

Light

A young boy with dark hair, wearing a white collared shirt and a light blue kippah, is looking intently at a Torah scroll. The scroll is bound in blue fabric with gold embroidery and Hebrew text. The background is dark, and there is a bright light source in the upper left corner.

...on a new world

Volume 32.1

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

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Who wrote the Torah?

From ancient times, Moses has been regarded as the divinely inspired writer of the first five books of the Bible, known to the Jews as the Torah. Moses lived between 14 and 15 centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ. The Bible records the account of creation, the Flood and the call of Abraham in the first 12 chapters. Abraham lived almost 2,000 years before Christ, around 400–500 years before Moses.

However, when you read commentaries from learned professors and scholars, you will often find reference to the Torah (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) being written much later in the post Babylonian era, thus ruling out Moses! Here is one example:

‘Traditionally ascribed to Moses himself, modern scholarship sees the book as initially a product of the Babylonian exile (6th century BCE), from earlier written and oral traditions, with final revisions in the Persian period (5th century BCE)’—

cover picture

carrying the scroll of the Torah at the Jewish festival of Simchat Torah. This celebrates the completion of another yearly cycle of readings from the Torah

extract from Wikipedia on the Torah. This view puts the Torah almost 1,000 years later than a plain reading would suggest.

If we accept that this view is correct, think of the implications for the Bible and its claim to be the Word of God. What they are saying completely undermines the history of the Jewish people, their origins, and the detail of the Law of Moses. It calls into question the role of Moses as writer and prophet, and indeed the whole validity of the content of the first five books of the Bible.

This so called ‘modern scholarship’ flies in the face of the clear Biblical record. Consider these references:

‘Then the LORD said to Moses, **“Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua.”** Exodus 17:14

‘So Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, **“All the words which the LORD has said we will do.”** And **Moses wrote** all the words of the LORD.’

Exodus 24:3–4

‘These are the journeys of the children of Israel, who went out of the land of Egypt by their armies under the hand of Moses and Aaron. **Now Moses wrote down** the starting points of their journeys at the command of the LORD.’

Numbers 33:1-2

‘...Moses **wrote this law** and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel’. Deuteronomy 31:9

The words of Jesus himself:

‘...For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for **he wrote** about me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?’

John 5:46-47

So, who are we to believe? Modern scholarship, or the Bible witness and Jesus Christ himself? The external evidence of early writing, quite apart from the Scriptures themselves, proves that Moses was well capable of writing down all the words God gave him. The evidence derived from Biblical archaeology, deserves our close attention.

When was writing invented?

In the nineteenth century, critics of the Bible said that Moses could not have written the Torah because writing had not been invented. However, cities of ancient Assyria

and Babylon have since yielded thousands of tablets showing that reading and writing were advanced. But much earlier evidence exists. One unique example was the discovery in the 1890's, of hundreds of clay tablets in the abandoned city of Akhenaten in Egypt, known today as Tell el-Amarna. Flinders Petrie (1853-1942) and his team uncovered



undisturbed records of Amenhotep IV. They were reckoned to date from just after the time of Moses around 1350 BC. The information revolutionised understanding of the ancient world. They are known as the Tell el-Amarna tablets, and include the first external reference to the Hebrew people. Written in tiny

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cuneiform script, these clay tablets illuminate the political diplomacy of those times. Moses, of course, was brought up and educated in Egypt.

Moses lived some 450 years after Abraham, the founding father of Israel. Could Abraham read and write? Although there is no direct Biblical evidence, recent discoveries have shown that writing and translating the many different languages in written form was going on at least 400 years before Abraham. He almost certainly spoke a Semitic language that was already being scripted using an alphabet, each letter of which had its own sound!

Discoveries at Ebla

In the 1970's, archaeologists from the University of Rome, led by Paolo Matthiae, made discoveries which led scholars to re-think their theories about language, reading, and writing. A mound in Northern Syria turned out to be the centre of Ebla (see map) a city state dating from some 500 years before Abraham. The key discovery was a library of over 17,000 clay tablets all closely written in cuneiform script. The city state had its own language, distinct from surrounding states, and is known as 'Eblaite' or 'Western Semitic'. This is a vital link, for Moses and Abraham,



The First Eblaite empire 2400 BC

descendants of Shem (the son of Noah), were Semitic. The script is, therefore, an early form of writing related to Hebrew, sharing common words and a language that Abraham would have been familiar with. It seems highly unlikely that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph (who brought the family of Jacob into Egypt in the first place), spoke a language other than ancient Hebrew.

