

Light



...on a New World

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Cover picture: Offshore Oil Platform

A background image of a sunset or sunrise over a body of water, with the sun low on the horizon and its light reflecting on the water. The sky is filled with soft, golden clouds.

Signs of the Times

The Final Energy Crisis

WITH THE DAWN of the Bronze Age about 3,000 years ago, mankind started on the path to industrialisation. He did not give up his flint club because he ran out of flint but because he found that bronze made a better tool and weapon. The Iron Age followed from small and slow beginnings but has only dramatically flourished over the last 300 years.

At first this age of metals used fire-wood as the fuel for smelting the metal, which often led to deforestation before new fuel was found in the form of coal. Lumps of ‘sea-coal’ were at first collected from beaches, before it was mined in shallow pits. Mining itself, as it penetrated the water-table, led to steam-driven machine-pumps to drain the surplus water, these pumps being later adapted to provide locomotives for transport.

The fossil-fuelled heat-engine was developed into the internal combustion engine, driven at first by benzene produced from coal, before turning to petroleum refined from crude oil. This new energy form has transformed the world during the short span of a single century. Cheap and efficient transport opened the world to trade, while the manufacture of consumer goods exploded. The new energy also transformed agriculture, providing the food for a growing population that has expanded six-fold, exactly in parallel with oil production. Oil was in turn followed by gas, increasingly used for electricity generation, which brought power and light to households throughout much of the world, opening the door to electronic communications and a growth in consumerism.

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This extraordinary progression was achieved in not much more than 100 years. But now, in the twenty-first century, we face the onset of the natural decline of the fuel that made all this possible, and we do so without having a substitute form of energy that comes close to matching the utility, convenience and low cost of oil and gas.



Oil Refinery

THE COMING ENERGY CRISIS

The Middle East today is at the centre of a storm that will envelop us all, for the simple reason that it controls the world's supply of oil. Now that the world has consumed almost half its supply of oil, most of what remains must come from Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait and Abu Dhabi. Two of these countries, Iran and Iraq, are declared enemies in the new U.S. led war on terror, and the remaining three are living on the declining royal patrimony derived from oil revenues. This arrangement does not give any confidence for security and stability of oil supply.

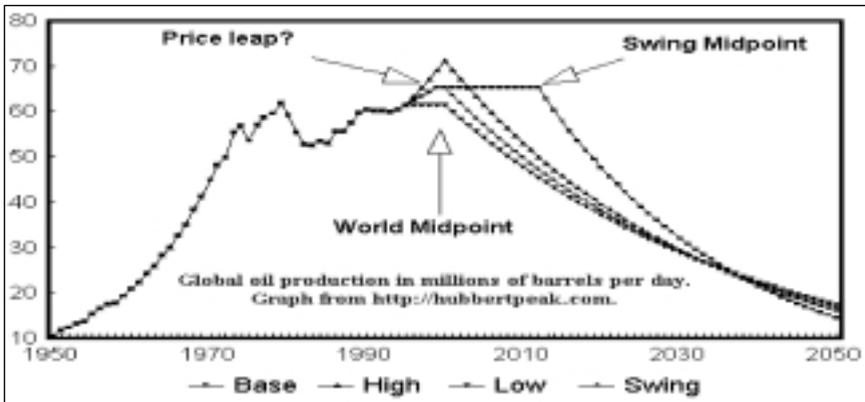


Chart showing estimated decline in oil production

There is a little time left now to adjust to a world without oil, as we have about as much left as we have used so far. Unfortunately, we are now using this limited resource faster than ever before, so that at the current usage rate, it will all be gone within about thirty years. Like it or not, the world as we now know it has to change.

‘The worldwide decline of oil production, ultimately to the point where it is insignificant relative to demand, will have many ramifications, changing world economies, social structures, and individual lifestyles.’

Walter Youngquist, geological consultant

If energy production was increased to the point where a world population of 9 billion people consumed energy at the current per capita rates of the rich world, all estimated fossil fuel reserves (including an estimated 2,000 billion tons of coal) would be totally exhausted within about 40 years.

BEYOND THE LIMIT

Energy consumption and resource demand patterns in rich countries are already far beyond sustainable limits. Yet virtually all countries seek economic growth and ignore any question of limits.

