

# Light

...on a new world

Volume 30.3

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

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- \* *Signs of the Times*
- \* *Alexander and the Greek Empire*

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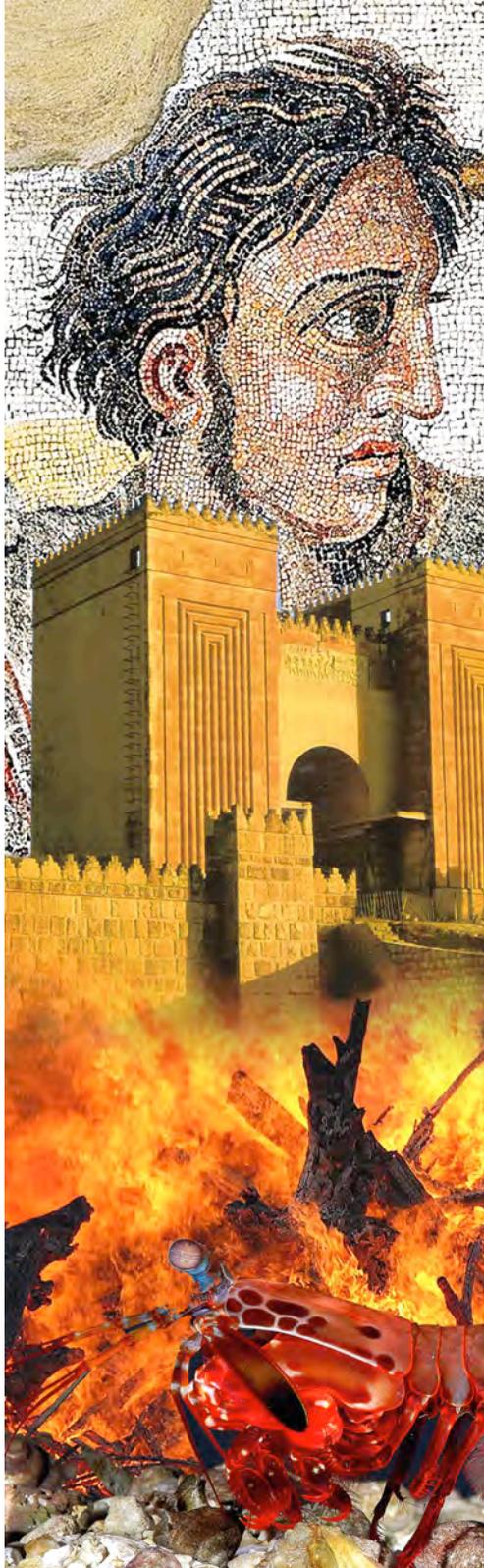
Alexander and the  
Greek Empire

## cover picture

Vats of dye for dyeing leather in Fez,  
Morocco. See article on baptism, page 3

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# Baptism

Jesus Christ was not the first to preach baptism for his followers:

‘In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near” ...

People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan.

Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.’

Matthew 3.1,5,6 NIV

Jesus himself was baptized by John ‘to fulfil all righteousness’ (Matthew 3,15). This gives us an indication of the importance Jesus himself placed on it. It was later confirmed by Jesus’ instructions to his disciples before his ascension into heaven:

“Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”

Mark 16.15,16 NIV

If Jesus himself placed such importance on the act of baptism, we should look carefully at what it means to be baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must decide if it is important to us as well in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

This yarn has been plunged into a vat of indigo dye until completely covered and transformed. This is the meaning of the original Greek word for baptize which was used in the dyeing industry.

## What is baptism?

The Greek word for baptism is 'baptizo', meaning 'to dip' or 'to plunge'. This word was particularly used in relation to the dyeing of cloth and described the action of plunging the cloth into the liquid dye. A complete covering through total immersion is required, as without it the dyeing process would be incomplete.

The Bible's many recorded examples of baptisms clearly show that complete immersion was the way taught by the First Century apostles and not a sprinkling of water, as taught and practiced by many established churches today. The sprinkling of either infants or adults is not supported in the Bible.

Two examples from the New Testament confirm this. Firstly, the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch by Philip. This is described as follows:

**'Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away.'**

Acts 8.38,39 NIV

Secondly, the Apostle John recorded that John the Baptist was '*baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water*' (John 3.23 NIV). The going '*down into*', and coming '*up out of the water*', coupled with the need

for '*plenty of water*' are all consistent with total immersion and not with a sprinkling of a few drops of water on the head.

## Who should be baptized?

Those who were baptized by the apostles, did so only after understanding and believing the gospel. The Ethiopian eunuch is a clear example of this. He had been reading the prophecy of Isaiah (see Isaiah 53.7,8) but did not understand the passage he studied. The result was that:

**'Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God".'**

Acts 8.35-37

It was only then that he and Philip went down into the water, that is after Philip had heard his declaration of faith and belief.

A second example from the book of Acts is that of the terrified jailer in Philippi. This followed the dramatic earthquake that had opened the doors of the prison where Paul and Silas were, and loosed the prisoners'

chains. Believing that all had escaped, the jailer was prepared to kill himself until assured by Paul that all the prisoners were still inside. He then ran to Paul and Silas with the question: “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household.” Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house...then immediately he and all his family were baptized’ (Acts 16.30–33 NIV).

The words of Jesus ‘Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved’ set out the required order of events. Belief must come first but this cannot apply in the case of infant baptism, as there can be no knowledge, let alone belief, by an infant. Baptism is, therefore, only appropriate for those who understand and believe the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection and his promised return to the earth to establish the kingdom of God. This was shown by those who believed in Samaria:

‘But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.’ Acts 8.12 NIV

## **What does baptism mean?**

The importance of baptism by total immersion is made much clearer if we understand its significance and symbolism. Peter, on the day of

Pentecost, taught the crowd in Jerusalem about Jesus’ death and resurrection. When the crowd understood their role in crucifying the Son of God, their Saviour, their consciences were pricked and they appealed to the apostles, ‘...“Brothers, what shall we do?” Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins”...’ (Acts 2.37,38 NIV). The Apostle Paul wrote to the baptized believers at Ephesus and underlined Peter’s words: ‘In him (Jesus Christ) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace’ (Ephesians 1.7 NIV).

In bringing these two examples together, we see that baptism in the name of Jesus Christ identifies us with the redemption and forgiveness of sins that he achieved through his death and resurrection. Paul confirmed this relationship through baptism in his letter to the believers at Rome:

‘...don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.’

Romans 6.3,4 NIV

The victory over sin and death won by Jesus and the hope of eternal life he offers to all, is made a reality only through association with him by baptism. In the same way that Jesus died and rose again, being ‘buried with him’ through total immersion in water, we die to sin and rise to a new life. Paul continued:

**‘If we have been united with him (Jesus) like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin – because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.**

**Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.’**

Romans 6.5–8 NIV

Baptism is also a symbolic washing away of past sins. Paul, in recounting his dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus, was subsequently instructed by Ananias: ‘*And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away*’ (Acts 22.16 NIV). Paul wrote to those at Corinth: ‘*But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ...*’ (1 Corinthians 6.11 NIV).

## **What does baptism achieve?**

The Apostle Paul told the believers that ‘*...all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ... If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise*’ (Galatians 3.27,29 NIV). To be baptized is to put on Christ like a garment, to identify oneself with his saving work, and to become related to Abraham and the promises God made to him.