Astonishingly, one of the finds was a single slab with 42 comparative languages set out side by side. Nowhere else has such a thing been found, and of such antiquity. Why would they be fascinated with language? The Tower of Babel incident, recorded in Genesis chapter 11, that took place in this same era, may well provide the answer. From Babel

(meaning confusion) or Babylon, a confusion of language caused peoples to disperse, each with their own language.

Scholars at Ebla were devoted to recording the various languages they came across. Is this merely a coincidence, or was this a 'Babel effect'? Many place names, and also people's names, were initially identified with Biblical names, such as Abram, Jacob, Israel, David and, often, Yah (an abbreviated form of Yahweh). But such was the political opposition from present day anti-Zionist Governments that a groundswell of opposing theories was put forward. Any discovery outside Israel, where a connection is made with ancient Israel in any way, is fiercely opposed.



Word tablet slab from Ebla

Remember, that if Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, then Hebrew is necessarily one of the earliest languages. Discoveries at Ebla show that is the case. To undertake his work as outlined in the Exodus, Moses must have been able to communicate freely in a language or languages that both the Egyptian Pharaoh and Moses' Hebrew brothers would understand. He was either bilingual, or there was a common language available. The language at Ebla was written in syllabic cuneiform, which means each syllable was made up of a separate complex individual character (like Chinese script). Moses' Hebrew would have been a similar language but was written in a completely different form using an alphabet.



LEFT: The remains of Palace G at Ebla



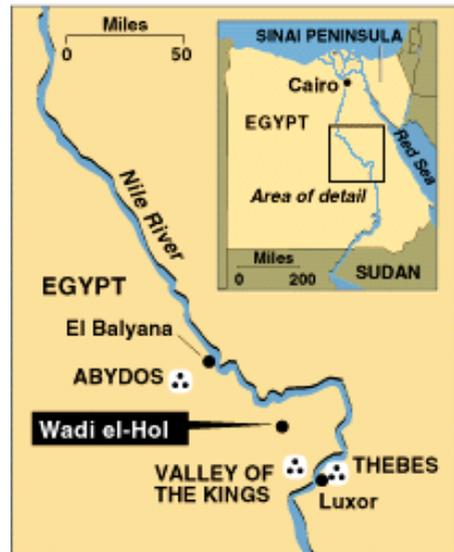
Sinai alphabet inscription found by Flinders Petrie

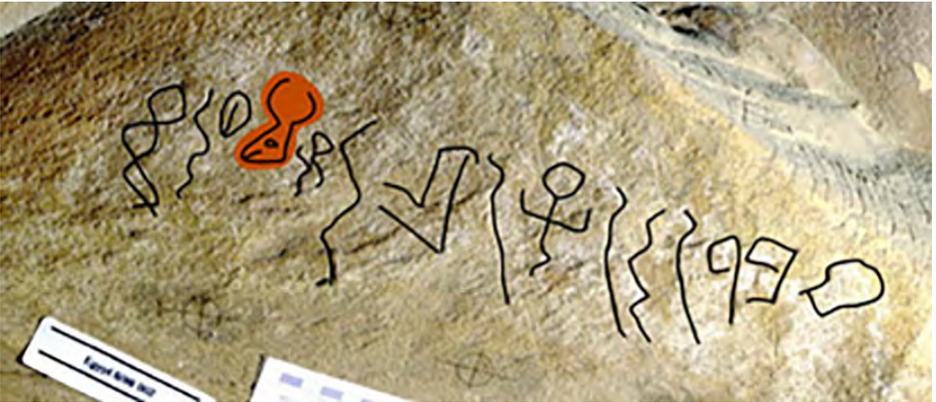
The Alphabet

Further evidence to support Moses' literacy is that the Hebrew alphabet is now thought to have already been in existence. Flinders Petrie made an initial discovery in 1904-05 in the very area that Moses trod for 40 years – the Sinai desert; inscriptions dating from the time of the Exodus! The inscriptions were found in the Sinai Peninsula at Serabit el-Khadim and are among the earliest examples of alphabetic writing. This means that instead of a word or syllable being a complex composite character, each sound is represented by a separate symbol.

