



Light

...on a New World

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Cover picture: The Beauty of Winter

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



Editorial

IT may have come as a surprise to many people when Mr Blair, the former British Prime Minister, announced in Parliament on the day after his retirement on 27th June 2007 that he was taking on the task of the peace envoy to the Middle East.

The post was previously held by the former World Bank president, James Wolfensohn who resigned in April 2006 it was reported, because of his frustration in not being able to make progress with a problem that has defied the diplomatic efforts of everyone involved in the Middle East for almost 60 years.

Those who are concerned about the Israeli-Arab conflict, will probably already know that a body called the ‘Quartet on the Middle East’ was set up in Madrid in 2002. This ‘Quartet’ is made up of the United States, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations. It is this international group that is now employing and financing Mr Blair and his team.

We are sure that most people would wish Mr Blair success in the task he has taken on. Some see him as the ideal man for the job, following his success, after many years of patient negotiations, to bring compromise and peace to the warring Protestant and Catholic peoples of Northern Ireland.

The publishers of this magazine dearly want to see peace and a better future brought to the peoples of the Middle East. However this

area's problems are not just between two minor religious factions, as in Northern Ireland. It involves the Jewish peoples around the world and a whole raft of Arab nations who are hostile to the very existence of the nation of Israel.



Meeting of the Middle East Quartet in Berlin – February 2007

We are firmly of the opinion that any negotiator of peace in Israel will eventually have to realise that the solution to the state of affairs in that land, is not in the hands of the world's diplomats or statesmen. It is in the hands of Almighty God.

Some commentators insist that the State of Israel was brought into being by the United Nations. Yes, it was approved of by a vote of that body, but behind that decision was the clear fulfilment of prophecies in God's Word, namely, that God would return His people at His appointed time to their ancient land. The Bible tells us that it was God Himself who scattered the Jewish people throughout the world: *'Then the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other...'* [Deuteronomy 28.64]. But in contrast the prophet Jeremiah wrote: *'Behold, I will gather them out of all the countries where I have driven them... I will bring them back to this place ...'* [Jeremiah 32.37].

There we have just two prophetic statements of God's purpose with His people Israel. There are many more similar prophecies in the Bible. These prophecies reveal the truth that bodies like the United Nations, the rulers of powerful nations and well meaning individuals are being overruled in their decisions by the hand of God.

We are told that the immediate task for Mr Blair on behalf of the Quartet is *'to help create viable and lasting government institutions representing all Palestinians, a robust economy, and a climate of law and order for the Palestinian people.'* This is the Quartet's planned lead up to the establishment of a Palestinian State alongside Israel. But the Bible tells us quite clearly that the Palestinians or Arabs, don't really belong there at all. Their designated lands are on the eastern side of the River Jordan.

Even the late Yasser Arafat seemingly recognised this when he and his Palestinian followers moved into the kingdom of Jordan after the 1967 Israeli victory over the surrounding Arab Nations, including Jordan, in the Six-Day War. However, when King Hussein of Jordan realised that his leadership was threatened, a vicious war broke out between these Arab brothers, leading ultimately to the expulsion of the Palestinians from Jordan in 1970.

Even if the planned Palestinian State is forced on the region by the 'Quartet', we believe it would only lead to another enlarged base for further terrorist attacks, even closer to Israel.

The reality is that there is only **one person** who can and who will eventually bring peace to this troubled region and that person is the Lord Jesus Christ! If you find that hard to believe, we urge you to study the Holy Bible, God's Word more closely. You will find, for example, that Mary the mother of Jesus was told this, prior to his birth:

'He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give him the throne of his

father David. And he will reign over the house of Jacob (Israel) for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.'

[Luke 1.32, 33]

This promised rule of Christ from Jerusalem over Israel will not just be local to the Middle East. It will certainly solve the problems there, but it will also lead to the solving of the dreadful problems worldwide.

The hope of the return of Christ to the earth and the establishment of the Kingdom of God is not a new idea, it was the primary hope of the first century Christians, and it still is the hope of true Christians today. The Apostle Paul taught the people of Athens about this great hope in these words:

'Because he (God) has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all, by raising him from the dead' *[Acts 17.31, 32]*.

The United Nations – The 'Quartet' can appoint who they wish in their endeavours to bring peace to the Middle East. God has ordained Jesus Christ as the only one who can bring peace and justice, not only to that troubled region, but also to all the nations of the earth.