We have noted that belief is essential before baptism, but there must also be a change of heart. Before being baptized, the believer must recognise that his or her life up to that point, had been in service to the natural self with its human desires and selfishness. The change of heart is a new determination, not to serve sin but to serve righteousness. As Paul wrote to the Romans:

**‘Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin...but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.’** Romans 6.12,13 NIV

The result of this change of heart is made clear once again by Paul: ‘*But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the*

*benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord’.*

(Romans 6.22,23 NIV)

## **Is baptism essential?**

It may be argued that there are many people who lead peaceful, upright, generous, and God-fearing lives for whom baptism is not necessary. However, the Bible is very clear in its teaching that the only way to salvation is through belief and baptism. The book of Acts tells us about Cornelius, a Roman Centurion, and a man of whom it is written: *‘He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly’* (Acts 10.2 NIV). An angel appeared to Cornelius while he prayed and instructed him to send for the Apostle Peter, as his prayers and gifts to the poor had been remembered by God.

Peter, on arriving at the house of Cornelius preached the gospel to all the household, concluding with the words: *“All the prophets testify about him (Jesus) that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name...Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water?”* (Acts 10.43,47 NIV). Then Cornelius and all his family were baptized. Although God had heard the prayers of Cornelius and noticed his

treatment of the poor, God required him to be baptized to receive the opportunity of salvation that God offers to all.

Baptism as taught in the Scriptures, is a very simple act of obedience, as Jesus himself demonstrated when he approached John to be baptized (Matthew 3.15). God requires obedience from us and the demonstration of humility and subjection to His will, through a willingness to follow the example of Jesus.

Baptism is the only way in which we can become related to Jesus Christ and his saving work; to have the opportunity to receive the gift of eternal life that God has offered to those that truly love and obey Him. As Jesus told Nicodemus, there is no other way to obtain a place in the kingdom of God (John 3.3-5).

To be baptized into the name of Jesus Christ is to associate oneself with his death, resurrection and above all his victory over sin. The instruction of Jesus is undeniably clear:

**‘Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.’**

Mark 16.16 NIV

Haydn Perfitt  
Norfolk, England



The south quay at Great Yarmouth in 1933 when the fishing industry was still flourishing

## *Escape from Great Yarmouth*

My home in Norfolk (UK) is not far from the coastal town of Great Yarmouth. The estuary of the river Yare gives the town a fine natural harbour, and it was once an important centre for the North Sea herring fishing industry. Daniel Defoe, writing about his travels in the early eighteenth century, was impressed; it was, he said ‘for wealth, trade and advantage of its situation, infinitely superior to Norwich’, with ‘the finest quay in England, if not in Europe’.

Times change. Today, the port services North Sea gas platforms and wind farms, and the town has several

attractions as a seaside resort, including a well-known Sea Life Centre (an impressive collection of marine life in an aquatic environment).

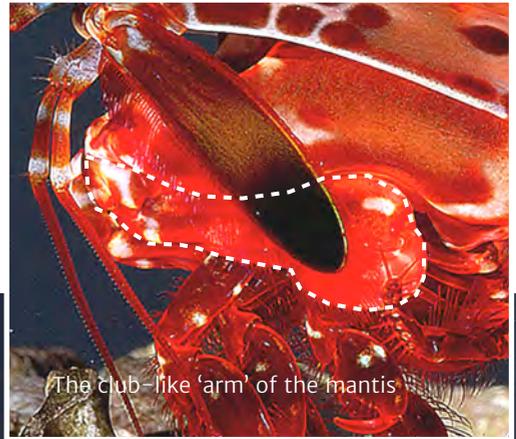
In 1999 the Great Yarmouth Sea Life Centre enjoyed a brief moment of fame when one of its ‘residents’ escaped. The culprit was a shrimp, a 10cm (4 inch) peacock mantis shrimp (*odontodactylus scyllarus*) which literally punched its way through the ¼ inch thick plate glass of its aquarium. It is now believed to have the strongest ‘punch’ of any known living thing. It is a superb example of specialised engineering design in the

animal kingdom and is described by Marcos Eberlin in his recent book 'Foresight' (see reference at the end of this article).

Just below its head, the mantis has two short appendages or 'arms', each with a broad club-like head, which it uses to smash the shells of crabs and other animals on which it preys. The numbers are impressive: high speed photography shows the club reaching a speed of 50 miles an hour in less than 800 milliseconds, generating a force close to 2,500 times the mantis' own bodyweight. I weigh nearly 100 kg. If I were a mantis shrimp I could land a punch of 250 tonnes – the expression 'punching above one's weight' hardly seems adequate! The club strikes with the force of a .22 calibre rifle bullet, and even ¼ inch plate glass doesn't stand a chance.

The big danger is of course that in launching a blow of such power, the mantis will do itself serious damage. The club which administers the punch is made of a very special material, a bonelike crystalline structure capable of absorbing pressures of up to four billion pascals, better than comparable man-made ceramics fired at very high temperatures. It is also wrapped in other fibres to minimise the chances of cracking.

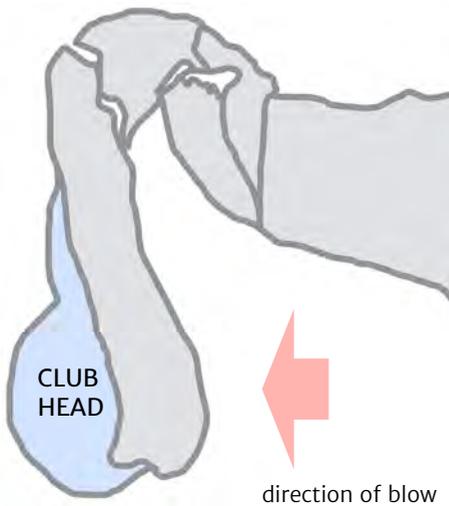
But the key to the power of the mantis strike is not in a collection of



The club-like 'arm' of the mantis

The mantis shrimp about life size





The swinging arm geometry of the mantis' club

details, but in the master concept behind it. The concept is to build up a store of energy, hold it very briefly in reserve and then release it all at once, explosively and destructively. The arm of the mantis has something like a ratchet mechanism allowing it to be locked in the closed position, whilst the muscle that drives the arm is tensioned up to its maximum. Then a release mechanism instantaneously unlocks the ratchet and the arm straightens out with explosive force. A small saddle-like spring acts with the muscle to give the motion an extra 'kick', accelerating it at over 10,000 g-forces at the right moment. The closest human example is perhaps the crossbow (see photo on

right), where the string is drawn back, sometimes by a hand-wound winch mechanism, placing the steel bow under extreme tension, and then locked in position. On releasing the trigger, all the energy stored in the tensioned bow is instantly released, sending the bolt towards its target.

Humans have been designing and making things for thousands of years – it is part of the unique creativity of the human race. Crossbows have been around since the time of the Greeks; mechanical hammers of various kinds have been part of the Industrial Revolution of the past two hundred years. We know how these things are designed, the intelligence and skill that goes into them, the importance of the initial concept which drives the development of all the details. Evolution does not have concepts; it has no foresight or planning, only the throw of the dice. Based simply on our own knowledge and experience, the idea that the mantis shrimp's astonishing artillery came about by accident, without any original concept or target or guidance, is irrational. The only reason to believe it is that the alternative is unthinkable. And that's not a good reason, it's a very bad one.