However, a discovery, even predating the Sinai script, was found much more recently at the Wadi el-Hol in Egypt (see map). Once again, theories

were revised! First uncovered in 1993, the conclusions were announced in 1999 that put back even further in time the invention of an alphabet. A similar phonetic script to Sinai, these inscriptions strongly suggested the development of proto-





Alphabetic inscription from Wadi-el-Hol

Sinaitic writing centuries **before Moses was born!** The letters, in a Semitic language, carved in stone cliffs west of the Nile, were found by Yale University Egyptologist, Dr John Darnell, who dated them from around 1800 to 1900 BC – the time of Abraham!

If this were not enough, this is what language historians say of the origins of the Hebrew Alphabet:

‘...Its first origins can be traced back to a Proto-Sinaitic script developed in Ancient Egypt to represent the language of Semitic-speaking workers and slaves in Egypt. Unskilled in the complex hieroglyphic system used to write the Egyptian language, which required a large number of pictograms, they selected a small number of those commonly seen in their Egyptian surroundings to describe the sounds, as opposed to the semantic values of their own

Canaanite language.’ (History of the Alphabet: Wikipedia)

Putting it simply, the slaves spoke and wrote their own language based on sounds, a much simpler system than the complex Egyptian hieroglyphic pictograms which remained in the exclusive domain of the priests.

Hebrew is a Semitic language based on 22 phonetic characters. Remember that the Hebrews became slaves in Egypt. Moses, the prince and prophet, led the nation out of slavery in Egypt, living in Sinai for 40 years before the conquest of Canaan. This conclusion further reinforces the validity of the Bible’s claim that Moses was the writer of the Torah in Hebrew, and that the people spoke and wrote early Hebrew.

Moses, brought up in the learning of the Egyptians, would have been familiar with, and capable of reading

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and writing the alphabetic Semitic language. Thus we conclude that Moses, being surrounded by, and familiar with alphabetic Semitic language, did write the Torah, just as the Bible tells us; it being the very first great work of ancient literature to use the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

The Book of Deuteronomy

The Book of Deuteronomy records Moses' last address to Israel. Chapter 28 sets out blessings for obedience to Yahweh, followed by warnings of scattering and persecution for disobedience.

800 years later, in the 18th year of King Josiah (622 BC), the Second Book of Kings tells us about the discovery of a lost book of the Law. The scroll, containing dire curses that would befall the people for disobedience, was read to Josiah. Realising that his father and grandfather had led the nation into idolatry, he wanted to know if and when the disaster predicted would happen. Huldah the prophetess was consulted, and she confirmed the words of Deuteronomy 28; but it would not happen in the lifetime of Josiah (see 2 Kings 22:8-20).

If the Book of Deuteronomy was rediscovered 36 years **before** the Babylonian captivity of 586 BC, how can we believe those who tell us that

the five books of Moses were written in Babylon? Let us never mistrust the claims of Scripture, no matter what others may say. Their views are forced to change as new discoveries are made which prove their theories wrong. But the Bible does not change.

Advice from the Apostle Paul

In conclusion, we can do no better than heed this warning and advice from Paul to Timothy:

'But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.'

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.'

2 Timothy 3:13-17

Justin Giles
London, UK

D is for ~~David~~ Dora

The German city of Cologne, AD 321:

The Roman Emperor Constantine issued a decree permitting Jews in the city to be appointed to the *curia*, the town council. This seems to be the earliest historical evidence for the presence of a Jewish community in Germany. Twenty years later another document confirmed that the Jewish synagogue in the city enjoyed the Emperor's privileges. That synagogue now claims to be the oldest Jewish synagogue north of the Alps.

Knowing as we do the recent history of the Jews in Germany, we might feel that in the great scheme of things, Constantine is not very relevant to the present day. But we would be wrong – in the last few years this decree has assumed immense symbolic significance.

In this current year (2021) the German government is planning a series of events and measures celebrating Jewish culture in Germany. The project is called

'321 – 2021: 1,700 years of Jewish life in Germany'.

Felix Klein, the government's antisemitism commissioner, says 'Germany and Judaism belong together, and are a centuries-old important pillar of our society'. He says that the year-long initiative is not about forgetting the Holocaust, but enlightening people about how Jews have contributed to German science, culture and society over the centuries.