Behind all these troubles with Israel and the Arabs there is the hand of God. The return of the Jewish people to their ancient lands is also a sign to students of the Bible that the return of Jesus Christ to the earth is near.

Will you be ready for this world shaking event?

Ken Dennis
Kent, UK.

The Wisdom of Solomon (3)

AN advertisement on the internet said: *'Save for a rainy day; Simple, straightforward savings for any purpose; A choice of four accounts and one investment – pick the one that suits you best.'* Various ways of saving and making a profit on those savings were advertised.

A WORLD OF EXTREMES

This world is one of extremes, no more so than in the distribution of wealth amongst nations and people. The richest 1% of adults in the world own 40% of the planet's wealth. The richest 10% of adults accounted for 85% of the world total of global assets. However, about 50% of the world's adult population own barely 1% of global wealth, yet the world's richest man, Bill Gates, has \$56 billion. In contrast we read in Proverbs the simple prayer:

'Give me neither poverty nor riches - feed me with the food you prescribe for me; lest I be full and deny you, and say, "Who is the LORD?" Or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God' [*Proverbs 30.8, 9*].

However, rich a company or man becomes, it is never enough. Profits must become greater, earnings must grow and much time and effort is spent in seeking even greater wealth. So much wealth, yet people are never satisfied. Many relationships break up because of the hours spent at building up a career and financial security, at the expense of family relationships. Family strains and 'workaholism' accounted for 24% of the reasons for seeking divorce in the UK in 2003. Other data from 2006 suggests that the other main reasons for divorce are financial issues ? being in debt or not having enough money for a desired lifestyle.

In the flood of dissipation, seeking of status, wealth and pleasure, does anyone stop to ask themselves if wealth can buy or bring true happiness? Can wealth buy true friendship? The answer of course is an emphatic no! In the end it brings a lonely, wasted life, bereft of any lasting meaning. The Apostle Paul wrote: *'For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out'* [1Timothy 6.7]. How is a lavish tomb better than a simple grave, when its occupants return to the dust from which they came?

Now Solomon explores the evil of greed and selfish gain, discussing the useless nature of selfishness and working only to satisfy oneself. A man may gain riches, but Solomon wrote: *'Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away like an eagle towards heaven'* [Proverbs 23.5]. All the wealth in the world is of little value, for it is envy and greed that drives a man on in pursuit of personal gain which in the end *'is vanity and grasping for the wind'* [Ecclesiastes 4.4]. When we consider the vast fortunes that large multi-national companies make and contrast that with the many poor and less fortunate in society who often pay inflated prices for goods, in order that these profits can increase, then it is evident how corrupt and unjust human society is. Thus Solomon wrote: *'Better is a little with righteousness, **than vast revenues without justice**'* [Proverbs 16.8]

THE MATERIALISTIC SOCIETY

It was reported in the local news that a 41-year-old woman was knocked unconscious and then trampled by a mob of shoppers, who then continued to step over her as she suffered a seizure during a sale at a shop in Florida, USA. In the UK it was reported that 3.6 million people work more than 48 hours a week, with many of these exceeding 60 hours. A Financial consultant in a recent report noted that people are forced to work longer hours and get multiple jobs to pay off debts. Many of us live in a materialistic consumer society, in which many people want the latest technology and fashion accessories, but use credit to buy these goods. Britain's personal debt is increasing by £1 million every four minutes! Total credit card debt in March 2007 was

£54.3bn and 300 people each day become bankrupt (Credit Action, 2007). How pertinent are Solomon's words:

'Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun: There is one alone, without companion: He has neither son nor brother. Yet there is no end to all his labours, nor is his eye satisfied with riches. But he never asks, 'For whom do I toil and deprive myself of good?' This also is vanity and a grave misfortune' [*Ecclesiastes 4.7, 8*].

