amount of bronze (which is 90% copper) used in the construction of the temple was discounted by critics. Any connection

between copper mining and Solomon had previously been viewed as distorted and exaggerated. But the Bible states *'and Solomon had all these articles made in such great abundance that the weight of the bronze was not determined'* (2 Chronicles 4.18). As just one example, two huge bronze pillars, which were named Jachin and Boaz, were cast to form a majestic and spectacular entrance to the temple in Jerusalem. But where did all the raw materials come from?

Interestingly, it was David who had earlier obtained large quantities of bronze from his conquests of the Syrians to the North, and reference is made to the defeat of Hadadezer in the North: *'Also from Tibhath and from Chun, cities of Hadadezer, David brought a large amount of bronze, with which Solomon made the bronze Sea, the pillars, and the articles of bronze'*

(1 Chronicles 18.8). So this Syrian bronze is specifically stated to have been used later by Solomon for the casting of the two pillars and the bronze Sea.

Where was this copper mined?

But Scripture is silent as to the particular place Solomon and other kings might have obtained the huge quantities of the base metal required. Where did all that copper to make the bronze come from? Now, with the recent Edomite copper industry discoveries to the South, the answer to these questions is very plausible indeed.

Some years ago, between 2006 and 2008, an international team of archaeologists excavated an ancient copper production centre at Khirbat en-Nahas (Arabic for ruins of copper) in the rift valley in ancient Edom, just south of the Dead Sea, which has been dated to the 10th century BC. A spurt of production was detected from the 9th century BC, perfectly aligning with the reigns of David and Solomon. The dating analysis was carried out at Oxford University. It would appear then, that Solomon's bronze production was based on the technology of an established Edomite industry.

Some 350 years later those same bronze pillars, referred to above,

were taken from the temple as a prize to Babylon, when Jerusalem finally fell to Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC. Jeremiah records the exact dimensions and details (Jeremiah 52. 21-23). Each pillar was about 8.2 metres (27 feet) high, 5.5 metres (18 feet) in circumference, and 10 centimetres (4 inches) thick, being hollow. On top of that was a decorated capital 2.3 metres (7ft 6 inches) high. That is a lot of bronze – a truly spectacular treasure trove for the Babylonians centuries later!

Scientists have also found from their observations that this copper production stopped abruptly. Evidence points to production being seriously disrupted, tying in well with Shishak king of Egypt's major invasion of Judah and Jerusalem, and all its fortified cities, in the days of Rehoboam, Solomon's son (2 Chronicles 12.2-9).

So we have a new and proven case for the Bible being right about Edom all along! The clear lesson is, never doubt the Biblical record. Scientists were surprised by their findings. Bible students on the other hand are excited, as yet another piece of evidence slots into place.

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The DEVIL and SATAN

Definitions

It is important to remember that the books of the Bible were written mainly in two languages: Old Testament in Hebrew and New Testament in Greek.

Old Testament (OT)

devil: the word does not appear in the OT.

devils: on a few occasions a Hebrew word is translated in the Authorised Version from words meaning animals. The context of the use of the word 'devils' relates to the abhorrent practice of animal worship, which was not permitted by God for His people.

satan: the Hebrew word means 'adversary'.

New Testament (NT)

devil: The Greek word means 'slanderer' or 'false accuser'.

satan: The Greek word means 'adversary'.

Background – sin and evil:

In order to understand what the Bible is telling us when the words 'devil' and 'satan' are used, we need to stay fully focused on the events in the garden of Eden.

Adam and Eve disobeyed God's instruction not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. In a previous article we looked in some detail at what happened there (see Light Volume 30.4 page 8). The serpent was an animal with no conscience but with the ability to speak. The tree itself had no evil power, in the same way that a speed limit sign has no evil power. But we are breaking the law if we exceed the speed limit.

The Genesis account of how sin and death came into the world makes it plain that God cursed them and the earth with decay and death as a result of Adam and Eve's disobedience. We should note here that God Himself allowed the introduction of sin and death into the world as a punishment for disobedience to Him. Under this heading we should also note that there is no mention of a superhuman evil monster or creature taking control and introducing evil into the world.

Look at what the Apostle Paul says about how sin came into the world and why death is something everyone faces (read Romans 5.12). Sin comes from within us and is not initiated by a super human evil being. It's also worth looking at Jeremiah chapter 17.9, which expresses the same truth. The Bible also tells us plainly, in more than one place, how sinful action begins. James likens it to the process of conception, birth and growth to maturity (read James 1.13-15 and Matthew 15.10-20).

What should we understand by the word 'satan'?

As the above definitions show, the Bible uses the words '*devil*' and '*satan*' to describe adversarial and sometimes evil behaviour. Closer examination of the places where these words occur in the Bible, demonstrates this point. Here are a few examples.

David had been temporarily outlawed from Israel and lived and worked with the Philistines. What is interesting is that when they went into battle, they wouldn't let David go with them because they didn't want to risk him becoming an '*adversary*' to them in the battle. If you look at 1 Samuel 29.4 you will see the point. It is important to note that in this case the translators chose to translate the Hebrew word '*satan*' as '*adversary*'.

Here is a good example of how important it is to read the Bible carefully to ensure we understand it. No one would suggest that David (who went on to become Israel's famous king) was in fact '*Satan*'. The Philistines

were worried about David defecting in battle. There are similar examples where the word adversary occurs in 1 Kings 5.4 (the words of King Solomon) and I Kings 11.14 (referring to Hadad the Edomite).

In Numbers 22 verses 21–35 the angel of the LORD who opposed Balaam was referred to as a '*satan*'. The word '*satan*' has again been translated as '*adversary*' in verse 22.

Another good example is in Mark chapter 8.31–33, where Jesus told the disciples that he was going to be crucified, in order to fulfil his mission as prophesied in the Old Testament. Peter challenges him and tells him that he will not allow such a thing to happen. Jesus tells Peter to '*... get behind me Satan! ...*'. In other words, do not challenge the will of God in the course of these events that are about to unfold. Jesus is not telling us that Peter is '*Satan*'. The idea is absurd. He is telling Peter that he should keep out of the way, and not be an adversary to Jesus in his mission to carry out the will of God.

What about the word '*devil*'?

The word '*devil*' is translated from the Greek word '*diabolos*' used in the original language of the NT. As noted above under definitions, it means '*false accuser*' or '*slanderer*'. If you look at a Bible concordance, you can see the theological slant of the translators, as sometimes they translate the Greek word '*diabolos*' as '*slanderer*' or '*false accuser*', where the concept of the devil as an evil spirit clearly does not fit. For example, Paul wrote to Titus about the way the older women were to set an example to the younger women. Similarly he wrote to Timothy about the wives of leaders (see Titus 2.3 and 1 Timothy 3.11).

