

Light

...on a new world

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

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

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Volume 28.4

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COVER:

Advanced Israeli technology on display – the Israel Aerospace Industries’ stand at the Singapore Airshow in 2016.

See article on the Balfour Declaration pages 7–8.

Note:

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

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The Balfour Declaration

the puzzled Minister

It was October 1916 in England, in the middle of World War One, and 25,000 tons of horse chestnuts (conkers) had been collected by school children around the country and were being delivered to the Ministry of Munitions!

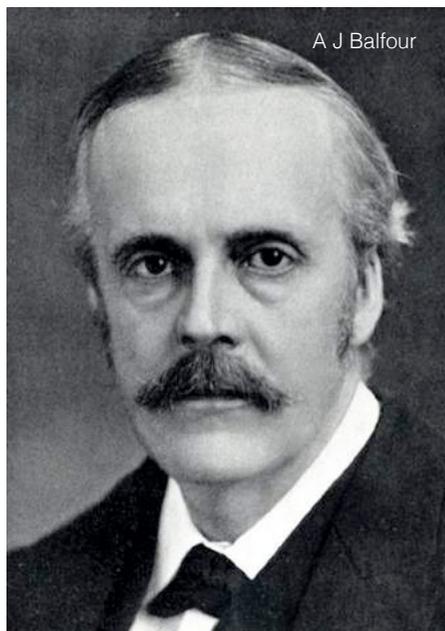
As the Minister, Winston Churchill knew only too well that acetone was needed to make cordite, the explosive inside tank and rifle shells, and that it was now in very short supply. But he had been kept in the dark about secret experiments being run at the British Admiralty Laboratories. So, on 2nd November Churchill wrote a letter to the Director-General, Sir Albert Stern: 'Pray explain to me why you are asking for chestnuts and what you propose to make of them?'

In his reply Sir Albert explained that the Laboratory Director, Chaim Weizmann, was working closely with a Jewish explosives expert.

Weizmann had found a way to make acetone by fermenting conkers!

another letter

Apparently by chance, another letter was sent on the same day. This time it was from A.J. Balfour, Foreign Secretary in Lloyd George's government and it read as follows:



'His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use its best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.'

The letter has been known ever since as the **Balfour Declaration**.

The war was at a critical stage. Lloyd George's War Cabinet wanted Russian Jews to encourage Russia to stay in the war and the American Jews to encourage the United States to fully commit to the war. The promise of a 'home for the Jewish people' was the bait.

From the moment it was written until the very end of his life, a leading supporter of the Balfour Declaration was Winston Churchill. But over 30 years would pass before Balfour's full intentions were achieved. By then Chaim Weizmann

RIGHT: Winston Churchill on a visit to Palestine in 1921

was no longer just a clever chemist, but the President of the newly formed State of Israel.

Churchill's support

Churchill always recognised that the British Government's pledge to the Jews had been made as a result of the urgent needs of the war. He also felt that the Balfour Declaration could not be set aside when, in later years, it became awkward to fulfil.

Churchill never forgot that Weizmann had presented his invention to the Government without taking a penny for it throughout the war. Now, with the war won, Weizmann asked for nothing but the support of Britain for the Zionist cause, and it was a promise that could not and would not be forgotten.

But as the years went by, there was opposition in Parliament and Britain's support for the promises made in November 1917 came under threat. By May 1939 the Government was finding it difficult to administer the Mandate over Palestine given to Britain by the League of Nations in 1923. In one Parliamentary debate, Churchill spoke with force and bitterness against proposed changes to Government policy, which he



the establishment of a 'home for the Jewish people'.

In 1942, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, Churchill sent a telegram of congratulation and support to Weizmann for the progress being made in Palestine. He also sent a message of encouragement to a Jewish newspaper, 'The Jewish Chronicle', ending with the observation that 'though the mills of God grind slowly...they grind exceeding small'.

believed would be a betrayal of the Balfour Declaration. In his words he felt unable to '... stand by and see a solemn engagement into which Britain had entered... set aside for reasons of administrative convenience or for the sake of a quiet life'. To which he added: 'I would feel personally embarrassed in the most acute manner if I lent myself, by silence or inaction, to what I must regard as an act of repudiation'.

Churchill's persuasive reasoning, voiced on many occasions during many years, certainly helped to keep the objectives of the Balfour Declaration moving slowly but surely in the right direction, towards

Unknown to many at the time, the atrocity of the Holocaust was being perpetrated in Europe during World War Two. Ironically, it was the revelation of the Holocaust that encouraged support for the objectives of the Balfour Declaration in the post-war world.

Churchill was aware of the hand of God in Jewish affairs. Perhaps he also recognised that the Balfour Declaration, unwittingly composed during World War One for another purpose entirely, was actually a divine instrument designed to fulfil Bible prophecy. When Churchill died in 1965, 'The Jewish Chronicle' included these words in his obituary:

'For Churchill it was the magical revival of a nation which had seen so many empires crumble into dust, which had persisted through so many trials and humiliations, which had renewed its ancient creative vitality...(that prompted him to call) upon his countrymen to conceive the establishment of the State of Israel in the perspective of thousands of years. No petty calculation or...diplomatic loss or gain drew him to Zionism; for him it belonged to the great tide of history.'

a magical revival?

That 'tide of history' reached its full height in May 1948. The revival of the Jewish nation and the establishment of the State of Israel that year was truly remarkable, but it certainly wasn't magic! The history of the Jews had been mapped out in advance. The publication of the Balfour Declaration moved God's purpose with the Jews forward in the direction predicted in the Bible:

'...the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you...He will bring you to the land that

belonged to your fathers, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers.'

Deuteronomy 30.3,5

These words are quoted from the NIV, as are all other Bible quotations in this article. They were written about 3,500 years ago, yet they have all come true in recent times. And there are many other prophecies in the Bible that predict the same thing: a Jewish return to Israel after many years of being scattered around the world. This remarkable prediction is one of them:

'See, I will bring them (the Jews) from the land of the north and gather them from the ends of the earth. Among them will be the blind and the lame, expectant mothers and women in labour; a great throng will return. They will come with weeping...For the LORD will ransom Jacob and redeem them from the hand of those stronger than they.'