The individual who seeks wealth and material comfort will never be satisfied, the more possessions are gained, the more are wanted. Yet who will gain in the end? When the bloom of youth has gone and the first signs of age begin to show, what use is wealth then? Can health be bought? Can youth be regained? Judging by the number of people who attempt to disguise age by use of cosmetics and even the deadly poison Botulinum toxin (trade name *Botox*) to hide wrinkles, aging is feared. Surely '*vanity of vanities, says the preacher...all is vanity*' [*Ecclesiastes 1.2*]

THE WISE USE OF WEALTH AND POSSESSIONS

However, there is nothing intrinsically wrong in wealth and possessions. Abraham for example was a wealthy man in his time and so of course was Solomon. But Abraham used his wealth wisely, for the good of others. His primary consideration was to trust and obey God; because of this attitude his faith was rewarded. Paul wrote: '*Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some (for example Abraham and his wife Sarah) have unwittingly entertained angels*' [*Hebrews 13.2 - see Genesis 18.2-5, 16, 17*]. It is greed, self-interest at the expense of others, vanity and ignorance of Divine principles, that finds condemnation. The Apostle James warned those who are self seeking in these words:

'Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are

corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days' [James 5.1-3].

For the Christian who tries to bridge the gulf between worldly ways and Divine ways, Jesus teaches that if we are mastered by greed and the search for riches, then we cannot love and serve God. We can have one or the other, but not both [Matthew 6.25]. Moses is a great example of a man who had the opportunity for an easy life amidst all the wealth that his age could offer. Yet Paul wrote these words about Moses:

'By faith Moses, when he came of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward' [Hebrews 11.24-26].

This great man who, at the command of God led the people out of slavery and is described as being faithful in all God's house, [Hebrews 3.2,5] forsook the temporary ease that Egypt could have offered, preferring the riches of knowing God and inheriting the Kingdom to come. Paul reminds us of the truth of the matter when writing to Timothy: '*But godliness with contentment is great gain.*' [1Timothy 6.6]

PENSIONS AND SAVING FOR A COMFORTABLE OLD AGE

Many people in the western world are concerned to maintain their comfortable lifestyle into retirement and if they can retire early and enjoy life, so much the better. A pension advice advert stated '*The good news is – we are living longer! ...The answer is good pension planning for everyone and it's becoming more important than ever. There are many types of pension available and a pension is one of the most tax efficient ways of saving. We will help you to find the one that is most suitable for you.*' And another financial advert stated, '*Save for your retirement in the original low-cost, hassle-free personal pension.*'

Thus people carefully plan for a comfortable retirement. Now, Jesus told a parable about a rich man who wanted to increase his ability to store wealth for his retirement. With a sense of self satisfaction about his wealth, he said to himself: ‘. I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.’ But the reality was to be far different:

“But God said to him, “You fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?” So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God’ [Luke 12.19-21].

All the wealth, status and savings in the world cannot put off the inevitable – the day of death – and nobody knows when that day will come. How then should the sincere follower of Christ view such matters? Paul gave some wise advice to Timothy when he wrote that:

‘we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And **having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.** But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For **the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil**, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows [1Timothy 6.7-10].

TRUE RICHES AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

What a stark contrast exists between those who seek God and those who seek the temporary riches of this present life. The one will find genuine riches and the other, though not realising it, is immeasurably poor and will perish in the end, destitute of the true riches that lead to life. Those who labour for selfish gain will in the end find only a lonely and meagre existence, which ends in the finality of death. True

riches are not linked to gaining the temporary wealth in this life, be it status, career, money or possessions. Rather finding genuine riches lies in the direction of Paul's exhortation to Timothy: *'But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness' [1Timothy 6.11]*. This advice applies equally to us today. It is the individual's character, developed by a sincere response to the Scriptures and emulating the example of Christ, which is of far greater worth than any material gain. The Apostle Peter described it as *'the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.'* [1Peter 3.4]

What greater riches could there be than to find life? Not just the limited life that exists now, but life as it was intended to be from the beginning. The dedicated follower of Christ will count the promise of God concerning salvation and His coming Kingdom, as their greatest treasure.

Jesus told a parable about a man who found hidden treasure in a field. That man went away and sold everything in order to purchase the field and obtain the treasure. In the same way, those who find the hidden treasure in the Scriptures about the Kingdom of God, must be prepared to give up present possessions if need be, in order to inherit those far greater treasures to come.

Money cannot buy perfect health, the removal of disabilities, or life. But for those who are truly rich towards God, eternal life means a complete regeneration, a new life! Imagine no longer experiencing the effects of ill health, age or disability, but having strength renewed, being able to walk or even run as far as you want without tiring (Isaiah 40:31). The path to spiritual wealth begins with humility. Not self seeking, but rather unselfishness and self-sacrifice. Such was the humility of Paul who wrote to the Christians at Ephesus: *'To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ'* [Ephesians 3. 8].