We note that in both these verses, the theological concept of '*the devil*' does not fit. The emphasis is that women should be examples of honest and truthful speaking – there is no hint of them being possessed by an external supernatural influence.

We can also see the idea of a slanderer or false accuser in these words of Jesus: ‘... *Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?*’ ‘diabolos’ – John 6.70). Clearly this is a reference to Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus and was responsible for the process that led to the arrest, the mockery of a trial, and ultimately the death of Jesus.

What about demons?

In the first century, people believed that they were possessed by evil spirits or demons if they had mental illnesses, and that was the way they described it. When we read in the NT about someone with a disease, such as leprosy or withered limbs, they are not referred to as being possessed by evil spirits. NT passages such as Luke 4.33, John 8.48 and Matthew 9.32 all reflect the beliefs and language of those times in relation to mental illness.

We can consistently see that it was God who brought evil into the world as a result of man’s wilful disobedience to Him. There is no precedent in Bible teaching for believing in a superhuman creature known as the ‘Devil’ or ‘Satan’, or devils and demons who are responsible for the evil in the world.

True Christians are followers of Christ who recognise that he died and was raised from the dead by God as a means of bringing salvation from sin and death into the world. This process will reach its completion when Jesus Christ returns to the earth at God’s appointed time, to reward his faithful followers with the gift of everlasting life. Ultimately sin will be removed and death will be destroyed (see Paul’s words in I Corinthians 15.20–28).

Why does God allow *suffering?*

Human suffering is one of the greatest barriers to a belief in the existence of a loving God. The question is often asked: ‘Why does God allow war and suffering?’ It is one of the arguments used by those who deny the existence of God. The Bible gives us the answer to the question.

The reason why so many people are troubled by the existence of suffering is that they do not understand what the Bible has to say on the subject. Most religious people believe that death, so often the result of suffering, is the gateway to a better life in heaven. This idea contradicts Bible teaching which reveals that death is the divine punishment for sin. The Bible does offer a hope of everlasting life and freedom from suffering, but it is a hope based on the resurrection of the body, not of immortal souls going to heaven at death.

The reason for death

Suffering and death were the direct result of failure to obey God – we are all under the sentence of death because we all disobey Him. This came about in the first place as

described in the first book of the Bible, in Genesis chapters two and three. God is truly a God of love but there is also another side to His character, in that He cannot overlook wilful disobedience of His commandments.

Two contrasting aspects of God’s character are plainly revealed in the Bible. For example the Apostle Paul urges us to ‘*consider the goodness and severity of God*’ (Romans 11.22). God created mankind with free will; He was not interested in creating robots that would be programmed to obey Him, but in people who would do so of their own free will.

At the same time He warned our first parents that disobedience to His commands would bring death (Genesis 2.17). They exercised their free will by disobeying God and death inevitably followed. However, we do not die merely because of the sin of Adam and Eve, but because we inherit their sinful nature and we too, having free will, are sinners ourselves. The Apostle Paul endorsed the record in Genesis and summed up the natural state of the human race in these words:

‘Therefore, 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

God has placed the sentence of death on us because we all sin. Death therefore comes about as a result of disobedience to God's commands.

Pain is not always evil

But it may be asked, could not God have foreseen that mankind would disobey Him and have created us in such a way that we would die without feeling pain? This is a complex issue – more so than most people realise. There are people who do not feel pain, but far from this being a blessing, they have a very serious disadvantage because they don't learn one of the basic needs of life, which is to avoid accidents and other things that cause pain.

Pain is a necessary part of learning in this life. Children who suffer as a result of an accident for example, learn to avoid such accidents. Some pain is also desirable as a warning to us that something is wrong. A severe toothache warns us that the tooth is bad and needs extracting. Without the pain, there would be little or no warning that anything was wrong.

More importantly, if we put our trust in God, pain and suffering are a

necessary part of the development of character. We are told in the epistle to the Hebrews that Christ was made perfect through sufferings (Hebrews 2.10). If we are rightly influenced by suffering when we experience it, it will help to mould our character, as we read again in the epistle to the Hebrews, where, quoting from the Old Testament, the writer says *‘...whom the LORD loves he chastens (disciplines), and scourges every son whom he receives’* (Hebrews 12.6). Adding his own inspired comment, the Apostle wrote:

‘Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it’.

Hebrews 12.11

Don't miss the importance of that last phrase, *‘to those who have been trained by it’*.

God's love shown through suffering

The above statement from the letter to the Hebrews shows that suffering can be a sign of God's love to those who are willing to accept it. God has also promised that although chastening is necessary for His sons and daughters while they have human nature, He will not allow them to be tempted (tested) more than they can

bear (1 Corinthians 10.13). This demonstrates that through suffering, God still loves those who are his true sons and daughters, as a parent loves the child he disciplines.

Natural disasters

Some people are rightly concerned about earthquakes, floods, and hurricanes together with famine in the developing world and similar disasters. Such events seem to strike indiscriminately and ‘innocent’ people including children suffer as a result. Could not a loving God have prevented such tragedies occurring?

These happenings are no doubt a direct result of the changed circumstances that occurred through the sin of our first parents when God placed a curse on the earth, a curse that will not be lifted until God’s kingdom is established (compare Genesis 3.17–19 with Revelation 22.3). The wise man Solomon reminds us of this truth when he wrote:

‘The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise...but time and chance happen to them all. For man also does not know his time: Like fish taken in a cruel net, like birds caught in a snare, so the sons of men are snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them.’
Ecclesiastes 9.11, 12

If God is left out of our lives, He should not be held to account, or His very existence challenged when things go wrong as a result of human error or mistake. Often man brings disasters on himself, either by greed, building in the wrong place, poor maintenance, or other causes. God allows us free will in such matters, so He cannot be blamed when things go wrong.

Suffering caused by war

War is a major cause of suffering, both to the victims and those that love them, but it is brought about by the wickedness of man, despite

A mother and daughter survive the earthquake that completely destroyed their village in Italy in 2016



attempts by some, through the U.N. and other organisations to stop wars. Their efforts are doomed to failure because we are told in the Bible that man is incapable of governing himself satisfactorily. In the letter of James we read these words:

‘Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires... that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain...’

James 4.1, 2

The Apostle James was referring to wars brought about by human lust. But there have been times in the past when God has used war for the furtherance of His plan. This is going to happen again in the future, which we believe to be near, when God will again use war as a judgment on the nations prior to the establishment of His kingdom on the earth.