Jeremiah 31.8,9,11

In view of this prophecy, even the strength of Nazi Germany and Hitler's attempt to destroy all the Jews was bound to fail. The Old

Testament prophets also recorded God's words:

'...O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel...I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land...' Ezekiel 37.12,14

'Hear the word of the LORD, O nations; proclaim it in distant coastlands: He who scattered Israel will gather them and will

watch over his flock like a shepherd.' Jeremiah 31.10

a modern miracle!

When the State of Israel was declared in 1948 there were approximately 600,000 Jews in the country. Today the Jewish population is over eight million. Israel is a military superpower in the Middle East and is recognized as the fifth strongest nation in the world. Israel now leads the world in many areas of scientific research and advanced technology (see front

Survivors of the Buchenwald concentration camp arrive in Israel in July 1945



cover). Israel registers far more patents for new inventions each year than any other country and exports large quantities of agricultural and commercial goods worldwide.

The land that was still a neglected desert when the Balfour Declaration was written is now one of the most fertile and productive areas of the world. Its agricultural technology and success are the envy of Africa and Asia. Recent discoveries of vast quantities of oil and natural gas will now add to Israel's rapidly growing prosperity. All of which is exactly what the Bible tells its readers to expect:

'...I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land...The desolate land will be cultivated instead of lying desolate...They will say,

RIGHT: the desolate land cultivated – fields in the Jezreel valley in northern Israel.

"This land that was laid waste has become like the garden of Eden; the cities that were lying in ruins, desolate and destroyed, are now fortified and inhabited."

Ezekiel 36.24, 34,35

The revival of Israel is most certainly a modern miracle. As Churchill observed, whole 'empires have crumpled into dust', but the Jews have never disappeared. No other people in the world have had such a remarkable history as the Jews. Their history was foretold in the Bible 2,500 years ago or more. This should alert us to the fact that something quite extraordinary is now happening in the world.

what next?

So, the obvious question is, what happens next? With Israel now flourishing as a 'home for the Jewish people', the original intentions of the Balfour Declaration have now been well and truly achieved.

Is that the end of the story?
Unfortunately not!

The Bible makes it quite clear that once the Jews are back in their ancient homeland, as they are now,

New brain research labs at Bar-Ilan University





other nations would envy their success and launch an invasion:

‘You and all your troops and the many nations with you will go up, advancing like a storm...against the resettled ruins and the people gathered from the nations, rich in livestock and goods, living at the centre of the land...You will come from your place in the far north, you and many nations with you...You will advance against my people Israel like a cloud that covers the land.’

Ezekiel 38.9, 12, 15,16

Such an invasion of the Middle East will trigger the greatest world crisis since the conclusion of the Second World War. If this was an isolated prediction we could shrug it off and take no notice, but that is not the case. We all have to make up our

minds. Either the fulfilment of Bible prophecy has been a series of uncanny coincidences, or they are really true. If we come to the conclusion that the prophecies are true, we naturally want to know how this invasion of Israel will end. At the end of the same chapter, Ezekiel described the destruction of the army that had invaded Israel:

‘I will execute judgment upon him (the invading army) with plague and bloodshed; I will pour down torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulphur on him and on his troops and on the many nations with him.’ Ezekiel 38.22

The entire conflict will be on a much greater scale than we have ever seen before, drawing other nations into the conflict:

‘I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city. Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle.’

Zechariah 14.2,3

It is at this point that, according to the Bible, Jesus Christ will return just as he promised, to set up a kingdom not just over Israel but ruling all the world from Jerusalem. A very welcome feature of that kingdom will be world peace:

‘He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.’

Isaiah 2.4

So clearly, the future of Israel is key to a peaceful future for the world. The outcome of the Balfour Declaration has proved to be more significant than its writer could ever have imagined!

God’s plan affects us all

Israel has certainly had a unique history, all predicted in advance in a unique book, the Bible. Their survival as a nation proves that God had chosen the Jewish race to be His witnesses to the world, that He exists and that He is still working among the nations to accomplish His purpose.

It took over 30 years for the purpose of the Balfour Declaration to be achieved. But while the old saying that ‘the mills of God grind slowly’ may be true, the signs are that His final purpose with Israel is about to be achieved.

That purpose involves our own salvation. God is calling us to become involved with that purpose by being baptized and starting a new life in His service. If we respond, we can look forward with hope to the return of Christ and the kingdom of God. We will be able to share in the destiny of Israel and a wonderful future for the world.

Signs are that the final conflict is not far away, so there is no time to lose!

Graham Lake
Surrey, UK

“Ladybird, Ladybird, fly away home...”

(English Nursery Rhyme)

As one of the so-called ‘baby-boomer’ generation, one of the things I grew up with after the Second World War was ‘Ladybird Books’. This was a series of small books for children, covering every conceivable subject, factual and fictional. My first encounter with King Arthur and his knights and an elementary crystal radio that you built yourself (lots of whistles!) came from ‘Ladybird’. The small format arose from wartime restrictions in 1940, when ‘Ladybird’ found they could print the whole of a 56 page book and dust jacket from a single sheet of paper 40 x 30 inches (102 x 76 cm) in size – a real feat of ‘paper engineering’. Being hardbacks they lasted well and many have been handed down over the generations. The ‘Ladybird’ symbol started off with open wings but soon changed to the one still used today with its red wing-cases and distinctive black spots.



Fast-forward to 2017, when some Japanese scientists decided to investigate how the ladybird manages to fold up its long wings to fit under its small wing cases. Part of one wing case (proper name ‘elytron’) was cut away and replaced by an artificial elytron made of clear resin, so that they could see what was happening inside. Then using advanced high speed photography they filmed the tiny bug as it opened and closed its wings, something it does a thousand times or more during its brief lifespan.

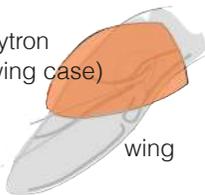
What they found was a complex pattern of folding which they compared with ‘**origami**’. This is the Japanese art of paper-folding which is now popular in many parts of the world. A single small sheet of paper is folded several times in different ways to form any number of 3-dimensional objects, from a boat to a swan to a jumping frog etc.

comment



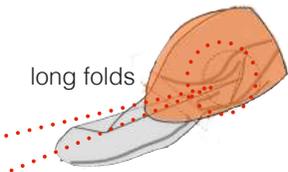
wing folding sequence

elytron
(wing case)

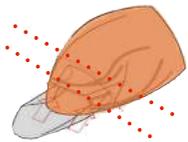


wing

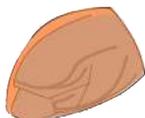
long folds



complex
multifolding
in centre

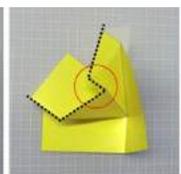
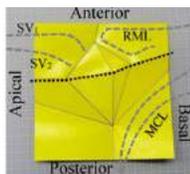


short folds

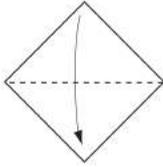


folding complete – wing
entirely protected by wing case

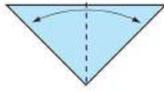
complex folding in centre of wing (see circled area)



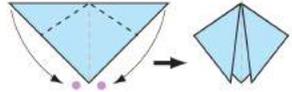
simple origami pattern for ladybird



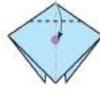
1. Start with a square piece of paper, white side up. Fold in half.