Paul recognised his true state before God and he suffered much for his faith. He saw the immeasurable spiritual riches revealed in Christ, marvelling that such love, mercy and compassion had been shown towards him by God. Thus he was moved to exclaim:

‘Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!’ [Romans 11.33]

This then is true wealth. Riches beyond measure, if we know the wisdom and knowledge of our Creator and experience His love and mercy extended towards us.

A ‘RICH’ FUTURE

Unlike the greedy and materialistic society in which many people live, the faithful work without thought for reward. Their motive is to please their Creator in this life and seek honour in the life to come. Their labour, though hard at times and apparently without immediate result, will not be forgotten. To them the prophet Malachi addresses these encouraging words:

‘Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, And the LORD listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before him for those who fear the LORD and who meditate on his name. ‘They shall be mine,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘On the day that I make them my jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him’ [Malachi 3.16,17].

The promise of God to those who during their lives forsake the illusion of present gain, is *‘eternal life to those who **by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honour, and immortality**’* [Romans 2.7]. God will not forget faith and trust in Him. The problems and trials that the faithful will experience in this life, are part of a

refining process which develops those characteristics of a *'gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God'* [1 Peter 3. 4].

SOLOMON AND CHRIST

As for Solomon, all his wisdom and vast wealth, in the end turned him away from God. Maybe he had himself in mind when he wrote: *'Better is a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who will be admonished no more'* [Ecclesiastes 4.13]. The *'poor and wise youth'* maybe speaks of the greater son of David, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was to come. He was lacking in material possessions and yet is heir to David's throne and his Kingdom will last for ever (See Luke 1.32, 33).

Though innocent and *'without sin'*, Jesus died and entered the prison house of death, being in the grave for three days. But the grave could not hold him for God raised His Son on the third day, to inherit far greater riches than Solomon amassed in his mortal life. Jesus is the firstborn from the dead, heir to all things and the Saviour of all who have faith in Him. His elevated position is described in the last book of the Bible: *'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing!'* [Revelation 5.12]

So through the wisdom that God gave to Solomon and the even greater wisdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the discerning find the path to real riches revealed. The quotation at the start of this article was: *'save for a rainy day'*. Those who are not *'rich towards God'* will find how poor they really are and how useless material wealth is when Jesus returns. They will have nothing saved of any real value. Those who are wise and have sought for that which is truly important in life, will find that they are given true and lasting riches – life for evermore in the Kingdom of God.

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The Promises to David

WHO was David? He lived about 1,000 years before Christ and he was an Israelite of the tribe of Judah. He was made King of Israel by God's appointment and Jesus Christ was descended from him. He is one of the most prominent and important characters mentioned in the Bible and references to him abound in both the Old and New Testaments. For example it is written concerning David:

'He (God) also chose David his servant, and took him from the sheep-folds; from following the ewes that had young he brought him, to shepherd Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands' [*Psalm 78.70-72*].

David never ceased to marvel at this astonishing transformation in his life. When later God gave immense promises to him, he could only marvel and express himself ecstatically:

'...Who am I, O sovereign LORD, and what is my family that you have brought me this far? And as if this were not enough in your sight, O sovereign LORD, you have also spoken about the future of the house of your servant. Is this your usual way of dealing with man, O sovereign LORD?' [*2 Samuel 7.18, 19 NIV*]

However, this is what the LORD thought about David, a man we know to have been less than perfect: '*After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: "I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do"*' [*Acts 13.22 NIV*].

Saul was the first man to be king of Israel. He was chosen by God from the tribe of Benjamin. Sadly the nation had overlooked that God was their king and foolishly requested that they be given a king like the surrounding nations. Saul proved to be a failure due to his disobedience to God's instructions and he and his family were rejected by God.

SO WHAT DID GOD PROMISE DAVID AND WHEN?

It came about like this. David, a very caring and generous man, was conscience smitten when he realised how much God had given him and yet he was dwelling in a house of cedar and the Ark of God, the symbol of God's presence in the midst of Israel was housed in a tent. And so he asked for God's permission to build a house for the Ark.

God responded in great generosity and made promises of very far reaching consequences and huge in their scope. David must have been amazed when the LORD said that, although David was not the right person to build a house for the Ark, yet God would, nonetheless, build David a house. But God promised David many more things besides. If you read the Second book of Samuel chapter 7 verses 10 to 18 and analyse its content you will discover that God promised the following:

- I will provide a place for my people Israel, and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed.
- Wicked people shall not oppress them anymore as they did at the beginning and have done ever since I appointed leaders over my people Israel.
- I will also give you rest from all your enemies.
- The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you.