For example, look at the production and use of cars. Given the limited amount of oil in the world there is simply no prospect of China, India or any other countries such as Malaysia, Brazil, Turkey, Iran, Ukraine, Mexico, the Czech Republic and other emerging car producers being able to achieve American, West European, Australian or Japanese rates of car ownership. The Chinese ‘Car Bomb’ therefore ticks onward, as each day another estimated 112,190 cars are produced. Each one requires up to 55 barrels of oil-equivalent to produce, and must operate on bitumen-based highways, on tyres that themselves are about 40 per cent oil by weight. Not only is this explosion of the world car fleet a serious threat to the earth’s environment, but through its oil demand impact it will become a threat to international peace and stability.

By the year 2035, oil and gas production and therefore consumption, will have fallen from today’s levels by as much as 75 per cent and 60 per cent respectively. Coal production and consumption may well have bounded upwards – but if so the environmental and climatic consequences will be grave. World climate by 2035, will have substantially changed from today. The effects of high carbon dioxide levels will most certainly wreak accelerating and unpredictable major changes in climate and sea levels.

The overshoot in consumption levels of oil and gas is enormous

when compared to availability, and so the amount of energy use in a sustainable society will have to be a small fraction of the amount we take for granted in a consumer society today. It follows that a sustainable society cannot be achieved without very radical changes in lifestyles, systems of land use, patterns of settlement, the economy and social values.

A NEW SOCIETY

The kind of society we must shift towards, if we are to solve global problems has already been described as ‘The Simpler Way’ (For more information about this online see: www.arts.unsw.edu.au/tsw/). Proponents of this solution to world problems recommend that energy demands be cut to far below present levels, by adopting:

- A simpler, non-affluent way of life.
- The development of many small-scale, highly self-sufficient local economies.
- A radically different form of government.
- The use of alternative technologies.
- The adoption of new personal values.

It is argued that only by moving to something like this vision of ‘The Simpler Way’ can we expect to achieve a just and sustainable global situation.

HOW CAN THIS BE ACHIEVED?

For the answer to that question we must turn to the Bible. Just when the world as we now know it is disintegrating into chaos and anarchy and the coming energy crisis could well be the cause, the Bible tells us that there will be a remarkable change for the better. It will be along the lines recommended by those advocating ‘The Simpler Way’ but with significant differences.

From Genesis onwards the Bible is full of predictions about vast changes to be brought about in the earth. Abraham, the founder of the Jewish nation, was told that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through one of his descendants, who is identified in the New Testament as Jesus Christ:

‘In blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the sea shore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.’ [Genesis 22.17,18]

‘Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your seed,” who is Christ.’

[Galatians 3.16]

The Psalms speak of a king (Jesus Christ), who will set up a universal rule of such benefit to humanity that ‘*all nations shall call him blessed.*’ [Psalm 72.17]

THE COMING NEW WORLD ORDER

God’s plan for the future is a practical one. Based upon the personal return of Christ to the earth to reign from Jerusalem [Jeremiah 3.17] described as ‘the city of the great King’ [Matthew 5.35], it provides for vast but necessary changes in the political, religious and social structure of society. **(See chart on pages 8 and 9)**

All these changes are dependent upon the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth, exactly as was promised by the angels when he ascended into heaven almost 2000 years ago. As the disciples watched him go, the angels asked them:

‘Why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw him go into heaven.’

[Acts 1.11]

Jesus will ‘*so come*’ – literally, physically, personally – not merely into men’s hearts and minds. He is literally coming back to change human affairs beyond all recognition. The Bible makes it clear that when he comes again, Jesus will take over the government of the whole world.

At a time that the prophet Daniel described as ‘*a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time*’ *[Daniel 12.1]*, everything will change. But just before this ‘change for the better’ happens, Jesus predicted that there would be ‘*distress of nations with perplexity...men’s hearts failing them for fear, and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth*’ *[Luke 21.25,26]*. In short, there is to be a ‘clean sweep’ of the present human political and religious organisations, just when the world needs it most.