A modern crossbow ready to fire

We have come a long way from Great Yarmouth, but the journey is important. Eberlin's book (see right) concludes with this quotation from J.J.Thomson, one of the greats of modern physics and a Nobel Prize winner. From his viewpoint in the early twentieth century he could foresee the ever-expanding fields of modern scientific discovery:

**'As we conquer peak after peak we see in front of us regions full of interest and beauty... in the distance tower still higher peaks, which will yield to those who ascend them still wider prospects, and deepen the feeling, the truth of which is emphasised by every advance in science, that Great are the Works of the Lord.'**

REFERENCE:

'Foresight – how the Chemistry of Life Reveals Planning and Purpose' by Marcos N. Eberlin, 2019.

DiscoveryInstitutePress.com/foresight. Marcos Eberlin is a member of the Brazilian Academy of Sciences and former president of the International Mass Spectrometry Laboratory.

**Roy Toms**  
Norfolk UK

## BASIC BIBLE TEACHING

# Jesus Christ

### definitions

**JESUS:** Greek name, equivalent to Hebrew name 'Joshua', meaning 'Yahweh is salvation'.

**CHRIST:** Greek name 'Christos', equivalent to Hebrew word 'Messiah' meaning 'anointed'.

**JESUS OF NAZARETH:** alternative title; Nazareth was the town in which Jesus grew up.

### The biblical record

The work of Jesus Christ is recorded in the Gospels, the first four books of the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. But the foretelling of his life and his future work is spread throughout the Bible. Indeed Jesus Christ is the hub of the entire Biblical narrative, the focal point of God's purpose with the earth and mankind.

### The Old Testament promise of Messiah

The prophets wrote consistently of the future advent of the Messiah. The concept is first outlined in Genesis chapter 3 which tells us how sin was introduced into the world. The curse on the serpent for its deception contains the first promise of the Messiah (see Genesis 3.14,15). In simple terms, sin, represented by the serpent, would eventually be destroyed by a specially born male – called the seed (offspring) of the woman.

In summary: Jesus would suffer a bruising of the heel (a temporary wound). In so doing he would bruise the head of the serpent (a fatal wound). The prophets foretold that the Messiah would eventually be born and live among his people. His mission was to teach ordinary people the need to repent of their sins, which alienate men and women from God (read Jesus' words in Matthew 9. 13, Mark 2.17 and Luke 5.32).

## **Jesus' birth**

The birth of Jesus came about by miraculous means because he was to be the Son of God. He is never referred to anywhere in the Bible (Old or New Testaments) as 'God the Son'. He was also the fulfilment of promises to key Old Testament characters like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and King David. There are numerous passages that reflect this but read 2 Samuel 7.12 – 16. Also read Galatians chapter 3 where the Apostle Paul has a lot to say on this topic.

## **His once for all sacrifice**

The prophets state the Messiah (Christ) would bring about, through the sacrifice of his own life, a means of reconciliation to God for all people, if they individually recognise him and repent of their sins. Jesus Christ, therefore, in his own life and death, made a once and for all perfect sacrifice for sin. The sacrifices of the Old Testament under the Law of Moses pointed forward to this. God promised that through Christ's perfect obedience to His will, he would be raised from the dead to immortality. Read Isaiah chapter 53 which foretells Christ's suffering, death and resurrection.

## **His three-fold mission**

Jesus Christ is often referred to as 'prophet, priest and king'. This description does not appear in the Bible, but there are considerable references to those three things as key components of his work. The Pharisees were afraid to take action against him during his ministry because they feared the people, who recognised him as a prophet (Matthew 21.46). Jesus' future kingship was recognised by Pontius Pilate when he was crucified. Pilate had a sign nailed to the cross which read: 'THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS' (Matthew 27.37).

## **His resurrection**

The four Gospel records in the New Testament clearly relate how Christ was raised from the dead and seen by several hundred people. The lives and deaths of the disciples were subsequent testimony to the truth of the matter. After several weeks Jesus ascended to the right hand of God, his Father (read Acts 1.9-11).

## His present role

Jesus Christ's priestly role is recognised by all those who have followed him through the waters of baptism. The High Priest, under the Law of Moses, foreshadowed the work of Jesus at his Father's right hand as a mediator, providing intercession for men and women who approach God through him. The letter to the Hebrews sums this concept up very well and it is worth reading carefully Hebrews 2.17, 4.15 and 10.11-14.

## His future work

Notice that the narrative of this story began in the Old Testament, passed through the New Testament with the advent of Jesus Christ, continues into our own day (his High Priestly Mediator-ship) and finally looks deep into the future too. The King of the Jews will return to the earth, will raise the responsible dead, and gather the living believers. Those found approved by Jesus will be awarded eternal life and, under the King's leadership, their initial task will be to establish the kingdom of God on Earth.

Jesus taught his followers to pray to God: *'Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven'* (Luke 11.2). When will this be? There will be a time of great trouble on earth and then, at a point when the human race is rendered utterly incapable of solving the natural, political, international and ecological problems taking place on earth, they will see Jesus *'coming in a cloud with power and great glory'* (Luke 21.27). It is essential to read Luke 21 to gain further insight into these events. See also 2 Thessalonians 1.7-10; 2 Timothy 3; 2 Peter 3.

The last message of Jesus, given to the Apostle John in the book of Revelation, concludes with these words: *'Surely I am coming quickly'*. John's response, and our prayer too should be:

**'Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!'**

Revelation 22.20

## Editor's note

Available on request – 'Light on the Lord Jesus Christ,' a Special Edition of **Light**. This provides a detailed review of all the above points and others too. Send for your free copy or download it from our website (details on inside back cover).



## from the editor

Are you feeling  
**'stressed out'?**

Anxiety and worry are human characteristics which can affect us all to a greater or lesser degree. Anxiety is an inescapable part of our makeup and anyone who says they have never been worried about something is in a very small minority. Some give the appearance of not having a care in the world but this is often a disguise to hide real deep-seated problems.

Anxiety and stress of one kind or another are features of modern society. It is one of the side effects of the quickening pace of life, particularly in the developed world, that has increased significantly in recent years. 'Stressed out' is a phrase which is used to describe the symptoms of worry and anxiety caused by poor health, family issues, education and many other

problems. In many cases it's associated with the stress of coping with our jobs. Large business organisations even have trained staff to provide counselling and advice to assist with stress management.

How then can we contain these feelings which sometimes threaten to engulf us? For most people the antidote is not clear - reach for the worry beads? Take a holiday? Change our job? More exercise? Counselling? Medical treatment? Drink? Drugs? Some of these options can be beneficial we know and some lead to further problems i.e. alcohol and drug abuse.

I read a newspaper article recently which offered solutions to the problem of being 'stressed out'. It dealt with every age group from teenagers to those in their 70's and beyond. But the advice given about coping with worry and anxiety does not mention religion and faith in God. ('The secret to beating stress whatever your age' Daily Telegraph 29-7-19).

Stress is one of those many ingredients of our human nature which

can so easily lead us away from God. Sometimes we worry about what might happen in the future and about things over which we have no control.

In addition to our own personal anxieties, today's world is full of seemingly insurmountable problems which human governments seem unable to solve (see 'Signs of the Times' article on page 27). But if we trust the Bible as God's inspired Word, we can rest assured that, despite appearances to the contrary, He has a plan for the future and He is in control. Having faith in God and His plan is the real secret to beating stress both on a personal level and in this troubled world.

On a personal level Jesus told his disciples *'peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you...let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid'* (John 14.26,27). By becoming Jesus' disciples and putting our trust in God's Word, we can gain an inner peace now to help us weather the storms of life and we can look forward to that time of real lasting peace when he returns to establish the kingdom of God on earth.