War will be abolished

God has promised that when Jesus returns and establishes the kingdom of God upon earth, the *‘inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness’* (Isaiah 26.9). This righteousness will prevail over sin and the result will be a time of peace. The words of the prophets of Israel remind us that war will then be a thing of the past. For example Isaiah foretold that in the last days, the days of the future

kingdom of God on earth, *‘Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more’* (Isaiah 2.4).

Then, and only then, will be fulfilled the words of the angels at the birth of Jesus: *‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men!’* (Luke 2.14). The one cannot be fulfilled without the other – there will be no peace on earth until there is glory to God in the highest.

The effect of this will be a lasting peace, as we are told in the same prophecy of Isaiah: *‘The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever’* (Isaiah 32.17). There are many other prophecies in the Scriptures that speak of this future time of peace and prosperity. Jesus, as the future king of the world, has been given the title *‘Prince of Peace’*, and the prophet adds, *‘Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end’* (Isaiah 9.6, 7).

We see that there can be no peace without righteousness (obedience to God). The Bible tells us that

‘the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. “There is no peace”, says my God, “for the wicked”’

Isaiah 57.20,21

This shows us why peace cannot prevail in the present climate of godlessness. The verses we have quoted and others like them, demonstrate that God knows of man's desire for peace and that He has planned for it to happen when Jesus returns as the future king of the whole world.

God's promise to remove all suffering

God plans to rid the earth of sin and death, along with natural disasters, as He told His servant Moses:

'but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD'. Numbers 14.21.

The present situation, where man does what is right in his own eyes, but which is usually wrong in God's eyes, does not fulfil that condition. It will only be attained when God sets up His kingdom over the earth, which He has promised to do through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Without the existence of suffering now, we would never appreciate the freedom from suffering that God has promised to those that love Him.

We are told in the Bible that God will abolish sin, suffering and death, but it will be in His own time and in His own way. The Bible confirms what we know from experience to be true, that man is incapable of making such decisions for we read *'It is not in man*

who walks to direct his own steps' (Jeremiah 10.23).

There will come a time when God will remove the sentence of death, through the work of His dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, a time when there will be no more human suffering and death itself will be no more, as we are told in the last book of the Bible:

'... 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

It is our wish that you with us may be among those who are ready to welcome the *'Prince of Peace'* when he returns from heaven to establish the kingdom of God on earth; to be among the true friends of Jesus in that day.

Editor's note:

We have reproduced this article which originally appeared in *Light* volume 20.2. The writer fell asleep in Christ a few years ago, and rests in hope of a resurrection to eternal life, and a place in the coming kingdom of God.

We know they lived!

50 people from the Bible who have been confirmed by archaeology

There are nearly 3,000 different people mentioned in the Old Testament. Many of them were quite ordinary folk, who we would not expect to leave their mark on the pages of history, but others were emperors, kings and great leaders. More than two thousand years after their story was written, how do we know if they were real people, or just fictitious, legendary figures from Jewish folklore?

First, we need a name, on an inscription of some kind that we know to be genuine and not a forgery. But many people had the same name, as we do today. So, second, we need to know that the geographical location, culture and time period matches the Bible. And third we need to match up at least three specific details of the individual, such as name, father's name, and title (king, priest, builder or scribe etc).

These are the three criteria adopted by Lawrence Mykytiuk in compiling his original list of 50 Bible people confirmed by archaeology, published by the Biblical Archaeological Review in 2014, as shown on the next two pages. These criteria have since been adopted by other scholars in this field. As we might expect with all the

archaeological work that is going on, that list is growing. Including the New Testament, another 23 or so characters are added to the list.

The Bible is so much more than a history book. Unlike many histories that are only of academic interest, Bible history matters. It matters because it testifies to God's hand at work, moving the course of history towards an earth-shaking climax. The characters in the Bible really matter. It matters that king David was indeed a king during a glorious period of Israel's history (see Light Vol 27.1 page 40), because he was an ancestor of Jesus. It matters because he passed on to Jesus the right to the throne over Israel, and because his kingdom looked forward to the coming kingdom of Jesus himself:

'...the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David... and of his kingdom there will be no end.'

Luke 1.32

On the next two pages you will find a chart showing the background, time period and reference for each of 50 OT characters. For the detailed archaeological evidence supporting each name, see the original BAR article.

50 Old Testament people confirmed by archaeology

NAME	who was he?	when? (BC)	Bible reference
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EGYPT

1	Shishak (= Shoshenq I)	pharoah	945 – 924	1 Kings 11.40, etc
2	So (= Orsokon IV)	pharoah	730–715	2 Kings 17.4
3	Tirhakah	pharoah	690–664	2 Kings 19.9, etc
4	Necho II	pharoah	610–595	2 Chronicles 35.20
5	Hophra	pharoah	589–570	Jeremiah 44.30

MOAB

6	Mesha	king	early to mid 9th C	2 Kings 3.4–7
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ARAM-DAMASCUS

7	Hadadezer	king	early 9th C to 844/842	1 Kings 11.23 etc
8	Ben-Hadad	king	844/842	2 Kings 6.24 etc
9	Hazael	king	844/842–c.800	1 Kings 19.15 etc
10	Ben-Hahad	king	early 8th C	2 Kings 13.3 etc
11	Rezin	king	mid 8th C to 732	2 Kings 15.37 etc

NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

12	Omri	king	884–87	1 Kings 16.16 etc
13	Ahab	king	873–852	1 Kings 16.28 etc
14	Jehu	king	842/841–815/814	1 Kings 19.16 etc
15	Joash (= Jehoash)	king	805–790	2 Kings 13.9 etc
16	Jeroboam II	king	790–750/749	2 Kings 13.13 etc
17	Menahem	king	749–738	2 Kings 15.14 etc
18	Pekah	king	750?–732/731	2 Kings 15.25 etc
19	Hoshea	king	732/731–722	2 Kings 15.30 etc
20	Sanballat "I"	governor under Persians	c. mid 5th C	Nehemiah 2.10 etc

SOUTHERN KINGDOM OF JUDAH

21	David	king	c.1010–970	2 Samuel 2.4 etc
22	Uzziah (= Azariah)	king	788/787–736/735	2 Kings 14.21 etc
23	Ahaz	king	742/741–726	2 Kings 15.38 etc
24	Hezekiah	king	726–697/696	2 Kings 16.20 etc
25	Manasseh	king	697/696–642/641	2 Kings 20.21 etc

SOUTHERN KINGDOM OF JUDAH (continued)