‘The God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms (of the present world), and it shall stand for ever.’ *[Daniel 2.44]*

‘Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.’ *[Daniel 7.27]*

The Bible records that under Joshua – an early leader of the nation of Israel in the past – every family had a farm of its own. This provided the basis of life, whatever else they did. When things went well, as they

continued on page 10

- **One king** (Jesus Christ) by divine right reigning over all nations: ‘The LORD shall be King over all the earth’ [*Zechariah 14.9*]
- **A new administration** directed by Christ’s followers then made immortal: ‘They lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years’ [*Revelation 20.4*] ‘on the earth.’ [*Revelation 5.10*]
- **One unifying religion of truth:** ‘My name shall be great among the Gentiles; in every place incense (a symbol of prayer) shall be offered to my name, and a pure offering.’ [*Malachi 1.11*] ‘every one who is left of all the nations which came up against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts.’ [*Zechariah 14.16*]
- **A united world:** ‘all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him.’ [*Psalms 72.11*]
- **Total disarmament and abolition of war:** ‘He shall judge between the nations, and shall rebuke many people: they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.’ [*Isaiah 2.4*]
- **International peace and goodwill:** ‘Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even for ever.’ [*Isaiah 9.7*]
- **Domestic security:** ‘No one shall make them afraid.’ [*Micah 4.4*]

- **Equitable distribution of wealth and resources:** ‘They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards, and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat.’ *[Isaiah 65.21,22]*
- **Firm governmental control to the benefit of all:** ‘He will bring justice to the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and will break in pieces the oppressor.’ *[Psalm 72.4]*
- **Vast increase of the earth’s productivity:** ‘the days are coming, says the LORD, when the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed.’ *[Amos 9.13]*
- **No unemployment:** ‘They shall rebuild the old ruins, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the ruined cities.’ *[Isaiah 61.4]*
- **A sound educational system:** ‘out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem’; ‘Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times.’ *[Isaiah 2.3; 33.6]*
- **New social order standards enforced:** ‘the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD’; ‘The work of righteousness will be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.’ *[Isaiah 11.9; 32.17]*
- **God’s will established in the earth:** ‘your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.’ *[Matthew 6.10]*

did when Israel obeyed God, they were blessed with everything they needed. They lived a life that provided every means of comfort and enjoyment, providing a healthy, happy existence. They were ‘partners’ with God, who made all things, instead of being remote from him, as in modern civilisations. They found satisfaction in their work well done, so that their lives, their worship and their families were thoroughly integrated. They were men and women, untroubled by the balance of payments, devaluation, inflation, import quotas, and all the other characteristics of many societies today, for God blessed them and they rejoiced in his goodness.

So it will be again when Christ rules on earth. The object will be to give to mortal men and women a proper background against which their minds may expand and their thinking become attuned with the God who made them, that they might reflect his glory.

Many of the prophets of the Bible describe Christ’s future rulership of the world. For example, the prophet Micah gives us some more details about this coming worldwide kingdom.

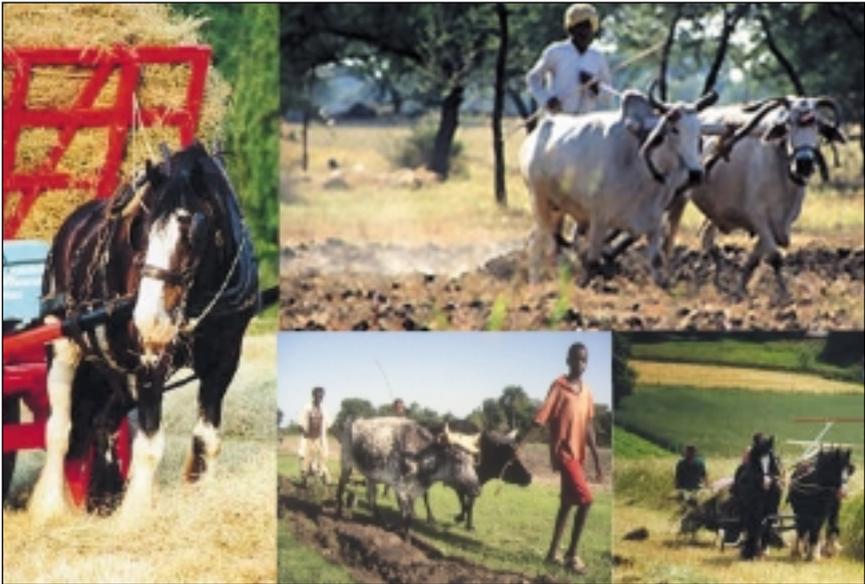
‘Now it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it.