The Apostle Paul reminded the Philippians of the importance of prayer as a means of helping believers to cope with anxiety and added:

**'the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus'.**

Philippians 4.6,7

Jesus told his disciples that at the time just prior to his second coming *'nations will be in anguish and perplexity... Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world'* (Luke 21.25,26 NIV). But he also assured them with the words that followed: *'When these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near'* (Luke 21.28 NIV).

The followers of Jesus have every reason not to be 'stressed out' but to look forward to that future time of change which the Apostle Peter describes as

**'a new earth in which righteousness dwells'** 2 Peter 3.13

Editor

# The prophets and their work

The Oxford English Dictionary, with its eye on brevity and accuracy, defines a prophet as: ‘One who speaks for God as the inspired revealer or interpreter of His will’.

In the Hebrew text of the Old Testament (OT) the word prophet mostly refers to the function of giving a message to the people under the influence of the Spirit of God. In this context the phrase ‘The word of the LORD came to ...’ or similar words are mentioned many times. In the New Testament (NT) the Greek word literally means ‘one who speaks forth’. Among the pagan Greeks it referred to an interpreter of the oracles of the Greek gods.

## Religious Prophets

An important difference between a prophet and other religious officials is that the prophet claims no personal part in his utterances. He does not speak his own mind, but a revelation made to him. Although the ability to prophesy is a gift from God, it is not always welcomed. Jeremiah, a prominent prophet in his time, strove to resist the source of his revelation until he was forced to reveal what God wanted him to.

There have been occasions when God spoke directly, without the use of a prophet, for instance at the baptism of Jesus Christ: ‘*And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”*’ (Matthew 3.17). The word prophet is used much more frequently in the OT than in the NT and is first used by God to describe Abraham (Genesis 20.7).

This is the only reference to a prophet in Genesis, but in Exodus we begin to get a slightly deeper understanding of the relationship between God and His prophets. God spoke to Moses as He prepared both him and his brother Aaron to go before Pharaoh: ‘*See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet*’ (Exodus 7.1). In this instance the role of the ‘*prophet*’ was to be a spokesperson who would carry the Word of God and speak it, in this case, directly to the person it was intended for.

## Prophets of the Old Testament

Whilst a popular image of a prophet is that of a grey haired and wise old man, the truth is far different.

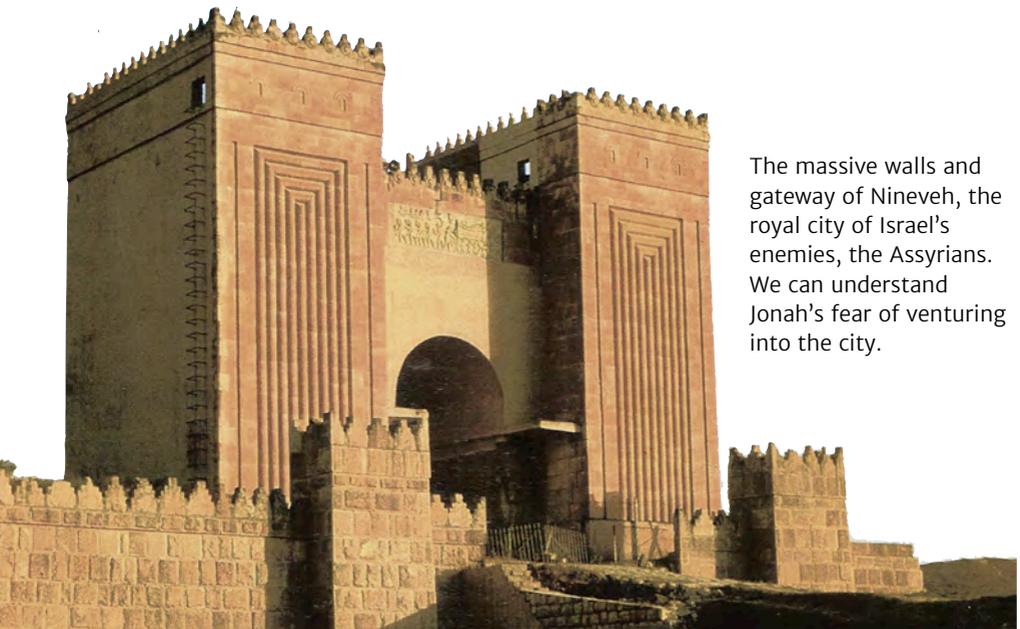
Samuel was a young lad when he was called by the Lord to reveal His judgement on Eli and his two sons for profaning the House of God. And the gift of prophecy was not restricted to men only, there are women prophets recorded in the Bible as well.

All the OT books from Isaiah to Malachi describe the revelations that these prophets made and are divided into two sections. The major prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, whilst the last section, the twelve minor prophets, brings the Old Testament to a close. The word minor refers in this instance to the size of the written work, not the importance of the prophecy or the prophet.

The revealed prophecy is not always welcomed by the one to whom it is directed, often the king, but it can

also apply to a wayward people or a nation. The role of a prophet can involve danger and fear, as seen in the case of Jonah. He was told by God to go to Nineveh, in Assyria, and '*cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me*' (Jonah 1.2). But fear of going to Nineveh, which had a terrible reputation, was too much for Jonah, and he fled in the opposite direction. The ensuing account shows the great mercy of the Lord, both in sending His prophet Jonah to warn the Ninevites, and in dealing with Jonah's reluctance to obey the Lord's command.

This fearful reluctance of a few of God's prophets must not be confused with the actions of false prophets. The First Book of Kings describes in great detail how Elijah confronted King Ahab, who had led his people into false worship: '*you have forsaken*



The massive walls and gateway of Nineveh, the royal city of Israel's enemies, the Assyrians. We can understand Jonah's fear of venturing into the city.

*the commandments of the LORD, and you have followed the Baals'* (1 Kings 18.18). The ensuing verses wonderfully demonstrate the judgment and power of the Lord, in dealing with the false prophets of Baal.

Anyone who prophesied their own thoughts, and implied that he was speaking the word of the Lord was committing a serious sin and God dealt with such in a very severe manner; the false prophets of Baal were slaughtered. Much earlier the Lord God spoke to Moses saying: *'But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die'* (Deuteronomy 18.20). This was necessary so that the spiritual purity of the people would not be profaned.

Among the prophetesses of the Old Testament, perhaps Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, is the most well known. Miriam claimed the LORD *'had spoken'* through her (Numbers 12.2). There were others; Deborah said to Barak *'Has not the LORD, the God of Israel commanded...?'* (Judges 4.6). The prophetess Huldah in the same way uses the prophetic introductory formula: *'Thus says the LORD God of Israel...'* (2 Kings 22.15).

## **Prophets of the New Testament**

In the New Testament, Luke describes Anna, a prophetess of the tribe of Asher, seeing the infant Jesus, whom his parents had brought to the temple in Jerusalem:

**'And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.'** Luke 2.38

John the Baptist is the first prophet mentioned in the New Testament, and it is a title given to him by Jesus. Speaking about John the Baptist, he asked the multitude what they expected to see when they went out into the wilderness. Jesus explained that John was a prophet and more than a prophet: *'For this is he of whom it is written: "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you"'* (Matthew 11.9). Here Jesus was quoting from the words of Malachi, the last of the Old Testament prophets.