- When your days are over and you go to rest with your fathers I will raise up your offspring to succeed you who will come from your own body.
- I will establish his kingdom.
- He is the one who will build a house for my Name.
- I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever.
- I will be his father and he will be my son.
- If he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings afflicted by men.
- But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul whom I removed from before you.
- Your house and your kingdom shall endure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever.

All of this is repeated in the first book of Chronicles chapter 17 and if a comparison is made we will observe a few differences as follows:

- The LORD said: I will set him over my house and my kingdom for ever. In the Samuel account the pronouns are '*your*' not '*my*'.
- The matter of punishment for the son if he does wrong is omitted.
- His (i.e. the King's) throne, not yours, will be established for ever.

We can see how David understood these words from following extracts from his response to the LORD:

- LORD God, keep for ever the promise you have made concerning your servant and his house.

- Your words are trustworthy. Now be pleased to bless the house of your servant, that it may continue for ever in your sight.
- You my God, have revealed to your servant that you will build a house for him, the house of your servant David will be established for ever before you.

DAVID'S SON SOLOMON

The important question is – to which of David's descendants would these amazing promises be fulfilled? To find out the answer we must trace the history of the family of David. We begin by observing what David told his son Solomon, who was appointed to succeed him on the throne.

‘...My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build a house to the name of the LORD my God; but the word of the LORD came to me, saying...you shall not build a house for my name because you have shed much blood on the earth in my sight. Behold, a son shall be born to you, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies...His name shall be Solomon, for I will give peace and quietness to Israel in his days. He shall build a house for my name, and he shall be my son, and I will be his Father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever.’ [*1Chronicles 22.7-10*]

We also note what David said in a speech made about the same time to the leaders of Israel. He explained

‘...of all my sons (for the LORD has given me many sons) he has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel. Now he said to me, ‘it is your son Solomon who shall build my house and my courts; for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will

be his Father. Moreover I will establish his kingdom for ever, if he is steadfast to observe my commandments...As you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind...If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will cast you off for ever' [1 Chronicles 28.5-10].

Solomon did build the house of God according to the written details given by God to David and using the immense wealth of materials provided so generously by his father. However, regrettably, he did not follow David's heartfelt advice and forsook the LORD. The record in the first book of Kings tells us that '*the LORD became angry with Solomon...*' and said '*I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant*' [1 Kings 11.9, 11].

Solomon ended up being a failure and that little word "**if**" in the promises applied to him. Solomon was only an imperfect prototype of someone much greater, one of David's sons to be born in the still distant future. This son was not chosen to be God's son but was actually conceived by the power of the Most High overshadowing his mother. He was truly God's Son as well as being descended from David through his mother Mary. Notwithstanding Solomon's failure, we have the following wonderful reassurances about the promises in one Psalm. (This Psalm incidentally was written by one of the outstandingly wise men of Israel with whom Solomon was favourably compared - see the reference to him in 1 Kings 4.31).

'If his sons forsake my law...then I will visit their transgression with the rod...Nevertheless my loving kindness I will not utterly take from him (David), nor allow my faithfulness to fail. My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David: His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me; It shall be established for ever like the moon, even like the faithful witness in the sky' [Psalm 89.30-37].

Many years later, after many of David's sons had ruled over a much diminished kingdom and in many cases flagrantly ignored the LORD, God declared in anger that there was no remedy and he would overturn the throne of the kingdom. There would be no more kings *'until he comes whose right it is'* [see Ezekiel 21.25-27]. The LORD punished his wicked people with the rod of men and brought the mighty Babylonian kingdom to destroy Jerusalem and remove its leaders from the land, sending them as exiles to Babylonia. It was while the Babylonians were in the very process of besieging and conquering Jerusalem in approximately 600 BC that God spoke through the prophet Jeremiah some most astounding words. Those who heard them simply refused to believe them, they were so amazing:

'...If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night so that there will not be day and night in their season, then my covenant may also be broken with David my servant so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne...If my covenant is not with day and night and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth, then I will cast away the descendants of Jacob and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his descendants to be rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For I will cause their captives to return, and will have mercy on them.'