Many nations shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; he will teach us of his ways, and we shall walk in his paths.” For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off. They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks:

nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree; and no one shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken. [Micah 4.1-4]



The simpler way

‘Everyone under his vine’ suggests a basically pastoral way of life in the age to come, exactly as recommended by ‘The Simpler Way’ – the only way to overcome the coming energy crisis.

A BETTER WORLD IS COMING!!

The book of prophet Isaiah is necessary reading if you want to know more about the world as it will be after the coming energy crisis has passed. It describes what will first happen in Israel, and will then spread to all mankind, for *‘Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the*

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face of the earth with fruit [Isaiah 27.6]. Read Isaiah chapter 65 verses 18-25 for yourself and notice all the good things that God has promised will happen to this earth in the near future. Here is a summary:

- Joy
- Longer life among mortal men and women – induced by clean, healthy living
- Building houses and living in them (unlike many in the world who have nowhere to call ‘home’)
- Owning their own land and ‘vineyards’ – an assured source of food and nourishment
- “Long enjoy the work of their hands” – when work is fair, satisfying and productive, because nobody will “labour in vain”
- Peace
- No cruelty, aggression or destruction

And this is just a ‘taster’ of what God says will happen when Christ returns to this earth. With the biggest crisis ever faced by the modern world now fast approaching, his return is assured and cannot come too soon.

Graham Lake
Surrey, UK

What the Bible says about...

Belief and Baptism

IN THE BIBLE, one of the core teachings of Jesus is about belief and baptism. Jesus said to his disciples before he left them to ascend to heaven, *'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.'* [Mark 16.15,16] This statement is very clear. To be saved we must believe *'the gospel'* - that is the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ and then be baptized. This is the first step to salvation. In order to take this step, we must fully understand what it means.

The objective of this article is firstly to underline the necessity of correct belief prior to baptism and secondly to show what baptism really consists of. Belief and baptism, together with the demonstration of faith by following God's commandments, will in God's mercy result in the salvation of the believer when Jesus returns to set up his kingdom.

WHAT IS BELIEF IN THE GOSPEL?

The verse quoted above from the Gospel record of Mark clearly confirms to us that belief is an essential pre-requisite to baptism - belief in what? Jesus said *'the gospel'* [Mark 1.15]. Gospel means 'good news' and refers to the good news about two things - God's kingdom and Jesus. In the book of Acts we read about the results of

Philip's preaching: *'But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized'* [Acts 8.12].

As we study the Bible, we learn about the gospel and God's plan of salvation from the book of Genesis onwards. What are *'the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ?'* Abraham was the father of the Jewish race and God made a promise to him that a *'seed'* or descendant of his would rule the entire world in peace and that through this *'seed'* all nations of the earth would ultimately be blessed. This *'seed'* is Jesus and we read in the New Testament how his lineage is traced all the way back to David king of Israel and even further back to Abraham [Matthew 1.1]. This promise concerning a *'seed'* was renewed to Abraham's son Isaac and grandson Jacob and later, promises were also made to David. God promised David that after his death:

'... I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever.'

[2 Samuel. 7.12,13]

When the Apostle Paul referred to David, he said, *'From this man's seed, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Saviour - Jesus'* [Acts 13.23]. It follows therefore that David's *'seed'* Jesus is the future ruler of a glorious kingdom.

Belief in the *'things concerning the kingdom of God'* is also necessary before baptism. These promises made so long ago have yet to be fulfilled. Jesus the Saviour will return to this earth to set up God's kingdom and so fulfil the promise God made to David. Jesus will sit on David's throne in Jerusalem and rule the world according to God's laws. The prophet Isaiah gives us many vivid word pictures of this glorious kingdom age. **(Read these passages from the prophet**

Isaiah: chapter 2 verses 1- 4; chapter 11 verses 1-9; chapter 65 verses 17-25). If we truly believe what God tells us about Jesus and his kingdom, it will prompt us to take action to be baptised.