## **The prophet like Moses**

Jesus was the object of many Old Testament prophecies. Moses spoke to the people in the wilderness:

**'the LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.'** (Deuteronomy 18.15)

This prophecy was fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

There is no doubt that Jesus was the greatest of the prophets. This was affirmed by a Samaritan woman who, when drawing water from a well, was asked by Jesus for a drink. In the ensuing conversation, Jesus revealed that the woman in her past life had five husbands and her current partner was not her husband. At this startling revelation she said: *'Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet'* (John 4.19).

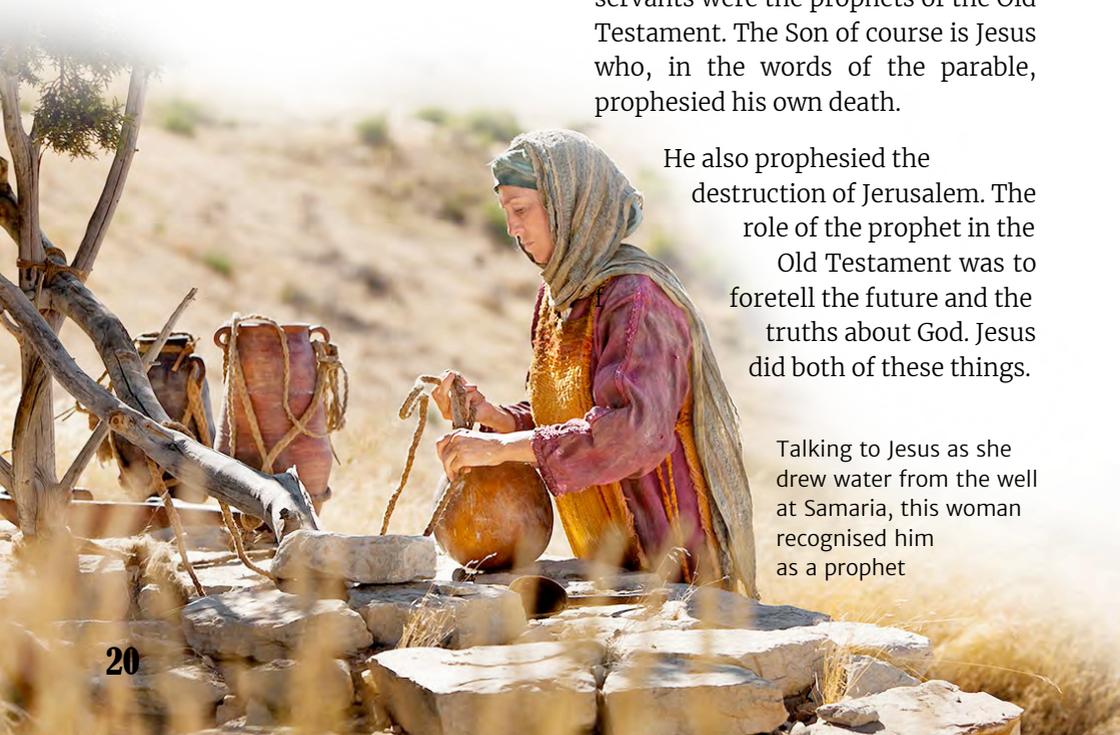
A little later Jesus travelled from Samaria to Galilee and made the observation that *'a prophet has no honour in his own country'* (John 4.44). He was well received, but only because the people had seen the miracles he had done in Jerusalem, prompting Jesus to comment: *'Unless*

*you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe'* (John 4.48).

What did Jesus prophesy about himself? Jesus made several predictions about his death and resurrection, each with increasing detail, as recorded in the Gospels. In Luke we read about the parable of the wicked vinedressers, told by Jesus (Luke 20.9-12). A vineyard was leased to some vinedressers. When the owner sent His servants, that they might have some of the harvest, they were beaten and treated shamefully and thrown out of the vineyard. In the end he sent his son, but they decided to murder him so that they could inherit the vineyard themselves. In this parable the vineyard owner is God and the servants were the prophets of the Old Testament. The Son of course is Jesus who, in the words of the parable, prophesied his own death.

He also prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem. The role of the prophet in the Old Testament was to foretell the future and the truths about God. Jesus did both of these things.

Talking to Jesus as she drew water from the well at Samaria, this woman recognised him as a prophet



**‘But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.’**

Luke 21.20-22

This destruction of Jerusalem took place less than 40 years later in AD 70.

The most well-known prophecy that Jesus made regarding himself, apart from his own death and resurrection, was his return to the earth to establish God’s kingdom, often referred to as the ‘second coming’. It will be a time when all the evil and corruption of this world will be done away with, and peace and righteousness will fill the earth. The prophet Isaiah describes this wonderful time in these words:

**‘They (the nations) shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks.’**

Isaiah 2.4

## **Conclusion**

Because a prophet is speaking the words of God through divine inspiration, it is important to hear what the message says, to understand it and most importantly

abide by it. The parables of Jesus illustrate this very well, and what will happen if these prophecies are ignored.

The greatest prophecy the world has ever received is the Gospel message concerning the coming kingdom of God as foreseen by the prophets. Jesus will set up this kingdom on his return to the earth. It is our fervent prayer that our readers, with us, will be found ready and waiting for that day, and be granted God’s great gift of eternal life. To them, Jesus will say:

**‘Come,  
you blessed of my Father,  
inherit the kingdom prepared  
for you from the foundation of  
the world.’**

Matthew 25.34

**Chris Farnworth**  
Surrey, UK

### EDITOR’S NOTE:

The subject of prophecy is dealt with in greater detail in a special edition of **Light** entitled ‘Light on Bible Prophecy’. Send for your free copy or download it from our website (details on inside back cover).



The valley of Hinnom looks peaceful enough today, but in Jesus' time it was literally 'hell' on earth.

## WHAT DID JESUS MEAN?

### “fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell”

Wherever the words of Jesus Christ are recorded in the Bible, they are worthy of our careful attention. Reading this verse seems to confirm a long held traditional Christian view that one of the destinations of life after death is 'hell'.

However, there is more to this verse than meets the eye. First of all, it makes a statement that seems to go against the traditional perceived idea of 'hell'. The basic idea of 'hell' is that it is 'eternal torment'. However, Jesus says that both *'body and soul'* will be destroyed in hell. If the soul is destroyed, then it cannot be in

eternal torment. This means that Jesus is contradicting the traditional Christian view of hell in these words.

To try and work out what this means, we need to take a close look at two of the words in the verse: *'soul'* and *'hell'*.

The New Testament was originally written in Greek. The Greek word *'psuche'* translated *'soul'* in Matthew chapter 10 means 'breath'. The word translated *'hell'* in Matthew chapter 10 verse 28 is the Greek word Gehenna, which is a place corresponding with the Old Test-

ament Hebrew name meaning ‘valley of Hinnom’.

We need to look at both words carefully, and in context, to understand exactly what Jesus was talking about.

## **Where is Gehenna?**

This is a reference to one of the valleys just outside Jerusalem (see map overleaf) which was used in the time of some of the Old Testament kings for child sacrifice (see for example 2 Kings 23.10). Jesus referred to the valley of Hinnom on several occasions. Two of the most well-known of these are found in Matthew chapters 5 and 18, where Jesus says that it is better to lose a part of your body than to have your whole body go ‘into hell’ (gehenna). This is the same word that Jesus uses in Matthew chapter 10.