The alphabet

One of the proposed measures will affect all young Germans learning their alphabet. Many languages have alphabet tables of some sort for teaching young children, designed to link the visual shape of the letter to the phonetic sound of the letter by using familiar objects or names. In English for example, 'a is for apple', 'c is for cat', 'f is for

A a



apple

Freddie' etc. The range of options is unlimited – an animal ABC has 't for turtle', 'i for iguana' and so on, but for teaching and other purposes some have been standardised. For example, the phonetic alphabet used by the British Police and emergency services is 'C for Charlie', 'D for Delta', 'T for Tango' etc.

The Weimar Republic in Germany which preceded Hitler's Third Reich had an alphabet table based on well-known names: 'A for Anton', 'B for Berta' and so on. Surprisingly perhaps, some of these names were Jewish in origin. In 1934, as part of their campaign against the Jews, the Nazis decided to remove all the Jewish names from this table. So 'D for David' became 'D for Dora', and 'N for Nathan' became 'N for Nordpol' (North Pole), Samuel became Siegfried, Zacharias became Zeppelin.

This year it is proposed to reverse that change; the education system in Germany will return to the pre-war Weimar tables complete with their Jewish names. This will be the first step towards introducing new tables based on well-known city names.

A small step no doubt, but highly significant.

The State that less than eighty years ago attempted to erase every trace of the Jewish people from Europe, today celebrates its Jewishness, and recognises and promotes the contribution that the Jewish people have made to its history and culture over 1,700 years. The pages of history cannot be rewritten, although many have tried. Nothing can conceivably recompense the victims or compensate them for their suffering.

German schoolchildren listen to a radio broadcast by Hermann Goering in 1936





Hitler at the Nuremberg Rally in 1934

But the nation recognises the awful injustice which disfigures German history and seeks to make amends, no matter how impossible that may be.

When Hitler and his henchmen decided to attack the Jews, they made a very big mistake. The Jews were God's people. God had said they would experience terrible things if they deserted him (see for example Deuteronomy 28:15–68). But he also promised severe retribution on the enemies who attacked them. The Reich should have paid attention to the Jewish Scriptures, to the words, for example, of the prophet Zechariah (2:8):

'He who touches you touches the apple of his [God's] eye'.

They should have listened to the words of God's promises to Abraham, the father of the Jewish people in Genesis 12:3:

'I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you.'

When the Nazis set themselves against the Jews, they set themselves against God. They attacked a people who enjoyed God's special care, the *'apple of his eye'*, and there could be only one possible outcome.

Hitler promised his Third Reich would last one thousand years. In his closing address at the Nuremberg rally in 1934 (see picture above), he said: 'The movement (National Socialism) is a living expression of our people and therefore a symbol of eternity'.

In 1945 he was dead, his Third Reich in ruins and utterly discredited.

His legacy is the State of Israel, the people who fled or survived his murderous regime, a nation of nine million people, restored after two thousand years to their ancient homeland as their prophets had predicted, celebrating their Jewish identity – but sadly, still to recognise their Messiah.

‘...*salvation is of the Jews*’ said Jesus, the greatest Jew of all (John 4:22). Using the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, he described himself as the complete A – Z of God’s purpose with mankind:

‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last... I am he who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore’ (Revelation 1:11,18).

He is the one who in the end will fulfil all God’s promises to Abraham, the father, not just of the Jewish people, but of men and women of faith from every nation:

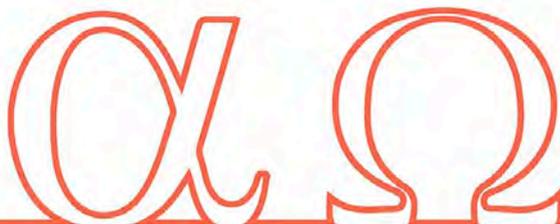
‘... in you all the families of the earth will be blessed’. Genesis 12:3

‘... many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD... In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, “let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you”.’
Zechariah 8:22-23

The story of the Jews is not yet finished.

Their sufferings may not yet be over. But we have the opportunity to join them in faith, to become part of God’s special people, the ‘*apple of his eye*’, to share the blessed future that God has promised to them and to us.