26	Hilkiah	high priest	within 640/639–609	2 Kings 22.4 etc
27	Shaphan	scribe under Josiah	within 640/639–609	2 Kings 22.3 etc
28	Azariah	high priest	within 640/639–609	1 Chronicles 5. 36 etc
29	Gemariah	official	within 609–598	Jeremiah 36.10
30	Jehoiachin =Jechoniah/Coniah	king	598–597	2 Kings 24.6 etc
31	Shelemiah	father of Jehucal	late 7th C	Jeremiah 37.3 etc
32	Jehucal (= Jucal)	official	within 597–586	Jeremiah 37.3 etc
33	Pashhur	father of Gedaliah	late 7th C	Jeremiah 38.1
34	Gedaliah	official under Zedekiah	within 597–586	Jeremiah 38.1

ASSYRIA

35	Tiglath-Pileser III (Pul)	king	744–727	2 Kings 15.19 etc
36	Shalmaneser V	king	726–722	2 Kings 17.3 etc
37	Sargon II	king	721–705	Isaiah 20.1
38	Sennacherib	king	704–681	2 Kings 18.13 etc
39	Adrammelech (=Ardamullissu = Arad-mullissu)	son and assassin of Sennacherib	early 7th C	2 Kings 19.37 etc
40	Esarhaddon	king	680–669	2 Kings 19.37 etc

BABYLONIA

41	Merodach-baladan II	king	721–710 and 703	2 Kings 20.12 etc
42	Nebuchadnezzar II	king	604–562	2 Kings 24.1
43	Nebo-Sarsekim	official of Neb II	early 6th C	Jeremiah 39.3
44	Evil-Merodach (= Awel Marduk = Amal Marduch	king	561–560	2 Kings 25.27
45	Belshazzar	son, co-regent of Nabonidus	543?–540	Daniel 5.1

PERSIA

46	Cyrus II ("the Great")	king	559–530	2 Chronicles 36.22
47	Darius I ("the Great")	king	520–486	Ezra 4.5
48	Xerxes I (Ahasuerus)	king	486–465	Esther 1.1 etc
49	Artaxerxes I Longimanus	king	465–425/424	Ezra 4.7 etc
50	Darius II Nothus	king	425/424–405/404	Nehemiah 12.22

COMMENT

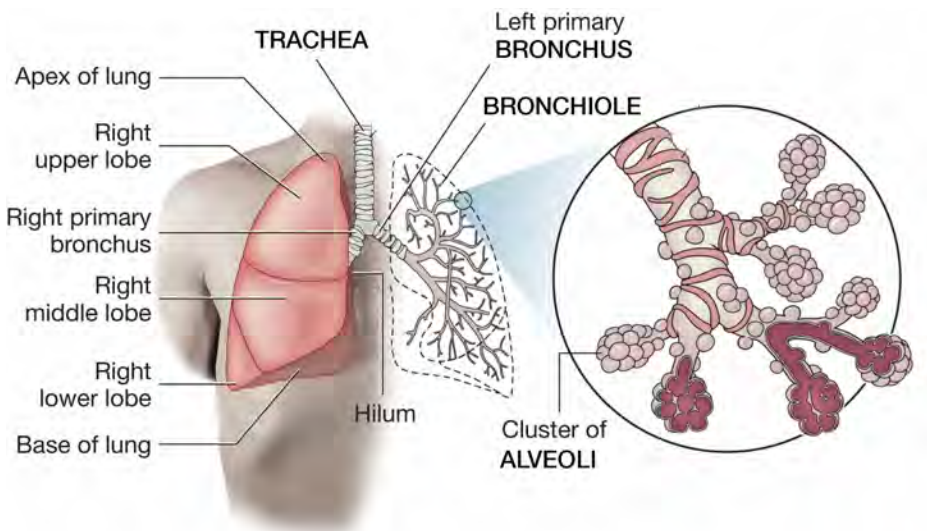
"now take a deep breath..."

‘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

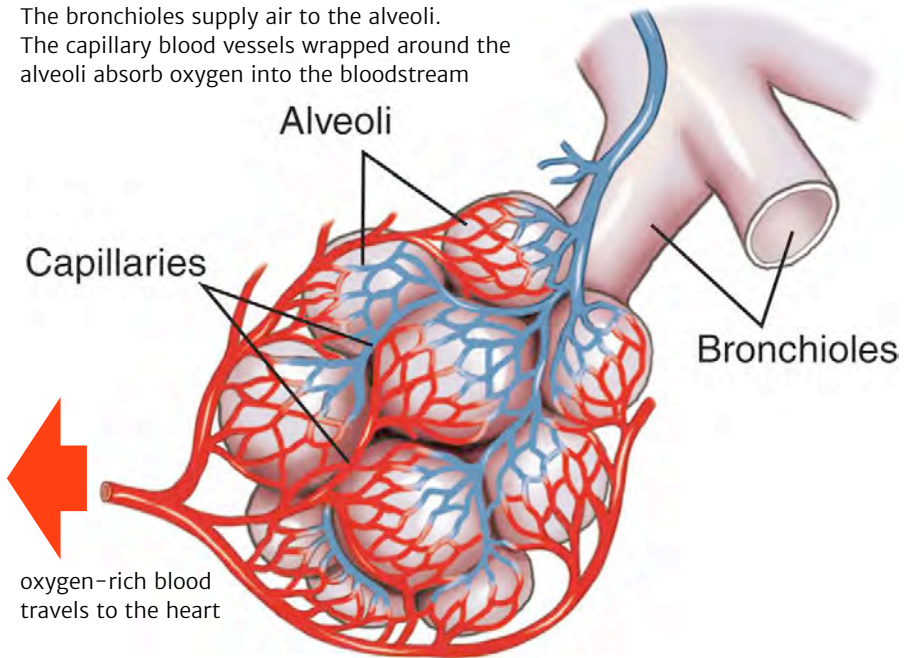
Adam’s chest heaved for the first time – all his vital systems kicked into life – and the story of the human race on this planet began. This Genesis account of creation could hardly be more different to the currently accepted narrative of evolution, which says that humanity is the result of several billion years of unguided accidental change. Can the story of evolution account for the mechanism of breathing that Genesis describes here, and which we now know so much about?

Almost every form of life on earth depends on the oxygen that makes up nearly 21% of the earth’s atmosphere. Each organism has different ways of extracting oxygen from its surroundings, whether air or water. In our case we breathe: the chest expands and air is drawn into the windpipe (**TRACHEA**) and then into the tubes (**BRONCHI**) that feed each lung. Our lungs are packed with smaller and smaller tubes (**BRONCHIOLES**), some of them as thin as a hair, around 30,000 in each lung.