TRUE CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

When we look at the many churches in existence today, we see that what is called baptism is actually a sprinkling of water on an infant's head. Infant baptism is not found in the Bible and it is problematic for several reasons. Later on, we will look at the true meaning of baptism and will see how infant sprinkling violates the real meaning behind the original Greek word for baptism. However, the baptism of infants poses another problem – it is connected with knowledge and belief.

As we have seen, before a man or woman can truly be baptised, that person must have knowledge about God and His plan of salvation. Of course, a tiny baby cannot have very much knowledge about anything! This knowledge also needs to be accompanied by belief - that is, the person must both know the facts about Jesus and God's kingdom and believe what he or she knows.

The Ethiopian eunuch is a prominent example in the New Testament of someone who desired to be baptised. He was reading from the prophet Isaiah and when Philip met him, they began to converse about the meaning of Isaiah's words. At first glance, this account in the book of Acts seems to indicate that little knowledge was required before someone was baptised: *'Now as they (Philip and the eunuch) 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"...So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him' [Acts 8.36-38].*

However, when the eunuch was baptized, he already possessed a great deal of knowledge about the gospel from his familiarity with the prophets of the Old Testament. After all, he had been reading from

Isaiah when Philip met him. All that was required, was a belief that Jesus was the promised Messiah referred so often by the Old Testament prophets such as Isaiah. The eunuch knew all his facts; the only requirement was that he believe and then he could be baptized.

Today we have the entire Bible, both Old and New Testaments telling us about the gospel. During the time when Jesus lived on the earth, people had what we know today as the Old Testament, to tell them about God. Much of the Old Testament also tells us about things connected to Jesus, so people of that time needed to believe that Jesus was the Messiah and that everything foretold about him would come true.

Belief in the gospel must be accompanied by repentance. God wants us to truly feel sorry for our past sins and be humble enough to ask Him for forgiveness. Before an individual knows about God's Word and His commandments, that person will do many things that are contrary to God's laws. Therefore, when a person learns about God he or she must recognise their sinful state and repent of past sins done in ignorance of God's laws. This allows the person to be baptized with a clean heart, having sought forgiveness from God for all previous wrongdoing.

WHAT DOES BAPTISM REPRESENT?

Baptism is the divinely appointed ceremony for introducing believing sinners into the name of Christ. Paul wrote to the Galatians:

‘...as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.’ [*Galatians. 3.27*]

It is one of the conditions of salvation taught by Christ and the apostles in the first century. Peter said, ‘*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ*’ [*Acts 2.38*]. On another occasion Peter commanded them ‘*to be baptized in the name of the Lord*’ [*Acts 10.48*].

In baptism, we obtain the forgiveness of all past sins. This is illustrated by Peter when he was preaching to the Jews and others on the day of Pentecost. He said in response to their question about what they should do: *‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized...for the remission of sins’* [Acts 2.38]. Paul also explained this in his letter to the Romans when he wrote: *‘Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?’* [Romans 6.3].

When we look at this aspect more closely, we can understand that Jesus died in order that sin might be destroyed. Although Jesus possessed our nature, he lived a perfect life without sin and yet submitted to an agonizing death upon the cross. He therefore condemned sin in his own body and brought to mankind a hope of resurrection from the dead and the promise of eternal life. (See Hebrews chapter 9 verses 26-28) For each of us to benefit from his redemptive work and have that promise fulfilled, we must become related to him in the way that God has appointed. This can be only by belief and baptism. Paul continues in his letter:

‘Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of his death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of his resurrection...knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over him. Likewise you also reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.’ [Romans 6.4,5,9,11]

WHAT DOES BAPTISM CONSIST OF?

Baptism is an action requiring total immersion in water. In all

cases recorded in the Bible, we read that those who asked for baptism, understood and believed the gospel message and then they were baptized into the name of Jesus Christ by the act of total immersion in water. This is supported by the example of Jesus himself being baptised by John in the river Jordan. We read that *'immediately, coming up from the water, he saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove'* [Mark 1.10].

Many churches would agree that baptism is essential to being saved. However, as already mentioned, in many cases it is administered to infants when a few days old in the form of sprinkled water. How did this practice originate? We have seen that Scriptural baptism involves total immersion, so it makes sense that there is absolutely no record of infant sprinkling in the Bible.