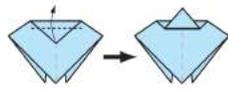
2. Fold this triangle in half, crease well then open.



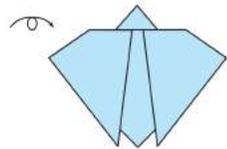
3. Fold the top 2 corners downwards, but not right to the centre line: leave a little gap.



4. Turn model over. Fold down top corner to the centre point of the model.



5. Now fold this corner upwards, and flatten.



6. Turn back over. Finished Ladybug



The comparison of the ladybird's wing with the simple paper engineering of origami is interesting, but also throws into relief the amazing advanced engineering of the ladybird. For example:

1. A sheet of paper has fixed qualities of strength and stiffness. Once it has been folded the paper is permanently creased and deformed. The ladybird's wing is quite different, because it can change its properties – the main supporting veins of the wing can be soft and flexible for folding and stiff and strong for flight. Where a human engineer would need to build a fixed combination of rigid rods and flexible hinges, the ladybird's wing can change its properties to suit its function.

2. The **origami** model requires the folder to decide from the beginning what he/she is trying to create, and then carry out a strict sequence of folds in a particular order to achieve the end result. The very first fold is made knowing what the eventual target is to be.

If the ladybird evolved, as so many people believe, then **there is no target**. Evolution cannot envisage any targets or choose any particular destination. It does not know that this wing needs folding or why – it is purely accidental, the result of the random changes ('mutations') on which evolution depends. If a fold happens to take place, and if it also proves to be an advantage of some kind, then it may be kept until such time as the next 'useful' fold happens to come along. The overwhelming majority of accidental folds will be harmful or fatal; the chances of two or three useable folds coming along together are astronomically improbable. The wing-case had to evolve at the same time, because a folded but unprotected wing is exposed to more serious damage – any impact could affect several layers at once.

The wing is much longer and also wider than its case, so a pattern of both **long-wise** and **width-wise** folds is needed, with a particularly complex pattern under the centre of the wing (see illustration on pages 12–13). The wing case itself needs to be an entirely different material, strong enough to protect the wing beneath it but light enough not to weigh down the insect in flight. It has to be smooth and aerodynamic to minimise wind resistance, hinged with an actuating mechanism to flip it up and down, and programmed to synchronize with the wing folding.

If all this came together by accident it would be a miracle. And a miracle is exactly what it is – not accidental, but a purposeful piece of superb engineering by the great divine Engineer and Creator, a miniature declaration of His wisdom, His power and His glory, exposed for us by the marvels of modern technology, microscopy and high speed photography. In the Bible, we read these words about the One who made the ladybird:

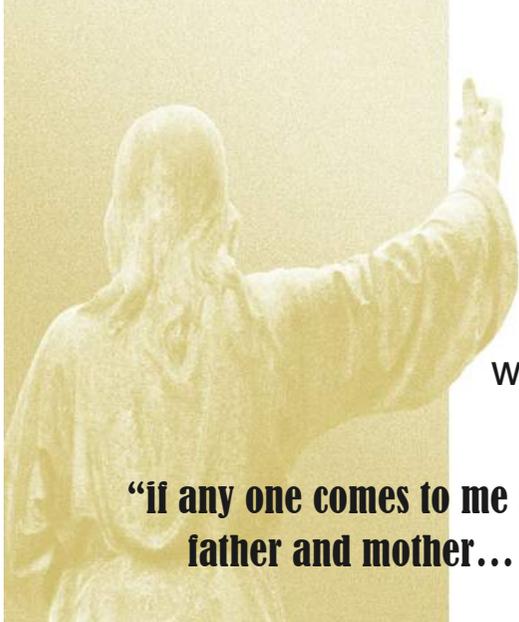
‘...since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse’ (Romans 1.20 NIV).

What ‘excuse’ do we have to reject such a marvel?

Roy Toms
Norfolk, UK

Note: for a detailed report about hindwing folding in ladybird beetles see <http://www.pnas.org/content/114/22/5624>





what did Jesus mean?

“if any one comes to me and does not hate his father and mother... he cannot be my disciple”

These words are found in Luke chapter 14 verse 26. They seem like the harshest words imaginable, unless Jesus did not mean it quite the way it first sounds. At face value, words telling us to hate our families seem to be beyond normal rationality. The object of this article is to explore the meaning of these words spoken by Jesus.

His statement on that day brings to mind things that have united or divided families. They also focus on the way that religion sometimes cuts across not only friendships but also the relationships within larger groups, even nations. The peoples of Ireland for instance seem to have been painfully divided by an intransigence that has often been said to come from their different religious perspectives. How many

times have you heard people say something to the effect that religion has caused more wars than anything else in human history?

We must try to understand what Jesus' answer would have been to those who would accuse him of bringing war not peace. All of this makes a rather wide topic. I can imagine the points of argument already forming in your mind as they have in mine. What we must do however, is start by simply getting back to the words of Jesus. He often spoke about the two opposing attitudes of mind involved in love and hate. In trying to understand the meaning of these two words we need to put aside the emotive aspects of modern day English.

considering love first of all

What was it that Jesus usually meant when he spoke about love, if the Biblical meaning differs from the connotations that English speakers put on this words? In addition, most of us would wonder what kind of love did Jesus show for his own family? His words in our title suggest he was a rather cold man, whose family meant little to him because his life was being lived out on a greater stage. What Jesus actually said and did concerning love for his family and for his wider family of human companions (including his followers) can be learned from passages like this: *'But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you...that you may be sons of your Father in heaven'* (Matthew 5.44, 45).