Each bronchiole ends with a small cluster of air sacs called **alveoli**. These are like bunches of tiny grapes or balloons, each covered with minute blood vessels (**capillaries**). It is here that the air finally meets the bloodstream. The oxygen atoms in the air pass through the fine walls of the capillaries (just one cell thick), to join up with iron atoms in the

The bronchioles supply air to the alveoli.
The capillary blood vessels wrapped around the alveoli absorb oxygen into the bloodstream



blood (in a special protein called **haemoglobin**), to be carried around the body to wherever oxygen is needed. There are about 600 million alveoli in the lungs, and the surface area of each of these tiny bubbles adds up to a very large figure indeed – about the size of a tennis court!

The bloodstream has access to this huge area for two different reasons. As we breath **IN**, it absorbs vital oxygen, but as we breath **OUT**, it gives up the waste product of carbon dioxide (CO_2), which it has collected on its journey around the body and which is passed back into the lungs to be expelled.

So we have: **IN**halation: the bloodstream is enriched with oxygen.

EXhalation: The blood gives up its waste CO_2 to be expelled (to be reused by plants in the process of photosynthesis that returns

oxygen to the atmosphere). One circulation system doing two quite different but equally essential tasks.

This system is driven by the heart, which powers both the enriched blood from the lungs to the rest of the body, and the blood returning from its journey around the body to the lungs with its burden of CO₂. These two different blood flows have to be kept separate. So the heart has four chambers, two dealing with the oxygen-rich blood from the lungs, the other two handling the depleted blood returning to the lungs – one pump, two different flows of fluid.

This process is monitored and controlled by a special respiratory centre ([medulla](#)) in the brain stem. This, for example, monitors the level of CO₂ in the bloodstream. CO₂ increases the acidity of the blood; chemical sensors detect this and send a message to the brain, which then increases the depth and speed of breathing, to expel more CO₂ and bring in more oxygen. If the atmosphere contains too little oxygen (for example at high altitude), the body's metabolism slows down to consume as little oxygen as possible, and blood flow to the limbs is redirected to the most critical organs, the brain and the heart.

Most of our bodies' vital functions are carried out automatically and continue without our being aware of them. But breathing is different: we do have voluntary control over it. We can 'take a breath', 'hold our breath', stop breathing altogether. In theory we could end our own lives, but the brain has a failsafe mechanism which kicks in and forces us to breathe. But the ability to control our breathing is vital – it enables us to swim, to talk (have you tried talking whilst you breath in?), to sing, or to play a musical instrument like a flute or trumpet.

The lungs have their own system of healthcare. They produce a liquid called [surfactant](#) (an important component of modern detergents!) which helps to keep the alveoli open. The alveoli contain immune cells called [bacteriophages](#) which deal with infection. Mucus produced in the tubes helps clear pollutants and infected material.

If you have the inclination, the time and an active imagination, maybe you can sit down in your armchair and come up with a way that this respiratory system could have come about by chance over a very long period of time, by a succession of very small accidental changes. But the

result would be fiction, not science. The evidence is entirely missing, and no two people would come up with the same result.

It would be like one of Rudyard Kipling's 'just-so' stories, 'How the elephant got its trunk' for example (see Kipling's own illustration below); the big difference is that Kipling never intended his stories to be taken seriously.



'... the life of the flesh is in the blood' says the Bible (Leviticus 17.11), written three thousand years before William Harvey discovered the circulation of the blood. Surely we stand in humble awe and amazement at this demonstration of our Creator's supreme wisdom and intelligence – we are *'fearfully and wonderfully made'* (Psalm 139.14).

**"let everything that has breath
praise the LORD!"** Psalm 150.6

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Internet: healthline.com/human-body-maps/lung

Roy Toms Norfolk UK

now take a deep breath... 23



from the editor

At the commencement of a new year many people are looking forward to a fresh start, hoping for a better future in the year ahead. However, as I write these words in January 2020 and think about the state of the world, the future for the majority appears very bleak whichever way you look at it.

In the developing world, many millions of people still live in abject poverty. Violent crime is increasing and the rising tide of world-wide terrorism in all its ugliness continues unabated. This brings awful consequences for the people who just happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. The tension in the Middle East is reaching crisis point, threatening to engulf the region in yet another war that could have serious consequences for the whole world.

In the natural world, disasters seem to be gathering pace, with threats from earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, storms, forest fires and flooding. Climate change has become a major issue for world leaders but with little agreement on how to resolve the developing crisis.

One of the consequences of all this turmoil in the world, is that many people suffer and die – victims of human greed, and fanatical adherence to a particular ideology. One of the articles in this issue asks the challenging question – why does God allow suffering? It is a question often posed by those who do not believe in God. The Bible's answer is not acceptable to the majority because it underlines the human condition, the consequence of our sinful state.

This is explained in another article in our continuing series entitled 'Basic Bible Teaching', which reminds us that contrary to the beliefs of many, sin comes from within us and is not the work of the 'devil' or 'satan'. It's important to understand this as a pre-requisite to understanding God's plan of salvation centred in the work of Jesus.

This year we plan to continue with our current series of articles under the title 'Signs of the Times'. The article in this issue picks up on some of things mentioned above – climate change and the rising tensions in the Middle East. Jesus said to some of his contemporaries '*...You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times*' (Matthew 16.3). But what did Jesus mean?

These religious leaders wanted to see a sign from heaven to prove that Jesus was their Messiah, the one he claimed to be. If they had understood and believed the words of the Old Testament prophets, they would have recognised him and believed that he was the promised Messiah. But they rejected him and suffered the consequences not many years later. Their world came to an end in AD 70 as Jesus foretold, when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the remaining Jews were dispersed throughout the Roman Empire (Luke 21.20–24).

The prophets of Israel foretold the events that would herald the return of Jesus and Jesus confirmed their words. He told his disciples about the ‘signs’ that would herald his return to establish the kingdom of God on earth: *‘distress of nations with perplexity... men’s hearts failing them for fear...’* This is a good description of our world today, but Jesus didn’t leave it there. He then said: *‘... they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory’* (Luke 21.25–27).

The point is that, 2,000 years later, in a world that seems to be without much hope, the Bible can give us comfort, assurance and hope for the future. This hope is that all that is wrong with this present world will be put right at the return of Jesus Christ. God has promised that *‘all the earth*

shall be filled with the glory of the LORD’ (Numbers 14.21).

The Prophet Daniel predicted *‘a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time’* (Daniel 12.2). These changes will not only affect the way men and women behave towards each other, but the natural world will be changed as well, and the threats to our very existence on this planet posed by natural disasters will be a thing of the past.