Roy Toms Norfolk, UK



The Greek letters Alpha and Omega

Light Special Issues

A number of special issues of *Light* magazine are available on request or by download from www.lightmagazine.org. Below is an overview of the main titles, all of which are free of charge.

Who are the Christadelphians?

informs the reader who the Christadelphians are and what the name means. It details what we believe the Bible message is, and what hope it gives us in this chaotic world. It also outlines what we can learn about the true Christian way of life shown in God's Word the Bible.

Light on the Bible

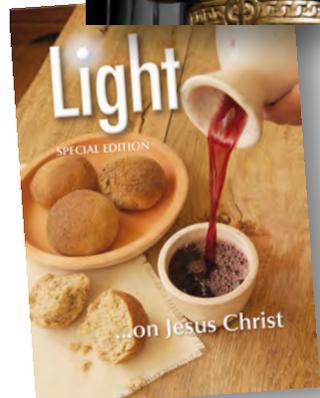
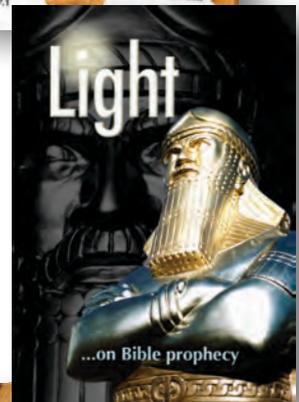
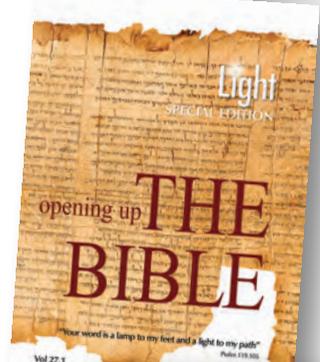
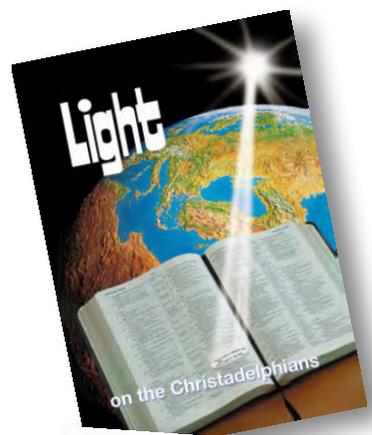
examines Bible's authenticity, what the Bible is, how it was written and how the original texts became available in English. It shows how archaeological discoveries in the Middle East support the Bible narrative. Included is guidance on how to read the Bible for yourself and the relevance of its message for today.

Light on Bible Prophecy

deals with what Bible prophecy is and who the prophets were. It examines specific prophecies, some of which have been fulfilled and some remain unfulfilled. These relate to empires in the past including Persia, Greece and Rome. The divinely appointed coming world conflict is also examined in brief and what this will mean to individuals personally.

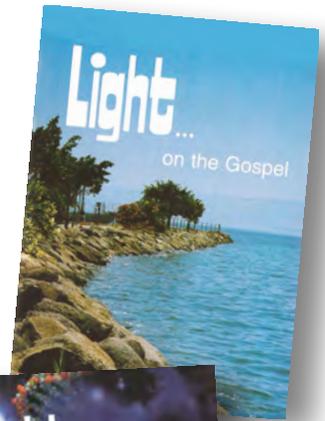
Light on Jesus Christ

looks at Bible teaching about Jesus Christ. It includes topics such as his role in God's plan, Old Testament prophecies about his first advent, his life and ministry, death and resurrection. His imminent return to the earth is also examined, plus much more.



Light on the Gospel

examines the Bible's consistent message across Old and New Testaments. It includes an outline of what the Gospel is and how it can vitally affect the lives of individuals.



Light on Creation

Creation is a key Bible topic. Belief in this essential aspect of Bible teaching is the subject of the first article, followed by God's role in creation. This is followed by a short examination of the erroneous theory of evolution. It concludes with an explanation of how man is made in God's image and God's purpose in Creation.



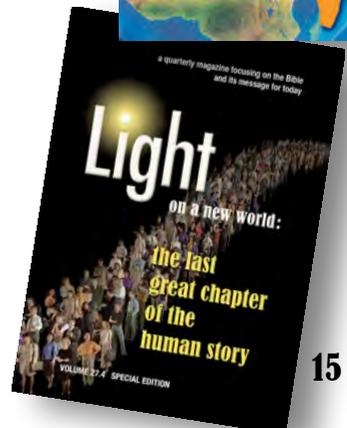
Light on Israel

reviews how the Jewish nation came into being, how they became the focus of God's plan for mankind and their miraculous survival as a distinct people. It looks at their re-establishment in the land of Israel as a nation and what the Bible says the future holds for them.