This statement is interesting because Jesus is obviously not telling us to like our enemies with that kind of fondness that we associate with loving a member of our family. That would be plainly hypocritical and extremely impractical. What he asks of us is this: to try to do our enemies the utmost good that is within our power. This attitude of mind is the basic meaning behind

the New Testament word that Jesus used.

The Greek word *agape* used in the New Testament has been translated into English as 'love'. At this point most of us would accept that the Gospels describe a man whose whole life was spent trying to do unmitigated good to everyone else, even to those who did not want it from him; even for his murderous enemies and the masses who never listened – this was perfect *agape* love.

Jesus said *'Honour your father and your mother'* (Mark 7.10), quoting the Ten Commandments. He was responding to a conspiracy that he saw in Jewish society at the time. The expense of looking after aged parents could be avoided by openly dedicating one's wealth to the temple. This meant in effect that their wealth would not be touched for earthly things like looking after their parents' needs. It was a mean device that covered over their neglect. So Jesus spoke very bluntly against this hypocrisy because it spurned the God-given duty to properly honour our parents.

Nothing Jesus said or did was two-faced. There was never a hint of hypocrisy about the quality of his

personal life, even though every moment was open to inspection and criticism. We cannot honour our parents and at the same time hate them. Jesus said *'Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God'* (Luke 18.16). We cannot even try to conclude that somehow Jesus wished mothers and fathers to be hated but on the other hand little children are to be received at any time.

The gospel records do not explicitly describe the details of the relationship of Jesus with his family in adult life. There is however a pattern of a loving relationship even though he had to break away from the close family life that he might otherwise have had. His mother was with him at the wedding in Cana at the beginning of his preaching work and she was beside him at the cross at the end. Those last hours confirm the loving care that existed between them. Their moment of 'farewell' at the cross has been preserved for us:

'Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing

by, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.' John 19.25-27

Love for one another held this small forlorn group together at a time of real heartbreak and the relationship of Jesus with his mother is placed at the centre of these few verses. Hours of suffering had brought Jesus close to death when he made provision for the mother he loved. His mother was to have a son and his close friend John was to have a mother. This was absolutely necessary because it had to fill the gap. No matter how imperfect, this substitute family was to be a replacement for the cherished relationship that had existed between Jesus and his mother to the last. (It would seem that Mary's husband Joseph has probably died before the events recorded in John chapter 19).

The Scriptures reveal Jesus as a man with warm human emotions of a kind that must have often tested his principled and godly mind. His thinking tends to be towards the limits of our understanding, certainly beyond ordinary worldly

attitudes. So, it is clear that he found certain things in life 'hateful' only because they were being compared with his absolute love for godly things.

The Jesus we know from the gospels ate and drank with those thought to be the dregs of humanity – outsiders and unacceptable to society at the time. He kept company with Judas and gave him loving support right to the very end, all the while knowing his friend was a thief and a betrayer. At the moment of his death he prayed for the forgiveness of those who crucified him. He did all this good with an extraordinary carefulness that drew people to him right up to the moment when he lost consciousness. However, this does not alter the fact that there were many things about their lives, that in a special and unique way he also hated.

hate – the opposing attitude to love

The mind of Jesus was tuned in to the sublime perfection of his Father's house. He was born to show godliness to the world and the pattern of his thinking will not come to us easily. Perhaps we can however perceive how Jesus felt

about the sub-standard aspects of our average human existence and then express his rejection as being like 'hating' even mother and father. To understand this we will now look into this word 'hate' and the way Jesus would have used it. Here are three passages from the Gospels including the verse of our subject heading, where Jesus talked about love, hate and family:

'While he was still talking to the multitudes, behold, his mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with him. Then one said to him, "Look, your mother and your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with you". But he answered... "Who is my mother and who are my brothers?" And he stretched out his hand towards his disciples and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."'

Matthew 12.46-50

'And great multitudes went with him. And he turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children,

brothers and sisters, yes and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple... So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple".'

Luke 14.25-33

'No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon.'

Matthew 6.24

(Note: the word *Mammon* means 'money' from the Aramaic word *mamona* meaning wealth or profit).

The idea that it is good to hate your own life found in the passage from Luke chapter 14 tells us that Jesus was putting a very particular meaning on the word 'hate'. No word from God ever tells us to hate the day by day blessings of life. Sadly, some of us may feel this way if we are affected by depression but the advice from God's word is enjoy your life as a gift from Him (see for example Ecclesiastes 11.7-10).

If we also examine the idea of loving and hating money found in Matthew chapter six, we can see that it can only have a profound meaning if Jesus was talking about an absolute preference against money only where a choice has to

be made. There is nothing at all wrong with money in itself until we begin to choose it as our heart's desire. If we prefer money to fulfil our life rather than God's good hand, then in Christ's view, we are losing our way and are perhaps even lost to God because we have chosen the world instead of Him.

In the book of Genesis we learn about Jacob's feelings for his two wives: '*...and he (Jacob) loved also Rachel more than Leah ...And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren*' (Genesis 29. 30, 31 KJV). Despite the complications of their family life Jacob seems to have treated Leah with proper consideration as a wife. It could never be disguised however, that Rachel was the real love of his life and this unfortunate inequality in Jacob's feelings was called hate, only because his feelings for Leah were inferior. It was not because Jacob acted towards her with unkindness or malice or any of the things we normally associate with hatred.

So on that day at the Pharisee's house, recorded in Luke chapter 14, Jesus was asking them to give their natural affections only second place to the things that God asked of them. In order to demonstrate to



Three generations of the writer's family in 1947, to be followed by two more so far. Jesus says that our love for him has to take precedence over our natural bonds of love with our families.

the crowd the extent of what he was asking, he chose a painful example that they could all have empathy with – choosing God over your own family. At the time Jesus was in the middle of a great crowd who were following him. He also had with him the few disciples who were close to him. He looked round at the whole company and said in effect, as one writer puts it: 'It is possible to be an associate member of my family but still not be a real disciple.'

If you and I are to be real followers of Jesus we must make God's

commands a first choice in our life, especially where they are in conflict with our natural loves, hopes, desires, friendships and family loyalties. In practice most of us find this difficult because it is so natural to place most value on the many pleasurable things that life contains. When we start to feel unequal to this example of Christ, we may recall that God's grace flows like a fountain. He has promised us that even a sub-standard performance in this respect can be balanced up if we have an abiding inclination to choose Him first. God has promised to those who choose Him, that He will make them part of Christ's family and heirs of the promise of

life. Jesus led the way, in hating his own life.