[Jeremiah 33.20-26]

Ever since those days there has been no king and no throne from which to rule the kingdom of Judah. But who is it who has the right to that throne? Which of David's descendants would not do wrong and thus qualify to rule on David's throne for ever?

JESUS THE SON OF DAVID

Inevitably we come to consider Jesus, about whom there is no **'if'**. In the same chapter of Jeremiah we have these words: *'In those days*

and at that time I will cause to grow up to David a Branch of righteousness; He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell safely' [Jeremiah 33.15]. Notice how other aspects of the promises are drawn into the picture; Israel to be planted safely in the land and never again to be disturbed by wicked men.

Isaiah also foretold a time of tremendous joy and jubilation when he wrote those words which the composer Handel put to music in his work entitled 'The Messiah':

‘For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder. And his name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 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 judgement and justice from that time forward even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.’

[Isaiah 9.6,7]

Plainly this is describing the one in whom all the clauses in God's promise to David will be fulfilled - permanent safety for Israel; a home of their own; never again to be oppressed by wicked people; David's name made great; David's house established for ever; David's own son reigning on David's throne and over David's kingdom, all of which are destined to be for ever. This will be accomplished by the God of Israel, who made those irrevocable promises and confirmed them with an oath.

THE PROMISES TO DAVID IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

What does the New Testament have to say about these things? Perhaps it should not surprise us to discover that David is mentioned about fifty times in the New Testament. In fact the New Testament

begins with these words: *'The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham'* [Matthew 1.1].

Luke gives the well known announcement by the angel Gabriel to Mary; that she is to be the mother of Jesus and the child would be conceived by the Holy Spirit coming upon her. Analysing the announcement we observe the following:

- The child would be great;
- He will be called the son of the Most High;
- He will be called the son of God;
- The LORD God will give him the throne of his father David;
- He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever;
- His kingdom will never end. [See Luke 1.32,33]

All these features occur in the promises to David. We particularly note the sharing of paternity between God and David. Luke also records the song of praise by John the Baptist's father, Zechariah, in which he said: *'Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for...he has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets...that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us...'* [Luke 1.68-71].

PAUL'S SPEECH ABOUT DAVID AND JESUS

Some thirty or so years later the Apostle Paul made a speech from which the following extracts are taken:

'And when he had removed him (Saul), he raised up for them David as king...From this man's seed according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Saviour - Jesus...those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know him, nor even the voices of the

prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them in condemning him...Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. **But God raised him from the dead?**And we declare to you glad tidings ? that promise which was made to the fathers. God has fulfilled for us their children, in that he has raised up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”...Therefore he also says in another Psalm: “You will not allow your Holy One to see corruption”. For David...fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption; but he whom God raised up saw no corruption’ [Acts 13.22-37].

There is no doubt, therefore, that Jesus is the son or descendant of David in whom the promises to David are to be fulfilled in their entirety. But in what way did he differ from all of David’s other sons?

JESUS THE ONLY PERFECT DESCENDANT OF DAVID

The Apostle Peter alluding to Isaiah chapter 53 wrote: *‘Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow his steps, “Who committed no sin, nor was guile found in his mouth”’* [1Peter 2v21, 22]. Jesus, the sinless man, was unique, not only among David’s sons but all humanity. The *‘if he commits iniquity’* clause of the promises [2 Samuel 7.14] simply did not apply to Jesus. Hence it is in Jesus that those grand positive aspects of the promises are to be fulfilled in their entirety.

We can now understand why the words concerning ownership of the throne, kingdom and house are interchangeable. The connections between God, David and their shared Son Jesus are so intimate that the ownership of the throne, kingdom and house are also shared. However, ultimately, as David declared in his prayer *‘Blessed are you, LORD God of Israel, our Father, for ever and ever...Yours is the kingdom O LORD and you are exalted as head over all’* [1Chronicles

29.10,11]. Jesus, likewise, in teaching his disciple to pray said: *'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven...for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever. Amen'* [Matthew 6.9-13]

ARE GOD'S PROMISES TO DAVID OF ANY RELEVANCE TO US?

You might well ask, what has all this to do with me? Well, it is not a mere academic exercise but of the greatest possible importance to us all. The fact is that God's 'house' or household is constituted of men and women, those that understand and believe in God's promises and search the Scriptures daily. Paul wrote to the Christians at Ephesus: *'you are no longer strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord'* [Ephesians 2.19-21].