If we look at ecclesiastical history after the time of Christ, we find that the erroneous teaching that man has an immortal soul was introduced in the third century. It began to be taught that the righteous go to heaven at death and the wicked to hell, doctrines which are not to be found in the Bible. It was therefore argued that if a child died before reaching an age of responsibility, it would be consigned to hell unless it had been baptized. A council held in the third century resolved that baptism should be performed within the second or third day after birth since, if the child died prior to baptism, its soul would be lost. It was about the same time that the teaching was introduced that those who were in a weak state of health and could not endure total immersion in water, could be sprinkled with water.

This practice has prevailed ever since and gradually more and more churches have performed the rite of baptism by sprinkling instead of total immersion in water. In most cases, babies are sprinkled with water very early in their life. It should also be noted that this practice was actually derived from paganism. In Roman times, prior to the adoption of Christianity, a newly born girl on the eighth day after birth,

and a boy on the ninth day, underwent a ceremony of purification with so called 'holy water' in order to protect them against sorcery.

It will help us to understand baptism if we look at the original word in the Greek language. This word has nothing to do with so-called 'christening'. The word baptism as used in the New Testament, is a translation of the Greek word '**baptizo**' that means to dip or to plunge into a liquid. This word was used in the dyeing trade and referred to immersing a garment or piece of cloth into a liquid dye. The complete immersion of the garment into the dye resulted in a change of colour in the garment being dipped or 'baptized.'

Another clear example that shows the meaning of the word '**baptizo**' is a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about 200 BC. It is a recipe for making pickles and it is helpful because it uses this word '**baptizo.**' In order to make a pickle, the vegetable was 'baptized' in a vinegar solution in order to make a permanent change.

SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM

What is the significance of baptism - does the water bring about a permanent change when we are baptised? No - there is nothing special about the water used in baptism and water in itself will not change us. However, the act of baptism symbolises a change from our former way of life to a new life committed to following God's commandments. Baptism combined with belief in the gospel, a renunciation of former beliefs and a confession of our sins, will bring about a great change. By being baptized, we are buried with Jesus by baptism into his death. As Jesus was in the grave for three days before being raised to eternal life, so in baptism we are 'buried' under water briefly, to rise up out of it to the hope of eternal life in God's kingdom. (Read Paul's letter to the Romans chapter 6). By the forgiveness of sins and being admitted into covenant relationship with God and Christ, we begin a new life 'in Christ' - a probationary period in this lifetime. Jesus likened it to being born again:

‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ Nicodemus said to him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?’ Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God’ [*John 3.3-5*].

This new life is a time of preparation for the gift of eternal life to be bestowed by Christ when he returns to set up the kingdom of God. Baptism is the way God has appointed for us to enter into this new life ‘in Christ’ but it is just the first step. Baptism washes away all previous sins and allows the believer to start a new life before God.

After baptism, the believer is then committed to following as closely as possible the teachings of the Bible. This commitment needs to be put into practice every day of the believer’s life, since Jesus at his coming will judge all believers on their actions. Baptism links us to Jesus. It also links us to those faithful patriarchs of Israel mentioned earlier – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David who received Divine promises concerning their ‘seed’ or descendant the Lord Jesus Christ. Finally it gives us the hope of entry into the wonderful kingdom that God has promised to set up on earth, as Paul reminded the Galatian believers:

‘For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ...And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.’ [*Galatians 3.27,29*]

Norman Grey
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The Metal Worker

THE BIBLE CONTAINS many references to trades and crafts associated particularly with Bible lands. Sometimes, these are referred to specifically and are intended to draw the attention of the reader to the matter, whilst other references tend to be mentioned almost in passing although not one word of Scripture is idle! For those prepared to look closer at the record, there are always lessons to be drawn, quite apart from it being a fascinating study.

The Bible is very much about the Jews and their place in the purpose of God. Other nations and peoples came into contact with the nation of Israel and in the inter-play between Israel and these other Middle-Eastern countries, we have mention of occupations, trades and skills that have been confirmed by the spade of the Archaeologist. It can be a fascinating study and this opening article is intended first of all to set the scene. We hope to follow by considering more specific occupations and the lessons which are provided by the Word of God.