'...nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will' (Matthew 26.39) was the width of that narrowest daily road that he chose for his own life. This amounted to a perfect, complete offering to his heavenly Father, made for himself and for us, if we choose to be his family. We must then learn to *'hate'* this life, not because it is actually hateful or miserable, but because we must make the same choice that Jesus made so decisively: *'And this is the will of him who sent me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day'* (John 6.40).

Alongside this astounding gift to all of us comes Christ's simple request to prefer him to the things you might want for yourself. We can see then how he termed this choice as being like hating your mother, father and family.

“hating” mother, father, family, friends and life

Living this way will bring with it a share of discomfort, disappointment or awkwardness, but it fades into insignificance as we experience

companionship within the family of Jesus. It might mean giving up some precious family time, not joining in, even staying apart sometimes, perhaps arguing the case in the family forum and not always keeping quiet. Furthermore, it might mean pain to you and to someone else when it becomes obvious that you are choosing to put them in second place.

To be a reflection of Jesus, we have to make these choices but never allow hatred to live within us in the normal sense. We must never disrespect others or encourage malice, let alone promote the violence and killing that are sometimes linked to religion, but we must act as God requires. Those who are cruel or violent or even kill in the name of religion can never be followers of Jesus. When the causes of wars, genocides and other eruptions of violence are extracted from recorded history, it is clear that religion has often been used as a badge of allegiance to two warring sides, hiding almost as an excuse, the real reason why war is found in human nature.

The words of Jesus come to mind when he said *'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God'* (Matthew 5.9).

Here is a family that is worth belonging to! The prospect before the true sons and daughters of God is this:

'...Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.'

Revelation 21. 3, 4

God's timetable for this imperfect world is running out and soon it will be proclaimed:

'...The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever!'

Revelation 11. 15

Jesus saw ahead of him the wonderful and enduring prospect described in these two passages from Revelation. He therefore gladly chose God's way above everything else in his life. You and I can be eternally glad that he did so.

summary

Jesus said you can't be my disciple unless you *'hate'* your own family. Although there are signs that Jesus was estranged from his family when they did not understand his mission at first, we can see in the gospel records the natural love that he had for them and the love his mother had for him. He was using words that are not really equivalent to our words for love and hate. He was really talking about choosing him above the things that are naturally dearest to us. That kind of choosing is the only *'hatred'* that Jesus asks of us. For the disciple of Jesus, it's all about getting our priorities right as Jesus put it on another occasion:

'He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.

And he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

And he who does not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me'.

Matthew 10.37, 38

Mark Kitchen
Norfolk, England



from the editor

end of the town's week-long summer festival and carnival.

Yet in my locality people were going about their everyday business without a thought or care in the world. Many were by their behaviour, demonstrating that they live for today and in western society you can have what you want when you want it. There are no limitations except perhaps the onset of ill health and death.

I'm writing this editorial in late August 2017. This morning I was in the city near where I live. It was lovely weather and hundreds of people were wandering around the shopping centre with bags of shopping: clothes, foods, household goods and novelty items. The restaurants, cafes and bistros were full of people eating and drinking. Outside in the sunshine street musicians performed. One performer sang 'Forever Young' an old folk song from the 1960s. It struck me quite forcibly how oblivious the world in general is to the plan and purpose of God.

Regular readers may have noticed that the issues that make up volume 28 of this magazine have a four-part theme running through them under the general heading of 'God's Interactive Plan' (see page 32). The objective of these articles is to demonstrate that God has set out in His Word the Bible a clear plan and purpose with the earth and the human race.

By contrast, last week in Barcelona, Spain, people were killed in yet another drive-through terrorist attack. Also this weekend, Cromer, a small Norfolk holiday and fishing town in the UK was in 'lockdown' because of civil unrest. Fights and robberies were taking place at the

This is the very thing that men and women are blissfully unaware of, or even have no interest in – 'God's Interactive Plan'. To the vast majority of the shoppers, diners and street performers, God is an out of date concept that is surplus to requirements and a dead weight to the freedom of this life. But God's

plan is interactive because the Bible clearly demonstrates that it is a two-way relationship. Recognition of God and His requirements are not difficult to understand or carry out. In return He has demonstrated that He does and will take care of those who try to follow Him. This is the kind of care that everyone should be striving for, because it is free and the ultimate reward is eternal life.

The Bible clearly tells us that God will send Jesus Christ back to the earth to establish the kingdom and reward his followers accordingly. Jesus talked about his return to the earth and he put it very simply for shoppers, diners and street performers to understand:

'...as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man (the second coming of Christ): They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it

be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed' Luke 17.26-30

Again, the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy:

'But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!'

2 Timothy 3.1-5

Does that sound like our world today? Now have a look at my opening paragraphs. Does it seem reasonable to simply assume that these things will continue as they do? If you think the answer is 'No', then I recommend that you carefully study the whole of the gospel message, because time is unquestionably running out.

John Meadows
Norfolk, UK

The Temple Mount

The Temple Mount in Jerusalem is the hill known to the Jews as Moriah. On this hill stood Solomon's Temple constructed around 950 BC. After its destruction in 586 BC by the Babylonians, it was

rebuilt on the same spot by Zerubbabel and his returning exiles after 539 BC, as recorded in the book of Ezra. Herod the Great began a massive rebuild of the whole temple complex in 19 BC, extending the temple platform and constructing a magnificent 'Roman'



the
Bible stands

THE TEST OF TIME

belief that, even if he had to kill Isaac, God would raise him from the dead. We have confirmation of this in the New Testament (see Hebrews 11. 17-19). There is only one Moriah mentioned in Scripture, and in Abraham's day it was a hill just above the fortress of Jebus occupied by a Canaanite tribe called the Jebusites.

Genesis chapter 22 records that Abraham and Isaac obeyed the divine command. Just as Abraham lifted his knife to slay his son, an angel intervened and stopped him. It had been the ultimate test of Abraham's faith in God's promise. A ram was provided instead as a sacrifice and Isaac was re-united with his father. We read that *'Abraham called the name of the place The LORD will provide; as it is said to this day "In the Mount of The LORD it shall be provided"'* (Genesis 22.14).