In the Old Testament there is a similar reference to the words of

Jesus in Matthew chapter 10. Isaiah chapter 66 contains a prophecy that describes those who will come to a restored Jerusalem to worship the God of Israel (Yahweh). They will go outside the city and will ‘*look upon the corpses of the men who have transgressed against me. For their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh*’ (Isaiah 66.24). This is a description not of ‘hell’ but of the aftermath of God’s judgment on Israel.

This makes a clear link with the words of Jesus, where he says: ‘*It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire*’ (Matthew 18.8). Jesus is simply saying that it is better to enter into eternal life in God’s kingdom having ‘cut off’ something in this current life, than to be like those spoken about in Isaiah 66, who suffered divine judgement for rebelling against God. This helps us



to better understand the word ‘soul’, literally translated ‘breath’. Jesus was speaking about fearing God, who can destroy body and soul (breath), that is life itself, by His judgement (as referred to in Isaiah 66).

## Do not be fearful

We can then look at the words of Jesus in context. In Matthew chapter 10, Jesus spoke to his 12 chosen disciples before he sent them out to spread the good news of the kingdom of God. He encouraged them and reminded them of the responsibility they had to preach the gospel. Jesus gave them a clear message about the difficulties they might face. He said they would be beaten, whipped and hated but he told them not to be fearful in these words: ‘...Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill

the soul’ (breath) and then says ‘...fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell...’ (Matthew 10.28).

## The meaning of ‘soul’

We need to look at this verse in detail. Jesus says that their enemies can kill their bodies, but not their soul (breath). What does this mean? Does it mean that humans have an ‘immortal soul’ that only God can kill? We would suggest that this is not the case. To understand this phrase, we need to go right back to the beginning of the Bible, to the book of Genesis:

‘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



MAP OF JERUSALEM at the time of Jesus

You can see the Hinnom Valley near the bottom towards the south west of the city.

The valley, tainted by its association with pagan rites of child sacrifice, was the site of constant fires maintained to consume the city's refuse.

At the time of Adam's creation, the Bible record tells us that God 'breathed into his nostrils the breath of life'. This is a reference to God's power and authority over His creation and is amplified in the book of Job where Elihu says:

**'If he (God) should set his heart on it, if he should gather to himself his Spirit and his breath, all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust.'** Job 34.14,15

Jesus was put to death on the cross, but on the third day God restored his 'breath' to him. The Roman and Jewish authorities could 'destroy' his body, but they could not 'destroy' the 'breath' that God can restore by resurrection from the dead. Jesus was telling his disciples not to fear those who could kill them in this life, but to fear God, the one who can destroy the 'body' and 'the breath of life' permanently.

### **What must we fear?**

We need to look closer at another word in the passage from Matthew – the word 'fear'. The Greek word used here can be translated to frighten, to be alarmed; by analogy, to be in awe of or revere. This again helps us to make sense of the words of Jesus:

**'And do not fear (be alarmed, be frightened by) those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But**

**rather fear (be in awe of and revere) him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.'**

Matthew 10.28

Jesus was giving his disciples a powerful reminder about the loving care that God had for them as they went out and proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God. This is made clear in the following verses:

**'Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.'**

Matthew 10.29-31



Jesus is clearly showing his disciples how much God cares for them and their welfare, so they should not fear, in the sense of being alarmed or afraid of what humans can do to them. This is the God of the Bible, a caring, loving God as we read in one of the Psalms: *'The LORD is merciful*

*and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy*' (Psalm 103.8). Jesus said: *'For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life'* (John 3.16) God is love. We are told this in the first letter of John (1 John 4.7-11).

## **Summary**

What have we understood about the teaching of Jesus which tells us *'...fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell'*?

1. Jesus is encouraging his disciples before they set out to preach the good news of the kingdom of God; therefore the context of Matthew 10.28 is one of positive confidence.
2. Jesus is reminding his disciples that those who oppose them only have the power to end this life but have no power over the future life God can give through restoring the breath of life at the resurrection.
3. Jesus is telling his disciples that they do not need to be afraid or be alarmed by human opposition, but rather have reverence for God, who ultimately holds the power of eternal life.
4. Jesus follows this up by reminding his disciples how deeply God cares for those he values, which is another reason why they should not be afraid of any human

hostility they may encounter while preaching the gospel message.

The words of Jesus, which at first seem to have a very negative message about destruction in hell and fearing God, are, in reality, part of a positive and uplifting message to the 12 disciples. The words of Jesus were spoken to build up, inspire and encourage. They can do the same for us.

Whatever happens to the followers of Jesus in this life, he has the power to restore the breath of life through resurrection from the dead at his second coming (see John 5.28,29; 1 Thessalonians 4.16). This is one of the key Bible messages, and well worth further study (please send for our free booklet *'Understanding the Bible's teaching – death'*).

Dan Giles  
Birmingham, UK



# signs of the times

The contrast between what we see around us today with what God has promised the nations on earth for the future, as described so vividly in Psalm 67 quoted in the last issue, could hardly be starker. I believe the perfect world described in the Psalm is not far away, and signs that it may well be coming very soon are the main theme of these articles. The Psalm concludes:

**‘...Let all the peoples praise you. Then the earth shall yield her increase; God our own God shall bless us ... And all the ends of the earth shall fear him’.** Psalm 67:5-7

Last time we looked at several matters which contrast sharply with God’s proposed government in His kingdom on earth and the state of governments today. We talked about dysfunctional government in both the US and the UK, including the

continuing Brexit saga in the UK, where politicians seem unable to agree on any course of action.

We also made the point that democracy seems to be declining worldwide in its effectiveness, being accompanied with internal turmoil in many countries. Nothing indicates that the situation has improved at all since the last issue. This could so easily lead to international turmoil and worse. Look at the US and Iran and the trade war between the US and China for example - exactly the conditions we can expect shortly before Jesus returns!

This dangerous instability of nations exactly corresponds to conditions foretold by Jesus immediately before his second coming:

**‘...distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves**

(the nations) roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth...

Then will they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.'

Luke 21.25-27

## Why I am a Christadelphian

In late 1973 I decided that I believed in God and His message for us. Two things stood out for me then and helped me make the decision to try to serve God. They still stand out for me today and both, but especially the second, are signs. Let me explain.

The first is the Bible itself. How is it a sign in our times? Primarily because it exists! Down through the ages there have been many attempts to destroy the Bible. These have been both physical and intellectual. There are many people today who regard the Bible as irrelevant to modern life, a collection of stories. But relevant or not, the Bible is easily obtainable. There are many different versions, a number in contemporary language, and the Bible has been translated into most languages on earth. It's also worth noting that the Bible was written by around 40 different people over a period of at least 1,600 years. Yet its message is consistent, and it does not contradict itself. I think it's fair to say that there is no other book that can claim these things.

The second of my two signs is a very powerful one, and I find it especially striking. That sign is God's people the Jews; they exist and not only that, the



State of Israel exists and has done since May 1948. Before 1948 the last time the Jews had a state was for a brief period prior to the birth of Jesus. In the long interval between those two times they have been persecuted as unwanted foreigners and driven from country to country suffering as no other people on earth. Adolf Hitler tried to eradicate all European Jews. He murdered 6 million during the Second World War.

The fact of Jewish survival, against all the odds, is a mystery until one reads the Bible! God said through His prophet Jeremiah around 600 BC:

**‘For I am with you...to save you; though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet will I not make a complete end of you. But I will correct you in justice, and will not let you go altogether unpunished.’**

Jeremiah 30.11

This is NOT an isolated reference!

Yet the Jews now have a country of their own that frequently draws world attention out of all proportion to its size. Israel was again featured in the news in both the lead up to and completion of their recent election campaign.