To this we can add Paul's words to the Philippians: *'For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ'* Then he adds something of the greatest significance *'who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to his glorious body'* [Philippians 3.20].

If you wonder why our bodies must be transformed, then Paul supplies the answer in a letter to the believers at Corinth: *'Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption'* [1 Corinthians 15.50]. He proceeds to explain that our existing mortal bodies must be changed to immortality and thus be capable of inheriting a kingdom which is to be everlasting. This is the kingdom of God upon the throne of which Jesus Christ will rule. The throne will be David's throne and the house over which he will rule is to be the house of Israel. However, Scripture says elsewhere that God will give his son a kingdom which will be *'from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth'* [Psalm

72.8] and again: *'I will give you the nations for your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession'* [Psalm 2.8].

JEWS AND GENTILES CAN SHARE IN THE PROMISES TO DAVID

Not long before David's throne in Jerusalem was overturned, the prophet Amos foretold a glorious restoration:

'On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David which has fallen down...and rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the Gentiles (nations) who are called by my name, says the LORD, who does this thing...I will bring back the captives of my people Israel; they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. I will plant them (the nation of Israel) in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them, says the LORD your God' [Amos 9.11-15].

When there was a dispute among the early believers as to whether the Gospel should be offered to the Gentiles (non Jews) the Apostle James settled the matter by quoting those words of Amos which clearly speak of the Gentiles being called to respond to the Gospel' (See Acts 15.15-18).

It would be tragic to miss out on this amazing offer through being unaware of it. Hence we draw your attention to it in this article but it is only one of many wonderful things that God invites you to participate in. However considerable effort is needed to search them out and this magazine seeks to help those who sincerely want to know the plan of salvation found only in God's Word the Bible.

Geoffrey Mitchell
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Customs in Bible Times

Anointing with Oil

THERE are many references in the Bible to the use of anointing oil and the practice of anointing persons with oil, many of them related to the consecration of the priests under the Law of Moses. This was a most ancient custom and was especially appropriate in a hot, dry and dusty country. It was also a means whereby honour was bestowed upon the person being anointed.

In England, in 1953, Queen Elizabeth II was crowned as the new monarch and anointed with oil and it is well known that this very solemn act was accepted by her as the token of her consecration to a life of service before God. She has won the praise of many for the tremendous effort she has made to serve her country and her people as the anointed Queen and she has always acknowledged that her allegiance is first to God Almighty, by whose grace she reigns. The vows she took on becoming Queen make this very clear.

Kings of Israel were anointed as a confirmation of their appointment by God. As Samuel said to Saul, Israel's first **human** king: *'The LORD sent me to anoint you king over his people, over Israel. Now therefore, heed the voice of the words of the LORD' [1 Samuel 15.1].*

The priests under the Aaronic priesthood, were all anointed to their task. It was an act which confirmed that they were consecrated to the service of the Lord and a very special oil was prepared, the like of which was not to be used by ordinary men and women. The instructions were very precise: *'take for yourself quality spices – five*

hundred shekels of liquid myrrh, half as much sweet-smelling cinnamon, (two hundred and fifty shekels), two hundred and fifty shekels of sweet-smelling cane, five hundred shekels of cassia, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and a hin of olive oil. And you shall make from these a holy anointing oil, an ointment compounded according to the art of the perfumer. It shall be a holy anointing oil' [Exodus 30.23-25].

God made it clear that the purpose of the anointing was to signify the separation of the priests to His service: *'This shall be an holy anointing oil to me' [Exodus 30.31].* This very special oil could not be used by anyone other than the priests: *'it shall not be poured on man's flesh; nor shall you make any other like it, according to its composition It is holy, and it shall be holy to you' [Exodus 30.32].* Together with all the washing and physical preparations, the putting on of garments which were *'for glory and for beauty' [Exodus 28.2].* Aaron was anointed High Priest, a figure of one to come who would **without** the beautiful adornments present himself morally without fault before his God and Father, yet one who was and will be anointed *'with the oil of gladness' [Psalm 45.7]* as king over the coming kingdom of God. (We will come back to this point and explore the beautiful figure presented to us here.)

We shall not be surprised to find that anointing took place on a much humbler level than that of Kings and Priests. It is known that the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans together with many other nations, resorted to anointing their guests as an act of courtesy and an expression of hospitality. Almost invariably, the base substance used was olive oil which was then mixed with fragrant and costly spices. The head was the usual part of the body to be anointed, but the feet also benefited from soothing and fragrant oil.