After this, the final promise was made to Abraham: *'In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice'* (Genesis 22.18). We can see in this incident, how Abraham and Isaac were 'acting out' God's purpose to provide the ultimate sacrifice of a descendant of

Abraham, who finally *'takes away the sin of the world'* (John 1.29). God's son, *'the Lamb of God'* who was also the 'seed' or descendant promised to Abraham was the one provided. He was and still is at the centre of God's plan to rid the world of sin and bring blessings to all nations. It was at that very place, on the Temple Mount, that Jesus, the sinless Son of God, stood before the Jewish Council 2,000 years later, to be condemned to death, only to rise from the dead on the third day.

Hundreds of years after the time of Abraham, around 1,000 BC, King David's army captured Jerusalem, and he made it his capital city. Moriah, to the north of the city, was just a threshing floor, where on the highest point of the hill, grain was threshed out of the ears of corn by oxen dragging a sledge over the smooth rock surface where the wind would blow away the chaff. It was on this very spot that King David offered a sacrifice in thanksgiving to God who had halted a plague that was killing the people (see 1 Chronicles 21.26-28). This also points forward to Jesus Christ, who laid down his life to take away the *'plague'* of sin, the cause of death.

David purchased the site from Araunah the Jebusite, and it was

The bare rock of the summit of Mt. Moriah exposed within the Dome of the Rock

later chosen as the building plot for Solomon's temple: *'Now Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing-floor of Ornan (Araunah) the Jebusite'* (2 Chronicles 3.1). During the following centuries, thousands of sacrifices would be made here, all pointing forward to Jesus' work, as the *'Lamb of God'* to take away the sin of the world.

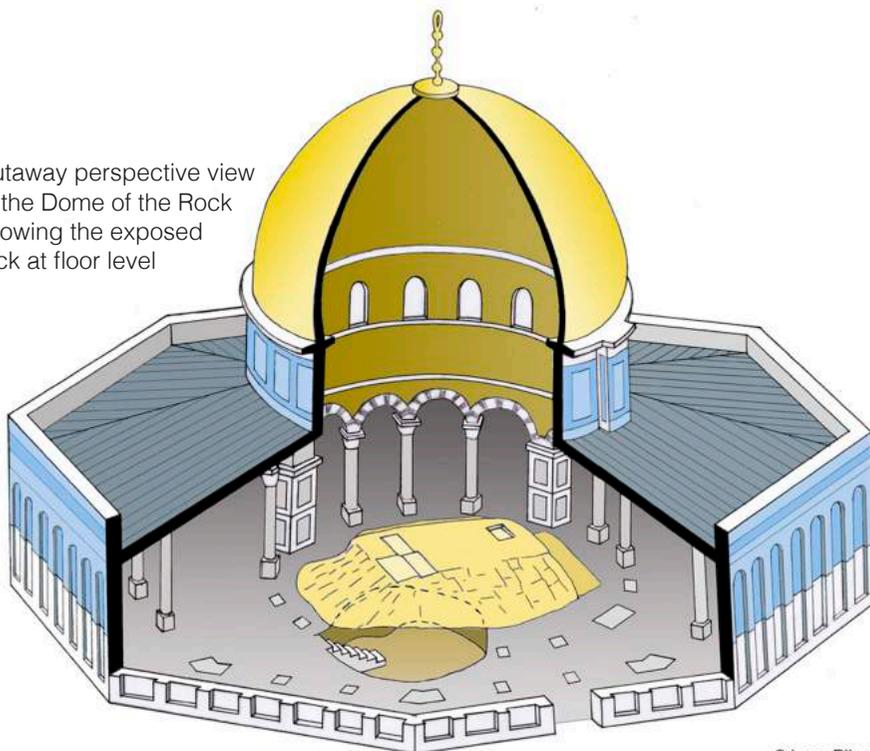
Six centuries after the Romans destroyed Herod's Temple, the area now in Arab hands, became the site for building the Dome of the Rock, one of the most sacred places for Muslims even today. The centre piece inside that shrine is a slightly raised area of bare rock, which tourists are able to observe from behind a barrier. Only relatively recently has the significance of a pattern of marks and indentations been realised. The surface of the rock, when carefully observed, is marked with various grooves, hollows and lines. For a long time it was a puzzle as to exactly where, on the large level platform, Solomon's and later Herod's temple actually stood. Ancient Jewish records (the



Mishnah) indicate that the Temple was not central on the present site, and that Solomon's original platform was 500 cubits (850 feet) square. (Note: the ancient Hebrew 'long cubit' measurement was about 20.4 inches [51.8 centimetres] long).

Leen Ritmeyer, an architect and archaeologist, has made some in depth measurements and has demonstrated that the site still shows the vital clues that prove the accuracy of ancient Jewish accounts. More importantly it shows the accuracy of the Biblical account of the measurements. The location of

Cutaway perspective view of the Dome of the Rock showing the exposed rock at floor level



© Leen Ritmeyer

the original 500 cubit square platform is consistent with the Most Holy Place of the Jewish temple being centred on the rock itself. It also agrees with a statement in the Mishnah, a 3rd Century AD Jewish book, that the largest of the outer courts was to the South.

From overhead photographs of the rock, it has been shown that areas had been channelled to take large cut stones, consistent with that of the base of a building. These channels are evidence of foundation walls long since gone. The measurements exactly correspond with the six-cubit-thick stone walls

recorded in the Mishnah, and the pattern in the rock exactly corresponds to the outer walls of the Most Holy Place!

More compelling still is the observation of a rectangular depression measuring 1.5 by 2.5 cubits. These are the exact dimensions of the Ark of the Covenant which Moses built by the command of God in the wilderness, and which was put in the 'Most Holy Place' of Solomon's temple. As Leen Ritmeyer explains, this depression might well have been specially cut for the Ark (see diagram opposite):