## **Israel’s election**

Mr Netanyahu, nicknamed by many Israelis as ‘King Bibi’, prevailed again

in Israel’s recent election and is in the process of forming a new government (see editor’s note page 31). There were several matters that arose in this election campaign that are of interest to me as a religious person. For I believe that Jesus will return to save the Jews from disaster and set up the kingdom of God on earth.

The election campaign was noticeably different from previous ones. Summing it up, it appears that Israel has moved notably to the right with this election result. There is even serious talk of annexing the West Bank! There was no real mention of the ‘two state solution’ to give the Palestinians a State of their own, even though that solution is the generally accepted international position for resolving the Palestinian problem.

The main opposition to Netanyahu was a former chief of staff of the Israeli Defence Force. His position on the Palestinians was only marginally different to Netanyahu’s. Perhaps it is the continuing trouble with the Palestinians on the West Bank, or more particularly, the continuous terrorist acts by Hamas from the Gaza Strip. After all, Israel once controlled the Gaza Strip but gave it back to the Palestinians. To the average Israeli the idea of giving the West Bank to the Palestinians as a State may seem like a possible repeat

of the same experience. No doubt the reasons are not as simple as that, but whatever the causes, the two-state solution is off the radar for Israel. This puts them very much at odds with almost every other nation.

Another factor that was unusual during the campaign was President Donald Trump. He and Netanyahu have a very friendly relationship. Much of what Netanyahu is going through as he faces criminal charges of fraud, Mr Trump can relate to and vice versa. Some of Netanyahu's rhetoric over these charges has a 'Trump-like' ring to it.

Trump's support for Netanyahu during the campaign, ironically enough, borders on interference in another sovereign state's election! Apart from his statements and very active relationship with Netanyahu, President Trump recognised Israel's occupation of the Golan Heights as legitimate at the height of the election campaign. This reversed 30 years of US policy and appears to have been done to boost Netanyahu's election chances. If it wasn't, it certainly looks that way, and that counts for a lot in politics. Netanyahu has used his close relationship with Trump as an argument for electing him. His argument is that he is the man with the proven ability to manage Israel's critical relationship

with the US. He has the 'track record' for that to be a credible claim.

Critical to the sign of a restored Israel after centuries of dispersion are two factors. Firstly, the restoration is a direct fulfillment of Bible prophecy for the last days. Secondly, the prophecies foretold that Israel would then be in the centre of a huge world crisis. And so they are!

The insoluble Israeli-Palestinian State issue threatens to de-stabilize the Middle East and the world. One State or two?

Unveiling the new US Embassy in Jerusalem, 14 May 2019



President Trump, in supporting Mr Netanyahu, appears notably uncritical of Israel's strong growth of 'settlements' in the West Bank. There are many settlements placed in such a way that would make ceding the West Bank to the Palestinians as a sovereign State very difficult. Previous US administrations have been very critical of Israel for this.

Then there was moving the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. There have also been cuts in US support for funding the Palestinians. These initiatives go against general world opinion. With Israel's shift to the right, emboldened by support from President Trump, it seems more likely that they will make decisions that are controversial without regard to world opinion. The end result could be that they become an international pariah.

With this in mind, it is interesting to consider these verses from the Old Testament prophet Zechariah, describing a massive crisis centred on Jerusalem. These words describe what will happen to Israel just before Jesus returns to this earth. The first words about '*all the nations*' are especially notable given Israel's 'go it alone' attitude and their deteriorating international position:

## **'BEHOLD, THE DAY OF THE LORD IS COMING...**

For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle.'

Zechariah 14.1-3

### **Conclusion**

We live in a deeply divided and troubled world. More could be said of the deepening crisis again affecting the Middle East between the US, Europe and Iran. But we will leave that for another issue. My hope is that Jesus will return very soon. He is the only one who can solve all these problems and bring peace and security to this troubled world.

David Gamble  
Melbourne, Australia

#### **EDITOR'S NOTE:**

Since this article was written, Mr Netanyahu has been unable to form a new coalition government and a new election is due to take place on 17 September '19.

## GREECE

is the third in a succession of four empires foretold by Daniel, when he stood before Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon in 603 BC. He explained to the king a vital prophecy concerning God's purpose that will culminate with God's kingdom being established over the earth (see Daniel chapter 2). In the working out of that remarkable prophecy, Babylon gave way to the Medo-Persian Empire and then Medo-Persia fell to the Greeks. This prophecy may now be familiar to many readers.

The Bible in both Old and New Testaments refers to the Greeks, and Greek was the common language of the Eastern Roman Empire in the time of Jesus and the apostles.

There was war between the Persians and the Greeks for 50 years from 500 to around 450 BC. These were monumental struggles in which Persia tried to invade Greece but ultimately failed. In the end it was Greece that conquered Persia under a famous king and brilliant soldier, Alexander the Great. Alexander's father, Philip of Macedonia, had managed to unite the squabbling Greek states, and in 336 BC, Alexander, at the tender age of 20, inherited a well disciplined army.



# ALEXANDER



*the Bible stands*  
**THE TEST OF TIME**

## **and the Greek Empire**

Mosaic of the Battle of Issus showing Alexander defeating the Persians. From Pompei about 100 BC. Now in the Archaeological Museum, Naples

Two years later he set out to achieve a centuries old ambition to conquer the Persians; something which Greece had previously failed to accomplish. This was the next transition in Daniel's prophecy. The chest and arms of silver gave way to the belly and thighs of bronze. This is something that Daniel could not possibly have foreknown or predicted by guesswork. It is, therefore, clear evidence of the Divine inspiration of Scripture.

Alexander's progress through the vast Persian dominions was astonishing. Defeating the Persians at Issus in 333 BC, and, adopting military strategies which are still studied to this day, his small but machine-like army swept all before them, never losing a single battle. At astonishing speed, in only 10 years, he had created a vast empire. From Greece he advanced across Asia Minor and then south towards Egypt. He then moved east conquering all of Persia and across Asia as far as India, winning battle after battle, and giving 70 cities the name Alexandria, after himself!

Undefeated in battle, he turned back because his troops refused to go any further, fearing they would fall off the edge of the world! But his astonishing career was brought to an abrupt halt. He died in Babylon on his return journey, only 33 years old.

Babylon was planned to be the epicentre of the empire, but it was not to be, and keeping such a huge dominion intact in its Eastern extremities also proved to be an impossible task.

The metal used to represent Greece in Daniel's prophecy was bronze. The choice of metal is exactly right, because in the ancient world they were known as the brazen-coated Greeks, for their use of bronze armour. (Homer, in Iliad book 3 refers to the 'brazen-coated Achaeans'). So how could Daniel have known that without Divine guidance?

In Daniel chapter 8, the war between the Persians and the invincible Greeks under Alexander is foretold in a vision concerning a great conflict between a ram and a he goat. The symbology is dramatic and unmistakable. Here the goat with a notable horn represents the Greeks led by Alexander, and the two horned ram represents the Medo-Persian Empire:

'And as I was considering, suddenly a male goat came from the west, across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the goat had a remarkable horn between his eyes. Then he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing beside the river, and ran



Greek bronze armour from about 340BC

at him with furious power. And I saw him confronting the ram; he was moved with rage against him, attacked the ram, and broke his two horns. There was no power in the ram to withstand him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled him; and there was no one that could deliver the ram from his hand.'