God promised Israel that once they entered the promised land, they would be blessed with olive groves: *'You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory'*, but they were also warned that

disobedience would mean that they would not enjoy the use of the oil, *'but you shall not anoint yourself with the oil; for your olives shall drop off'* [Deuteronomy 28.40]. Not to anoint oneself, was also a sign of mourning and this is alluded to in an incident taken from the times of King David: *'And Joab sent to Tekoah and brought from there a wise woman, and said to her; please pretend to be a mourner; and put on mourning apparel; **do not anoint yourself with oil**, but act like a woman who has been mourning a long time for the dead'*[2 Samuel 14, 2].



In the well-known 23rd Psalm, David referred to anointing as a sign that God had blessed him in his life: *'You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over'* [Psalm 23.5]. In so saying, David presents himself as an honoured guest of Almighty God. The figure he uses so beautifully in the Psalm, is taken directly from every day hospitality in the Middle East. The picture shows an eastern shepherd pouring oil on his sheep to protect them from the sun and heal wounds.

Another Bible character, Naomi told Ruth to wash and anoint herself with oil. Having toiled in the field all day, gleaning for corn, it was probably good advice! [Ruth 3.2]

These are just a few of the many references to the use of anointing with oil and the careful use of a concordance or 'on-line' Bible reference system will reward you further. However, it is the association of Jesus with anointing which presents us with some of the most powerful lessons. You may recall that occasion when Christ

entered the house of Simon the Pharisee. It was a time for this woman deemed by Simon to be a sinner, to show her love and affection for Christ, and it was an act which was misunderstood by Simon. The sin-stricken nature of the woman was more obvious to Simon than the love she wanted to show for Jesus. His condemnation of Simon was complete. He clearly had loved little! *'You gave me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss my feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint my head with oil, but this woman has anointed my feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little'* [Luke 7, 45-47].

There are, of course, lessons for us all. We do not have the physical presence of Jesus so that we can lavish upon him our love, but we do have those who are his followers, who will benefit from our loving care and attention. There is without doubt a modern day equivalent of the anointing oil and many have benefited from it, sometimes from the most unexpected quarters. As Jesus said, we have the poor always with us and it is upon them that we can pour out our love for him.

Jesus would have appreciated that his head be anointed with oil. Little chance of that in the house of a Pharisee! **Yet, he himself, is the Christ – the anointed one - as that name means!** The Apostle to the Hebrews makes the connection and provides those powerful lessons we referred to earlier. He contrasts the superiority of Christ over the angels and refers to that passage we have already mentioned in Psalm 45 concerning Christ's anointing: *'But to the Son he says: ' Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness more than your companions'* [Hebrews 1, 8-9]. Christ is associated with those described as his '*companions*'. He was of our nature and was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin [Hebrews 4.15]. Because he loved righteousness and hated iniquity, he

has been raised to a glorious place next to his Father, greater than the angels - **the anointed one** who soon will return to be enthroned as King of Israel and of the whole world.

The Apostle John, writing to the first-century believers speaks of us having '*an anointing*' [1 John 2.20 - KJV '*unction*']. This is not the so-called '*divine unction*' administered to dying persons but rather the revelation of the truth of God's Word. '*You know the truth*' wrote John [1 John 2.21]. What an anointing! Those who have become associated with Jesus through belief and baptism have received this '*anointing*' with the prospect before them of being made Kings and Priests, when those who are truly Christ's '*companions*' will share with him the glories of the age to come.

Will you be among that number?

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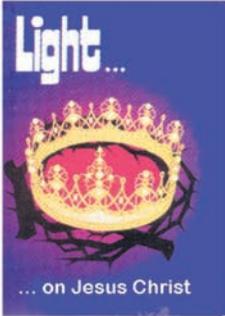
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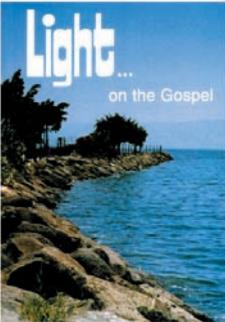
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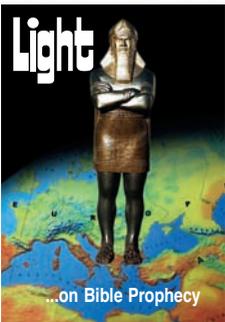
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