OLD TESTAMENT TIMES

We begin almost 6,000 years ago, in an age when technology was at a very basic level. The Biblical record covers a long period of time and our source of information from the Bible itself, is centered very

much on Palestine, for this is where so much of the Bible account took place. Archaeology confirms that throughout their long history, the people of Palestine, that is the Jews and their neighbours, maintained a similar range of skills. These included the potter, the builder, the carpenter, the mason, the metal worker, the tanner and the dyer – all trades and skills mentioned in the Bible, so there are a number of different trades to examine!

From earliest times, the inhabitants of the world used those materials which were readily to hand to use in every-day life. Clay, metals, fibres, wood and stone were made use of at the very beginning of civilisation. One of the earliest skills mentioned in the Bible, is that of the *'artificer'*. The writer recalls reading a text book on metal working, whose author used a *nom de plume* rather than his own name. He called himself, 'Tubal-Cain'. In fact, he was appropriating a name from the Bible, for we read, *'And as for Zillah, she also bore Tubal-Cain, an instructor of every craftsman in bronze and iron'*[Genesis 4.22].

GOD-GIVEN SKILLS

The Jews are probably more associated with business acumen than with technical skills and when there was a need for highly skilled workmen, we find that selected men were given very special skills by God. The children of Israel were constituted God's own special people and God instructed Moses to build a portable place of worship, called the Tabernacle. We have very detailed descriptions in the book of Exodus of the way the building was to be constructed and it certainly demanded high skill levels. Now, we shall look at some of these later in this series, but this is what God said to Moses, the leader of His people:

'See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works, to work in

gold, in silver, in bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of workmanship. And I, indeed I, have appointed with him Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and I have put wisdom in the hearts of all who are **gifted artisans**, that they may make all that I have commanded you' [*Exodus 31.2-6*].

Here then were exceptional skills, Divinely imparted some 3,500 years ago. However, by the time we come to the period around 1100 BC we find that this intelligent and skilled people had lost some of their basic skills. In the days of their first king, Saul which was at the end of the turbulent 400 year period of the Judges, they did not have access to **blacksmiths** who could harden tools. This is the record from the first book of Samuel:

'Now there was no **blacksmith** to be found throughout all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, "Lest the Hebrews make swords or spears." But all the Israelites would go down to the Philistines to sharpen each man's plowshare, his mattock, his axe, and his sickle; and the charge for a sharpening was a pim for the plowshares, the mattocks, the forks, and the axes, and to set the points of the goads. So it came about, on the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people who were with Saul and Jonathan. But they were found with Saul and Jonathan his son.'

[*1 Samuel 13. 19-22*]

There is almost certainly an underlying reason for this loss of skills which has a lesson for all followers of God. The nation of Israel were only controlled by the Philistines in this way because they had been disobedient to God's commands. He had promised Israel domination of the land and its indigenous peoples, provided they kept

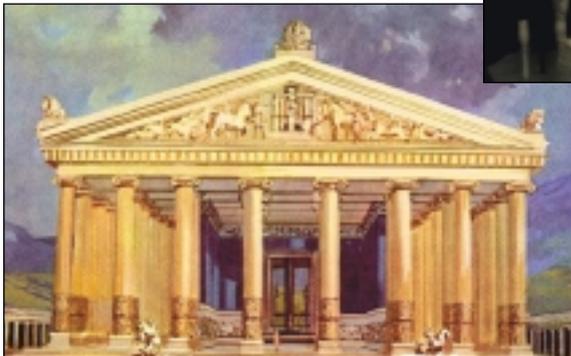
God's laws. Otherwise, their near neighbours would become a real problem to the nation. Saul himself had been disobedient and was ultimately replaced by David, a man who pleased God and who brought the nation of Israel to dominate the area, especially when his son Solomon became king in his place.

NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

In the New Testament, there are a number of references to trades and skills and we find the establishment of trade guilds as men and possibly some women sought strength in numbers. The Apostle Paul came up against this **guild of workers** as he went about preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. At Ephesus, which was a significant city in the Roman province of Asia (now known as Turkey), the inhabitants were largely pagan. They had adopted a goddess named Artemis by the Greeks and Diana by the Romans.