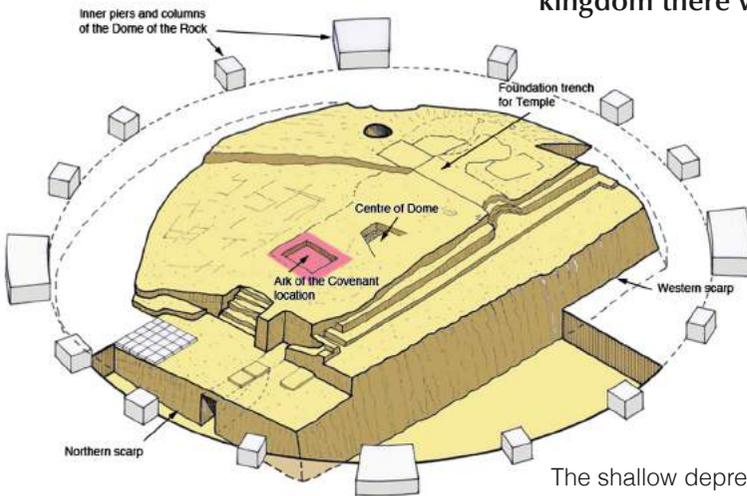
'Such a sacred object could not be left to wobble about on the uneven surface of the rock but would need a table base on which to stand. The cutting of a flat basin such as this is the obvious solution. The orientation of the Ark thus sited with the short side facing the veil, would allow the withdrawal of the staves from the rings along the long sides, with minimum disruption to the sacred area. This arrangement allowing the poles to be withdrawn towards the veil is proved by the Scriptural record: *'the poles extended so that the ends of the poles could be seen from the holy place, in front of the inner sanctuary; but they could not be seen from outside'* (1 Kings 8.8).

We marvel at the history of this place, and the accuracy of the Scriptures. Above all, we marvel at the fulfilment of God's purpose in Christ, who at this place accomplished a work to bring blessings to all nations. He is coming back to Jerusalem to set up his throne there, in fulfilment of that great promise made to his ancestor David and confirmed in the words of the angel Gabriel to Mary:

'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

Justin Giles
London, UK



The shallow depression (marked in pink) which may mark the original position of the Ark of the Covenant in Solomon's temple

GOD'S INTERACTIVE PLAN PART 4

The focal point of the preceding three articles in this series is that God has a plan for the earth and the human race. This plan continues to be worked out in the twenty-first century and its climax will be the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth.

THE DIVINE MANIFESTO

This means that there is a 'divine manifesto' for the whole world, not just one country. 'Manifestos' are things that most of us would be familiar with the world over. Anyone in a country where there is more than one choice of government for which people can vote, will be familiar with this concept. Each political party puts in writing and campaigns to promote their 'manifesto' which contains a set of principles and proposals for governing the country.

Political parties are often incapable of keeping to their manifesto once they are in power. They find that the many issues that need addressing to run the country become overwhelming and are often completely opposed to the aims of their 'manifesto'. They just

do not have the power, control, finances or often the will to put their 'manifesto' into action and this is the same the world over.

The Bible reveals the concept of world government led by the Lord Jesus Christ. The 'manifesto' that is attached to this is as spectacular as the power that will institute it. There is a long list of 'manifesto statements' contained in the pages of the Bible. Here are just a few of them. The last book of the Bible states that the kingdoms of the world will become the kingdom of God, ruled over by His Son Jesus Christ, who will reign forever (Revelation 11.15). In several places the Old Testament prophets speak of disarmament. Isaiah tells us that weapons will be turned into agricultural implements and there will be no more war (Isaiah 2.4).

The book of Genesis tells us that God confused the language of the people (Genesis 11.6-9). By contrast another prophet predicts that in the future all people will speak 'a pure language' (Zephaniah 3.9 – see right)

The Prophet Isaiah sets out the divine manifesto in word pictures showing the changes that will take

place in the world. Here are some of them:

- ❖ **Famine:** The deserts of the world will become fertile (35.1, 2).
- ❖ **Housing policy:** everyone will build their own house and plant their own vineyard (65.21).
- ❖ **Healthcare:** The eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf will be opened, the lame will walk and the dumb sing (35.5, 6).
- ❖ **The legal system:** Jesus Christ will judge righteously and with justice, not based on what is seen or heard; and the wicked will be slain (Isaiah 11.1-5).
- ❖ **Religion:** A united world will serve the one true God and worship him (Isaiah 2.2, 3).

If this manifesto was printed and offered by a human political leader, most people would ask the question: 'Can they deliver on these things?' It is a valid question which really comes down to this: is God powerful enough to do these things? If we are convinced that there is an eternal God, creator and sustainer of all things and our answer is 'no', we limit the power of God. This might imply that we have more faith in mankind's political power and strength to stand in the way of God's manifesto.

Of course the whole thing comes down to personal faith in what the Bible is telling us. In this series we have consistently pointed out that 'God's interactive plan' is implicitly two-way.



The European Commission currently provides simultaneous translation facilities for 24 different languages.

The Bible's manifesto promises one single pure language worldwide.



A FAILED MANIFESTO As one of his policies Chinese Chairman Mao Zedong encouraged commune members to eat at free canteens. These soon closed due to lack of food and fuel. Mao's disastrous policies are believed to have caused the deaths of 40 – 70 million Chinese.

FAITH IN GOD'S MANIFESTO

What advice is there on this topic that we could take into account in considering such an ambitious manifesto? King Solomon, who possessed God-given wisdom to a high degree, wrote: *'The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction'* (Proverbs 1.7). And Jesus had this to say: *'... this is eternal life, that they may know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent...'* (John 17.3).

At the forefront of the manifesto are some strong 'headline' promises. They revolve around the fact that true followers of Jesus will not only be raised from the dead and given eternal life, but also given roles in the rulership of this global kingdom.

This is the two-way or 'interactive' aspect of God's plan. If we have faith and believe that God is going to do these things, we are promised a part in them. In the New Testament, the writer to the Hebrews puts it like this:

'Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what

we do not see. This is what the ancients (men and women of faith in Old Testament times) were commended for’. Hebrews 11.1,2

If all these things were being offered by a human leader and we viewed their offers with some certainty, we would want to know what it would cost to become a ‘member’. That is an entirely reasonable question even in the context of the Bible’s promises to us, and God’s manifesto for world government.

BELIEF AND BAPTISM

If we do have faith in these things; if we can be certain of the promises in the manifesto and really believe the message of the Bible concerning God’s interactive plan, the Bible clearly illustrates what Christ’s teaching was and still is, about ‘membership’. And there is no need to reach for your wallet, money belt, cheque book, bank details or purse! Mark’s gospel record tells us what an individual has to do to be a ‘member’. Jesus said: ‘He who believes and is baptized will be saved’ (Mark 16.16).