The last great chapter of the human story

deals with God's plan for the world as the central theme of the Bible narrative. It covers the culmination of that plan in the future Kingdom of God on earth, how we will be affected by it, and how we can be part of it.



The History of Israel [part 1]

Readers following this series will already recognise that the nation of Israel, sometimes referred to as the Hebrews or the Jews, are significant people in the Bible narrative. The next few articles under this theme of Basic Bible Teaching are about the history of Israel. This began with the call of Abraham, which we looked at last time [Light Vol 31.4]. Abraham was the ancestor of the nation of Israel. However, his descendants were not fully established as a nation until God made a covenant with them at Mount Sinai, after they had fled from being slaves in Egypt. In this first article about Israel's history, we look at events leading up to the making of that covenant.

These events are important in the establishment of God's plan for the world contained in the Bible. Indeed, it is necessary to understand the importance of God's people, Israel in this context. We read in the book of Deuteronomy:

'When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel (Abraham's grandson Jacob). For the LORD's portion is his people; Jacob is the place of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land and in the wasteland, a howling wilderness; he encircled him, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.' Deuteronomy 32:8-10

How this relationship with God affected their history, and the principles and lessons we can learn from it, will become clear as our studies progress. In this article we are going to look at the period from Abraham's son Isaac, up to the point where Jacob's son Joseph found himself in Egypt, due to the hatred of his brothers. We will notice, as we go through the history of Israel, that there are a number of key people in the development of God's plan.

Isaac

Abraham told his chief servant to find a wife for his son Isaac from Abraham's wider family. Expressly, Isaac was not to marry one of the

idol worshipping Canaanites in the land where Abraham had settled his family at God's instruction. *Read Genesis chapter 24.*

Notice that Isaac's marriage was an arranged marriage; it was within the bloodline of Abraham's wider family, and was designed to keep them separate from the evil influences of the world at that time. See Paul's teaching in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 in this context, which contains important lessons for us today. Isaac married Rebekah, and two sons were born to them called Esau and Jacob. God promised that the elder (Esau) would serve the younger.

Read Genesis 25:19-28 which relates these significant events.

God repeated to Isaac the promises He had already made to Abraham, that through his descendants all the families of the earth would be blessed.

Read how God appeared to him and confirmed the promises in Genesis 26: 2-5.

Jacob

Jacob was chosen by God, even before his birth, as the one through whom the promises to Abraham would be developed. In his letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul used this in his teaching to explain how God selects and calls men and women to be part of His plan and carry out His purpose. *Read Romans 9:6-13.*

Jacob and Esau grew up and Esau sold to Jacob his 'birthright', or inheritance, his entitlement as the elder son of Isaac. He did this because he was weary and hungry, and wanted some of the food that Jacob had prepared. A key point to note is that Esau showed a lack of faith in God. He also showed a lack of faith by selecting wives for himself from the Canaanite women. Esau became the ancestor of a large nation - the Edomites (see Genesis 36:1). The Edomite territory is now part of modern Jordan. There are a series of Bible passages that demonstrate some of the key lessons from this period.

Read Genesis 25:29-34; Genesis 26: 34-35; Jeremiah 49:7-22.

In the New Testament there are important lessons for all of those who wish to be related to God's promises. *Read Hebrews 12:14-17.*

In addition to obtaining the oldest son's birthright, Jacob received his father's blessing on the firstborn by disguising himself as Esau. He did

this because Esau had sold his birthright to him for food. As a result of this, Esau was furious and threatened to kill his brother (Genesis 27:41). This caused Jacob to flee to his uncle Laban, who lived in Haran (in eastern Turkey today).

Read about these further significant events in Genesis chapter 27 and 28:1-5.

God's Promise to Jacob

The promises to Abraham and Isaac were confirmed by God to Jacob (read Genesis 28:10-22). Amidst some family intrigue, Jacob stayed with and worked for Laban, and married his two daughters, Leah and Rachel. Twelve sons were born to these women and their maids, Bilhah and Zilpah. These sons became the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Read the whole of Genesis chapters 29 and 30 to get the full picture of what took place, and how it was overruled by God.