There are many amazing word pictures in the Bible which describe this future for our planet. Even the most inhospitable places on earth will be changed beyond recognition: *‘...the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose... waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water’* (Isaiah 35.1,6,7).

When Jesus spoke to his disciples, he urged them to carefully observe the signs so they would be ready when the time of trouble came, and this is the message for the disciples of Jesus today. Are you preparing for that time of great change? The Bible tells us what we need to do now to be ready for the return of Jesus – but don’t leave it for another day, for Jesus said it will come unexpectedly for the majority – and then it will be too late.



Last time we began the article with some words from the prophecy of Daniel which describe a time when men *'will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay'* (Daniel 2.43). We said this will describe the state of the world just before Jesus returns to establish God's kingdom on earth (Daniel 2.44).

In the time between the last article and this one, is this still the case? Does it still feel like nobody can agree with anybody else over anything much at all? I believe this inability to reach agreement over contentious issues, is very much a common thread that runs through so much of what's going on in our world right now. If anything, it has become worse! In this article the focus is on two broad issues that in themselves have many sub-issues. Two particularly memorable expressions encapsulate the issues one by one and they can stand as headings respectively.

“How dare you!”

“You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words. And yet I'm one of the lucky ones. People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction, and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!”

These words were part of an impassioned speech that the teenage Swedish activist, Greta Thunberg, gave to the UN climate summit in late September last year. Her words were very blunt and did not go down well with some people. Her primary message here, and elsewhere was not to listen to her, but to the scientists. The climate change issue is on the world's agenda with some action happening, but the expert consensus so far is that the action to date simply isn't enough.

In this regard it was interesting to read on BBC Online, an item from November 6 last year entitled 'Climate change: "Clear and unequivocal" emergency, say scientists.' The article said: 'A global group of around 11,000 scientists have endorsed research that says the world is facing a climate emergency. The study, based on 40 years of data on a range of measures, says governments are failing to address the crisis. Without deep and lasting changes, the world is facing 'untold human suffering' the study says.'

2019 seems to me to have seen the issue of climate change elevated to mainstream discussion. Literally as I write this (November 4th 2019), the news came through that the US has

filed the paperwork to the United Nations today to begin the one-year process of leaving the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. The reason stated for beginning the withdrawal process was that the agreement placed an 'unfair economic burden' on the US, the world's largest economy and not surprisingly a major contributor to pollution.

You may recall that the original agreement was signed by almost 200 nations. Whilst largely symbolic it was nevertheless significant. Each country provided its own goals to curb emissions of heat-trapping gases that lead to climate change. It's future and efficacy minus the US doesn't seem very certain!

My main interest in all this is to assess whether it's a sign in our times. How exact the science is, how over-blown or conversely under-blown the threat is, whether the huge and growing movement for change will be successful or not, all these questions I don't have to answer. And I can't! This is adding to the existing turmoil in most societies today which, in my view is a sign itself. It lines up with the unstable state of affairs, predicted so well by the composition of the feet, in the image described in Daniel chapter two, with its incompatible elements of iron and

Greta Thunberg, TIME magazine's 'Person of the Year 2019'



clay. As we have noted before, a common theme across an astonishingly wide range of current events is sharply divided opinion and an inability to compromise, to reach any kind of consensus.

The words of Jesus in the Mount Olivet prophecy are very relevant to this situation:

'And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.'

Luke 21.25-29

It's easy to see '*men's hearts failing them from fear*' over the climate change issue. And if that doesn't make you afraid there's still many other issues to fear – terrorism, war, environmental damage and deterioration – to name just a few. Will humankind fix these things? I think not. But I believe Jesus will, when he returns.

“They didn't help us with Normandy”

These words formed part of President Trump's explanation for withdrawing US forces from near the border between Syria and Turkey. The heading comes from an odd historical parallel he used, as he defended his decision to pull US support from Kurdish fighters allied to America in northern Syria. This would have left them vulnerable to the Turkish offensive that began immediately after the US withdrawal. 'They're fighting for their land,' Mr. Trump said of the Kurds. 'And as somebody wrote in a very, very powerful article today, they didn't help us in the Second World War. They didn't help us with Normandy, as an example.'

The Kurds are a distinct ethnic group, the majority of whom live in the Middle East, in parts of three countries – Syria, Iraq and Turkey. They are the largest stateless ethnic group in the world. A little history is needed here. In the carve-up of the Ottoman Empire after World War 1 by the UK and France, the Kurds were intended to get a state in northern Syria and Iraq and southern Turkey. It didn't happen. Since that time all three countries where most Kurds live, have a history of mistreating them. This has been especially so in Turkey, with such a violent and long-

standing rebellion by many Kurds there, to the degree that they are regarded as a terrorist group by Turkey and the US.

However, as a result of the chaos in Syria, the Kurds in northern Syria had been able to form a small 'virtual' state. This was right on the border of Turkey, much to the strong disapproval of that state, which claims with some truth that Syrian Kurds are associated with Kurdish terrorists in Turkey. The Kurds in northern Syria however had been supported by the US (a Turkish ally!), mainly because they were able and willing to fight and eventually defeat the so-called Islamic State (ISIS). In fact, they lost 11,000 soldiers in achieving this.

Kurds surround US troops in protest as they withdraw from Syria

This brief summary brings us up to current events. In October 2019 President Trump suddenly decided to cease US support for the Kurds in northern Syria and withdrew US forces. Turkey immediately invaded the area to establish, they claimed, a 'buffer zone' to protect their country from Kurdish incursions.

The result was yet more tragedy in the Middle East. More displaced people and the horrors that so often accompany war. But why am I especially interested? Sadly, there's no shortage of wars in this troubled world and indeed even in the Middle East. My strong interest is because this has altered the balance of power in the Middle East in ways that are still being determined. But there's more. The cover of 'The Economist' magazine of October 19th-25th, 2019



sums up another aspect of my interest brilliantly! The heading reads 'Who can trust Trump's America? The consequences of betraying the Kurds'.

Let's pull all this together. We have noted before the critical role the US plays in the continuing existence of the State of Israel. Many questions are being asked about US support in general, including in Israel. We pose the question – will the US be unable, unwilling, or perhaps both, to support Israel when they are catastrophically invaded at 'the time of the end'? It's a scenario that not very long ago would have seemed unlikely. But now, perhaps not so much.

In fact, just such an invasion of Israel is clearly described in the Bible. Read Ezekiel 38, a chapter well known as describing what many call the 'end times'. Verse 16 is one of several that describes this. *'You will come up against my people Israel like a cloud, to cover the land...'* (Ezekiel 38.16).