Daniel 8.5-7

'Without touching the ground' ... the Grecian goat was indeed moving like the wind when it hit the Persian ram! Then the sudden death of Alexander and what happened next, is foretold by the breaking of the goat's horn and four smaller horns replacing it. But in case we are in any doubt as to the identification of the goat and the ram, we are told later in the same chapter:

'Look, I am making known to you what shall happen in the latter time of the indignation; for at the appointed time the end shall be.

The ram which you saw, having the two horns—they are the kings of Media and Persia. And the male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king. As for the broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power.'

Daniel 8.19-22

Clearly this is a prophecy of the sudden death of '*the first king*' (Alexander) and then the goat power is divided into four parts. That is exactly what happened. On Alexander's death in 323 BC with no legitimate heir, after 25 years of warfare, murder and dissension between Alexander's generals, the Greek empire settled into four distinct parts as shown on the map (see overleaf):

1. Lysimachus initially ruled over Thrace and much of Asia Minor.
2. Cassander initially ruled over Macedonia and Greece.
3. Ptolemy took Egypt, Palestine and the eastern Mediterranean.
4. Seleucus ruled the remainder of Asia to the North and East.

Both Ptolemy and Seleucus founded dynasties and became the most powerful of the Greek rulers.

Again the prophecy is specific and could not have been known by Daniel without God moving him to write under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Peter reminded his readers that *'prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit'* (2 Peter 1.21).

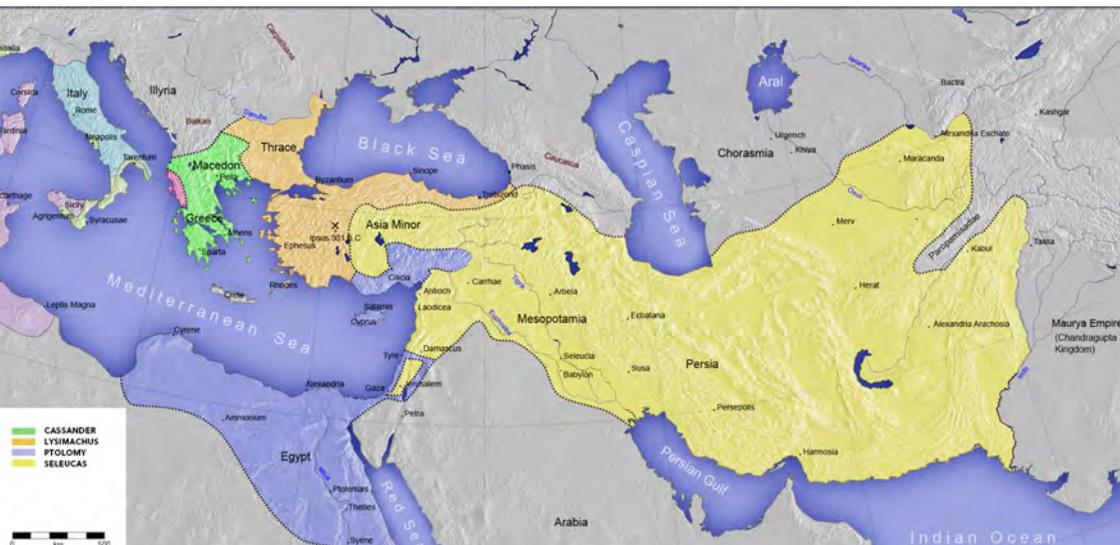
Biblically, we now move into the period between the Testaments, when there was no prophet or divine

revelation. After the prophet Malachi in the Persian period, the Old Testament was completed and the New Testament books were not written for another 400 years.

In relation to Israel, which was situated between the dominions of the Ptolemies and Seleucids, the southern kingdom of Ptolemy is known in Scripture as *'the king of the south'* and the Seleucid kingdom to the north as *'the king of the north'*. Daniel chapter 11 gives very specific and detailed prophecies of the ensuing series of wars between these two dynasties, and how the Jews of Palestine were affected. These prophecies can be shown as accurate from recorded history.

Israel, at that time a subject people, and strategically in the wrong place, suffered greatly from persecution, particularly from the Seleucid kingdom in the North. So extreme

Map showing Alexander's conquests split between his four generals



was the treatment of the Jews by one very bad (and mad) ruler, Antiochus IV Epiphanes (215-164 BC), that it led to a Jewish uprising and the eventual loss of Judea. He attempted to enforce Greek religion and culture on the Jews, sending his army with orders forbidding Sabbaths, holy days and circumcision. A Statue of Zeus was placed in the Temple above the altar. Pigs were sacrificed on the altar, an abomination to the Jews, and a gross violation of the Law of Moses.

All this precipitated a major and successful rebellion by a guerrilla army led by the priest Judas Maccabeus and his family in 167 BC. The eventual success of the Maccabean rebellion gave the Jews independence from Greek rule for around 100 years, with Levite priest/kings reigning (although not in the royal line of David) known as the Hasmonean dynasty. Eventually family infighting and civil war gave rise to an invitation to the Romans to intervene and bring peace!

This was the period in which Greek culture, language, thinking, literature, mythology and pagan worship spread its influence all around the Middle East, and also affected Judaism. The philosophy of Plato, speculating on the immortality of the human soul, spread and took root in Jewish beliefs. This was



Coin of Antiochus Epiphanes, declaring him to be the 'image of God'.

contrary to the words of Moses and the prophets, which teach that man is a dying, mortal creature of the dust, with no consciousness after death, requiring a resurrection of the body to enjoy any future life.

The Jewish sect of Pharisees were established in this period, and adopted a belief that their 'immortal souls' went to enjoy bliss in 'Abraham's bosom'. Greek influence called 'Hellenism' was a big issue and seen as a threat amongst rabbis and scholars, but with differing views on the subject. The other ruling party of the Sadducees didn't believe in an afterlife. This was the culture into which Jesus was born, and the backcloth of his life and teaching of the gospel of the kingdom of God on earth. Sadly, the power and influence of Greek thought also corrupted Christianity with that same false doctrine of the 'never dying soul' (see article on page 22).

The growing power of Rome swallowed up the Grecian dominions as well as its gods and culture from



around 150 BC, well before the birth of Jesus. That is why it is sometimes referred to as the Greco-Roman Empire. Rome had also extinguished, with the help of its cruel and brutal Idumean friend Herod the Great, the Hasmonean dynasty as well. The iron 'Roman' legs of the next stage of the image prophecy were now in place in fulfilment of God's plan.

Remember the end result of that image prophecy of Daniel 2 and where it is all leading. The stone struck the image on the feet of iron and clay, it was ground to powder and blown away. The stone grew to fill the whole earth. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar what it meant:

**'And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed...'**

**'The dream is certain and its interpretation sure'.**

Daniel 2.44,45

Just as those great empires of the past came and went, there can be no doubt that the kingdom of God will be established on earth, and we believe that time of great change for this world is not far away.

**Justin Giles**  
*London, UK*

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## this magazine

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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.

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

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## ***the stones keep crying out!***

This pilgrims' route was opened to the public in July this year after some eight years of excavation. It connected the Pool of Siloam in the south of Jerusalem to the Temple Mount and is now under the Arab area of East Jerusalem. It is believed to have been built in the time of Pontius Pilate and during the lifetime of Jesus, who may possibly have walked along it with his disciples. Today archaeology continues to support the authenticity and accuracy of the Bible record.

**'Light on archaeology'** is a special issue of Light magazine that looks at some of the many discoveries that give us confidence in the Bible.

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