The goddess Diana



Artists impression of temple of Diana

We read this about her in the Acts of the Apostles:

‘And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way. For a certain man named Demetrius, **a silversmith**, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: “Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. So that not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised, and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship’ [*Acts 19. 23-27*].

These working groups, or guilds, had become very powerful political groups, often working under imperial license. In this case they made life difficult for the Apostle Paul, who refuted their pagan beliefs and set out the clear teaching of the Gospel of Christ.

THE USE OF TOOLS

So much then for a general look at the basic trades we find mentioned in the Bible. From earliest times it is clear that in Palestine flint knives and scrapers were in use, as examples of these have been found. Wood, of course, found early use as the basis for simple agricultural tools. In due course, iron tools became readily available and from about 3200 BC, copper was regularly employed. There is an interesting *frieze* which came from Senacherib’s palace in Assyria displayed at the British Museum and which shows Assyrian workers

LIGHT ON A NEW WORLD

carrying tools on their shoulders. This artefact is dated to about 690 BC and the scene depicted was parallel in time to Israel's declining



years as a nation. The men are shown carrying everyday working tools, such as spades and picks. (see picture below)

A little illustration from Jewish history and customs is that of the detachable axe-head. A wooden shaft would be carved from suitable wood and these would be used for felling trees. As we know from our own experience, it is all too easy for the axe-head to become loose and fall off. Israel were told to designate certain cities as ‘*cities of refuge*’, to which a manslayer might flee. The example used to illustrate a possible accidental killing, concerns an errant axe head!

‘you shall separate three cities for yourself in the midst of your land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess. You shall prepare roads for yourself, and divide into three parts the territory of your land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, that any man-slayer may flee there. And this is the case of the man-slayer who flees there, that he may live: Whoever kills his neighbour unintentionally, not having hated him in time past - **as when a man goes to the woods with his neighbour to cut timber, and his hand swings a stroke with the axe to cut down the tree, and the head slips from the handle and strikes his neighbour so that he dies** - he shall flee to one of these cities and live’ [*Deuteronomy 19. 2-5*].

Clearly, the people of Israel had a responsibility towards each other and God provided them with the means whereby justice could be obtained when an accident had occurred. Axes were the equivalent of the modern chain saw and we know they also can be lethal pieces of equipment in the event of an accident.

LESSONS FOR TODAY

It would be appropriate at the beginning of this series to comment

upon the need to be occupied in a trade or skill. The Bible alone provides the reason why we need to work to live and why life is often obtained at the expense of considerable effort. The reason of course is sin. This is perhaps an unfashionable word to use these days but it does explain a lot of things!

The Bible reveals that we die because we are sinners in the sight of God. Man was condemned to manual work: *'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]*. The change of pace of life in the modern world means that not everyone needs to do manual work, but we cannot escape the punishment for sin. This is a subject dealt with in this magazine from time to time and is a subject of its own, but it *does* tell us why we need to be occupied, if we would live.

In many countries in the world the conditions today are much as they were several thousand years ago at the dawn of civilisation and bread is won at the expense of sheer physical labour. To have learned a skill may be a welcome change from a life of labouring, but it still demands that we earn our living. It was so throughout Bible times and the Apostle Paul makes the point clearly: *'For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat' [2 Thessalonians 3,10]*.

The Apostle Paul had been called as the Apostle to the Gentiles, to preach to them the Gospel of the Kingdom, but this did not mean that he relied on others to feed him. He was by craft a tent-maker and shared this work with other followers of Jesus in the first century. The followers of Christ have an incentive to work to earn their living, but how much better if all our labours are directed in the service of Jesus Christ, as Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers of the 1st Century: *'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord' [1 Corinthians 15.58]*.

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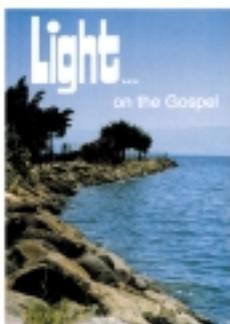
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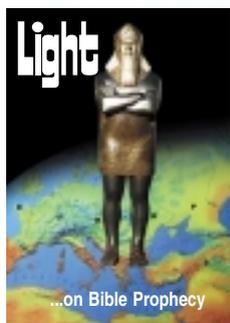
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