It's fascinating for a watcher of the signs to see the Middle East dividing into Northern and Southern opposing camps. Israel is aligned with the Southern one. At the same time US influence, at least in the Northern camp, is now so diminished it is virtually non-existent. But there is a country that has taken over the role

of outside influence. That country is Russia. As the US left the Kurds to their fate, the BBC quoted Russian newspapers: 'Trump's reckless actions strengthened Moscow's position in Middle East'. There's so much to watch here!

Conclusion

Last time I wrote that I feel blessed that I don't have to be anxious about the terrible things that are happening in our world. God is in control. Jesus will return. The second last verse in the Bible says it all for me!

'He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!'

Revelation 22:20

As I write this article, I feel this even more! I hope for all our sakes He will return soon, but I know it will happen in God's good time. As the Apostle Paul told the men of Athens:

'... he (God) has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man he has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all, by raising him from the dead'

Acts 17:31

David Gamble
Melbourne, Australia



from our mailbag

A question has been asked about the historical authenticity of the book of Daniel, contending that prophecies contained in the book must have been written after the event or were interpreted retrospectively.

Who was Daniel?

The first step in answering this question is to recognise that Daniel was an Old Testament prophet and there is no question that he existed. As a Jew, he was taken into exile to Babylon around 600 BC and lived to see the Babylonian empire give way to the Medes and Persians.

He is referred to in the Old Testament by the prophet Ezekiel, who also lived in exile in Babylon and was contemporary with him (Ezekiel 14.14). Also, the narrative clearly fits in with the Babylonian period, as one French archaeologist put it:

‘The colouring of the narrative is exactly Babylonian. The details of

the manners and customs of the Babylonian court are given with an exactitude remarkably confirmed by the monuments, which no writer in Palestine of the 3rd or 2nd century BC could have possibly attained.’
(François Lenormant 1837-1883)

In addition, the ‘Septuagint’ translation of the Hebrew Old Testament contained the book of Daniel. This was completed in the 2nd Century BC and was the Greek version commonly in use at the time of Jesus.

Daniel is mentioned by Jesus in the New Testament. In the Mount Olivet prophecy, he quoted Daniel foretelling the future destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. This occurred some 40 years later in AD 70, under Titus the Roman General. He warned his disciples:

“‘Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand) “then let those in Judea flee to the mountains””

Matthew 24.15,16

Clearly Jesus was referring his hearers to Daniel's words in chapter 11. This chapter contains a detailed prophecy of the struggle between the dominant kings (described as the king of the North and the king of the South) from Daniel's time onwards: *'...forces will be mustered by him (the king of the North), and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation'* (Daniel 11.31).

This means that a prediction made by the prophet Daniel was still unfulfilled at the time of Jesus, in the 1st Century AD. It was eventually fulfilled, following a Jewish revolt, when the Romans captured Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, and took the Jews which were left into slavery.

Nebuchadnezzar's image

In the second chapter of Daniel there is an amazing prophecy about four world empires that would have a huge impact on the ancient world, and particularly on the land of Israel and its people. The chapter records a king's dream about an image made of different metals. Babylon is identified as the head of gold in verse 38, and it was Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon who Daniel was speaking to.

This empire, as history records, was followed by the Medo-Persian



Babylon as the prophet Daniel may have seen it

empire, then Greece, and the fourth empire was Rome. But there was not to be a fifth dominant empire after Rome. The Roman empire developed into eastern and western parts, depicted by the legs of the image, and they were still the dominant power long after the 1st Century AD. Its breakup after the 4th Century AD into divided nations struggling against each other, reflects the instability of the iron and clay feet of the image.

Because the Biblical detail is so remarkable, and history confirms all the facts, it is thought by some that such long-range predictions could not possibly have been made by a man, and that, of course, is true. As Daniel himself said, no human mind could reveal to the king his dream, let alone its meaning: *'But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days'* (Daniel 2.28).

The other more detailed prophecies concerning these empires can be identified in chapters 5, 7, 8 and 9 and indeed, the whole book of Daniel is well worth reading carefully.

Bible prophecy gives us confidence

The accuracy of the fulfilment of the details of the prophecy should not lead us to question whether these writings were put together after the event, or question whether historical facts were used afterwards to fit the prophecy. But rather it should fill us with wonder at the amazing accuracy of Bible prophecies, of which there are many. This in turn gives us every confidence that the Bible is inspired by God, and His words are always fulfilled in every detail.

Of course, the most exciting aspect of Daniel's prophecies are the statements predicting events which are still future. Daniel foretold that after the breakup of the Roman Empire the kingdoms of our world would continue to contain strong and weak nations, but no single over-ruling power. Above all, the next phase will be the establishment of God's worldwide empire on earth at the return of Jesus. Jerusalem, the city that the Romans destroyed, will then become the centre of government for the kingdom of God on earth. As Daniel told King Nebuchadnezzar:

'...the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed...'

Daniel 2.44

The Apostle Peter asks us to consider prophecy carefully and positively because it comes from God for a purpose and has a vital message for all generations:

'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

Correspondence secretary

Editor's note:

The special issue 'Light on Bible Prophecy' contains more detail about the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Please send a request to the correspondence secretary if you would like a free copy (see inside back cover for details).

BIBLE SYMBOLS

One of the powerful and illustrative ways in which the Bible communicates its message and teaching is by using metaphors and symbolism. The 'centre-pin' of the Bible's message and teaching is the salvation of mankind through the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, we are not surprised to find that Jesus himself used symbolism to enrich people's understanding of who he was and why he was sent.

Who is Jesus reaching out to?

Jesus was born into the world with the purpose of saving sinners (Matthew 1.21). Unsurprisingly, many of the people who gave time to listen to him were the poor and lowly; those worn down by life and those in search of hope and relief in their struggles. Jesus was apt to use language and comparisons that would be simple to understand, yet powerful in what they communicated.

On one occasion, when Jesus was preaching to the masses and healing the sick, they were so enthralled with him that they followed him part way up a mountain. The people gathered there were hungry, and he asked his disciples where

The Bread of Life

they could buy bread for them all. The disciples replied that they couldn't possibly afford to buy enough bread for such a large crowd. Jesus then prayed to his Father, after which the disciples discovered that the food they had (five barley loaves and two small fish) was miraculously increased and could be shared out amongst the thousands who were there.

The following day Jesus had mysteriously gone from the presence of the people, but when they eventually found him, he said to them:

'Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.' John 6.26



Perpetual hunger

We humans are often led by our stomachs and compelled by physical hunger. In Genesis, Adam was told:

‘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 3.19

In this one verse our demise is settled; the thin slice of time between birth and death will be sustained by hard-gained bread. This is the first time, right back in Genesis, where bread is used symbolically (used here to represent food in general). The ancestor of mankind was told that bread was merely a temporary substance to maintain a temporary life until we return to the ground and to the dust from which Adam was made.