In the New Testament, the book of Acts tells us about the preaching of the Apostles Peter and John. They

were able in those days to pass on the Holy Spirit to fellow believers. A man named Simon who had been baptized, saw Peter and John doing this. This is what happened:

‘Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, “Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit”. But Peter said to him, “Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you”’. Acts 8.18-22

If you read this passage for yourself you will see what the outcome was. But for our purpose it demonstrates that there is no financial implication for what God is offering us. The initial ‘price’ is baptism. What is this baptismal act that is required if we believe in these things as outlined by Jesus in Mark 16? Let us not miss

the point that baptism must be preceded by 'belief'. Having 'believed' what else do we need to do? The Apostle Peter gives us the answer:

'...“repent and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...”'

Acts 2.38

“Repent therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and he may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, of which God has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.”

Acts 3.19-21

In both of these passages Peter is telling his hearers to repent (meaning to rethink or change one's mind) and be baptized. So there is something else as well as belief. There is the need to recognise that our natural human state is sinful or at variance with God's way.

The whole concept of the gospel message revealed in both the Old and New Testaments is about being

humble enough to recognise that God is all-powerful, to be worshipped and served, and that our natural state is sinful. Sin is washed away in the waters of baptism. That is the command of Jesus and his apostles to those who believe.

In Acts chapter 8 we read about a eunuch, who was the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the Queen of Ethiopia. Philip was talking to him about Jesus, his death and resurrection and the need to be baptized 'into Christ'. The Ethiopian eunuch then asked Philip what was preventing him from being baptized. Philip replied: *'if you believe with all your heart, you may'*. The eunuch responded: *'I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God'* (verse 37). Then Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and he was baptized (verse 38). Afterwards we read that they came up out of the water (verse 39).

This is a crucially important part of the New Testament narrative. Belief and baptism is not something an unknowing baby can do and it is not something that is done by flicking a few drops of water on an individual. The act of baptism is deeply symbolic for it involves...



An oasis in the wilderness where Philip might have baptised the Ethiopian eunuch

... a washing away of past sins and a 'clean' start in life and...

... a symbolic death and resurrection by being buried completely under the water and raised up out of the water.

The Apostle Paul wrote this to the believers at Colosse: *'...buried with him in baptism, in which you also were raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.'* (Colossians 2.12).

These are vitally important points about becoming related to this divine manifesto.

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

We can now see that the entire direction of God's interactive plan is that men and women can be associated with the promises that He has made, by faith in Jesus Christ and through the waters of baptism. These promises can be summarised as follows:

- ❖ Jesus will return to the earth to establish the kingdom of God.
- ❖ The dead who during their lives repented and were baptised will be raised and rewarded with eternal life.
- ❖ Those who are alive and have been baptised will also be similarly perfected at his return.

- ❖ The establishment of the kingdom of God will see the most incredible changes to the way this world is ruled compared with our current experience.

Our concluding point for this series about God's interactive plan is found in a short parable of Jesus:

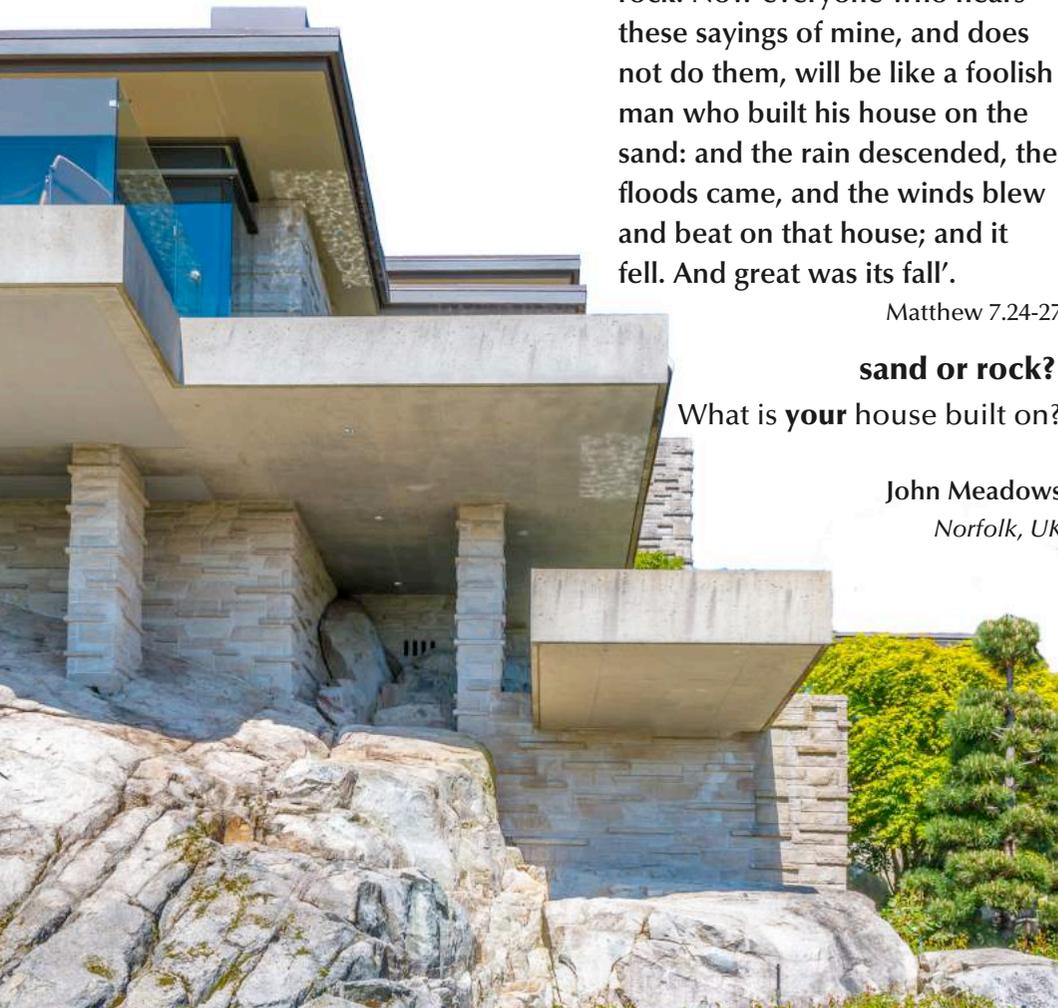
'Therefore whoever hears these sayings of mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. Now everyone who hears these sayings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

Matthew 7.24-27

sand or rock?

What is **your** house built on?

John Meadows
Norfolk, UK



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The kingdom of God

'...all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him... There will be an abundance of grain in the earth, on the top of the mountains...' Psalm 72

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