The people in John Chapter 6 were following Jesus, not for their spiritual fulfilment, but to satisfy their physical needs (he relieved their hunger with bread). This is where Jesus stunned them (and us) with a deeper truth, when he said to them:

“Do not labour for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set his seal on him.” Then they

said to him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?” Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he sent.””

John 6.27-29

Belief in Jesus

There is a lovely contrast between Jesus’ answer and the labour-based decree of Genesis 3.19. Jesus said that the work of God (as opposed to man’s work in producing food) is simply to believe in Jesus. That’s it! Believe in Jesus. However, the people, still feeling a bit insecure, asked him:

‘What sign will you perform then, that we may see it and believe you? What work will you do? Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, “He gave them bread from heaven to eat.”’

John 6.30,31

They were referring to the time when their forefathers were led by Moses (who was led by God) out of their captivity in Egypt to escape into the desert wilderness. Once free, the people fretted about not having anything to eat, so God provided them with manna. *‘Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its colour like the colour of bdellium’* (Numbers 11.7). This is what they were referring to when they said to Jesus: *‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’* And here they were asking Jesus for a

similar sign – a miraculous gesture to make it easier for them to believe. But Jesus had already performed miracles. Instead, he enlightened them concerning the bread that was provided to the Israelites in the wilderness:

“... Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world”. Then they said to him, “Lord, give us this bread always.”“

John 6.32-34

The people were right to express their eagerness for ‘*this bread always*’ but they only half understood what Jesus was getting at. Then he said to them very plainly:

‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst’

John 6.35

Again, he said:

‘And this is the will of him who sent me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day’

John 6.40

By the use of a metaphor (a figure of speech), Jesus plants a powerful

description of himself in the people’s minds; one they can understand. He is like bread that satisfies hunger and gives life; but not everyday humdrum mortal life. It is a deeper, more fulfilling, everlasting life; a life made immune to age and decay and a life that is washed clean of sin.

The living bread

The way to obtain this special life is through the process of receiving and eating this special bread. Later in this same chapter, Jesus makes it very clear:

‘Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in me has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die.

I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.’

John 6.47-51

The symbolism in these verses is even more illuminating. Not only does Jesus evoke the imagery of himself being ‘*the living bread*’, but also of us eating it, and furthermore, the bread is his flesh.

Are we to be cannibals?

Of course not – it is in keeping with the metaphor. Jesus describes himself as *‘the living bread’* and he is saying that if we consume this living bread, which means consuming his flesh, our bodies will become everlasting living bodies. So how do we consume his metaphorical flesh?

As he said, he gave his flesh, meaning he sacrificed it through his death on the cross. ‘Consuming it’ means acknowledging and believing that the sacrifice was made, understanding its significance and regularly remembering it. These all describe intellectual processes of the mind. But what about some sort of physical enactment that might allow us to really feel like we have consumed his flesh and feel like we have shared in *‘the living bread’* that he is?

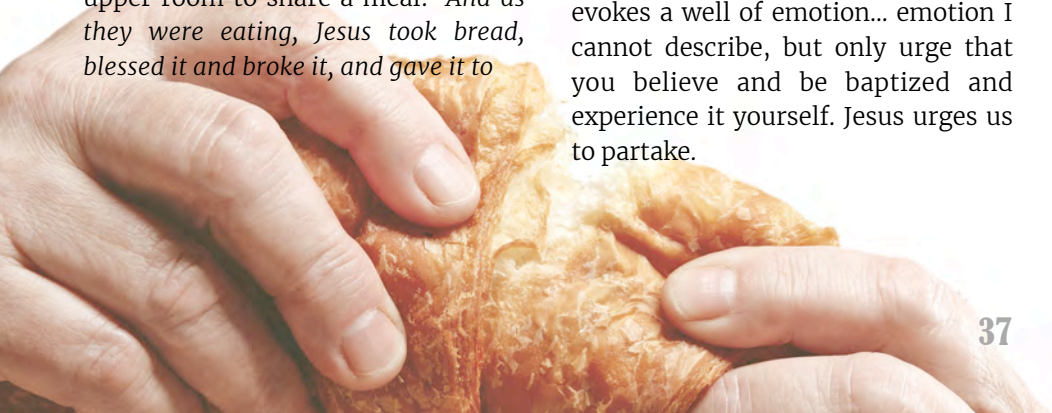
The memorial bread

Jesus carried out a symbolic act which also involves eating real bread. The night before he was going to sacrifice his body on the cross, he gathered his disciples together in an upper room to share a meal: *‘And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to*

the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is my body”’ (Matthew 26.26). This is the memorial activity he wants us to regularly perform, along with drinking wine to symbolize his blood, as a way of partaking of him, *‘the living bread’*. And it’s a beautifully simple construction that appeals to our senses.

We have already referred to the visual imagery, but bread also has an appetizing smell. It has a tactile feel when you gently break a piece off, and of course it has a taste, a wholesome taste. But the metaphor goes even further. It involves a sense of motion, of chewing and swallowing, allowing time for the process of remembrance and appreciation. Then follows ingestion, taking this physical bread into our physical body. We are symbolically taking everything Christ stood for into our hearts and minds. In this way we can share true fellowship with him and the Father.

And the final sense that this symbolic action induces is emotion. The whole process *“take, eat, this is my body”* evokes a well of emotion... emotion I cannot describe, but only urge that you believe and be baptized and experience it yourself. Jesus urges us to partake.



Jesus calls to all of us as he did the people who listened to his words:

“... Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven – not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.”

John 6.53-58

On another occasion, when the disciples asked Jesus how they should pray, he taught them a prayer that included the words ‘*Give us day by day our daily bread*’ (Luke 11.3).

Our Father in heaven blesses us by providing our daily food; but He blesses us even more with ‘*the living bread*’ of His Son, which we can meditate upon every day and so look forward to a wonderful and everlasting future when he returns to establish the kingdom of God.

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We believe that over the centuries the original message of Christianity has been corrupted. Light is published to provide a better understanding of the true Christian hope.

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A still life photograph of a wooden table. In the upper left, a white ceramic pitcher is pouring a dark red liquid, likely wine, into a small, light-colored ceramic bowl. To the left of the bowl, a light-colored plate holds three round, golden-brown bread rolls. In the foreground, a piece of light-colored, textured fabric (possibly a napkin) holds two pieces of bread, one of which is broken in half. The background is a dark, solid color.

Light

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