Eventually Jacob returned home to his father Isaac. On the way an angel met him and gave him an alternative name, Israel. Jacob means 'supplanter', or one who takes the place of another, whereas Israel means a 'striver with God' or a 'prince with God'. As is often the case in the Bible, we should note that although events seem unfair from a human point of view, in fact God blesses a course of action and rewards those who are faithful to Him and try to do the right thing. This significant event, where Jacob wrestled with an angel of God, is found in Genesis chapter 32.

Read verses 22- 32.

After this, Jacob met his brother Esau and they were reconciled.

Joseph

Of his twelve sons, Joseph was Jacob's favourite. He had dreams which were from God. He told his brothers about them and, because the interpretation of the dreams showed that one day Joseph's brothers would bow down to him and be ruled over by him, they hated him.

Read the whole of Genesis chapter 37 to see the sequence of events that followed.

Joseph was sold into Egypt by his brothers and, although he was wrongfully imprisoned, eventually he was released and became second only to Pharaoh in the land of Egypt. But again, this was God's doing. Joseph had been given great wisdom by God which he used to the benefit of the Egyptians. Pharaoh had a dream, which Joseph, with God's help,

interpreted as predicting seven years of great agricultural bounty, followed by seven years of terrible drought and famine.

The detailed narrative of Genesis chapters 39 – 41 should be read carefully to understand how God's plan progressed through adverse times.

Meanwhile, in the land of Canaan, Joseph's father, his brothers and their entire households, were suffering because of the same famine. Food was very scarce. Jacob sent the brothers to Egypt to buy grain from the storehouses that Joseph had built there. However, they didn't know that Joseph was still alive, and that he was ruler in Egypt, responsible for the storage of the grain from the seven bountiful years.

Continue by reading Genesis chapters 42 to 47.

Jacob's sons did indeed find themselves bowing down to Joseph their brother, as predicted in his dreams all those years earlier. The narrative is enthralling, but particularly notice how again God's hand directed events to further His purpose with Jacob's family, the children of Israel.

Joseph as a type of Christ

In this issue of Light (page 33), there is an article that explains what a Biblical 'type' is. It's worth reading carefully to understand how the Bible demonstrates that the events in the life of God's servants in the past, foreshadowed even greater things to come.

In this case, we can clearly see that many aspects of Joseph's life and work were similar to, and typical of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. For example, Joseph was rejected by his brothers, sold for twenty pieces of silver and taken to Egypt. Jacob thought that his favourite son had been killed by a wild beast. But Joseph was later instrumental in saving the family from certain death by starvation.

Jesus was similarly rejected by his brothers and sold for 30 pieces of silver. But through his death and resurrection, he became the saviour of mankind. His brothers, the natural descendants of Jacob (Israel), will eventually recognise him when he returns to rule over the whole world (see the prophecy of Zechariah 12:10). He will then bring salvation from death to all those 'who eagerly wait for him' (Hebrews 9:28).

Next time, God willing: how God freed the nation of Israel from slavery and took them towards the Promised Land.



Nezer Shlomi

Spring is in the air.

In the UK, the dark green spikes of early-flowering bulbs have burst out into snowdrops, crocuses and daffodils. In Israel, hillsides are covered with wild flowers, among them anemones and cyclamen. Interestingly, the popular name in Israel for the *cyclamen persicum* is ‘nezer Shlomi’, in Hebrew נזר שלומי meaning ‘Solomon’s Crown’.

The Jewish story goes that King Solomon needed a new crown. He was searching for inspiration for the design, and he found it in the flower of the cyclamen. Designers through history have looked to nature for inspiration, and Solomon himself is described as a skilled naturalist (see I Kings 4:33-34). Whether or not there is any grain of truth in the story, it is easy to imagine how the delicate, upward-reaching petals of the cyclamen might inspire the design for a crown (see pictures).

Sadly, over this last year, the term ‘crown’ has been forced on our consciousness in quite another context. The English word ‘crown’ has come to us direct from the Latin word ‘corona’. The first scientists who looked at the Covid virus under the microscope thought it looked like a crown and assigned it a Latin name – so the term ‘coronavirus’ entered our vocabulary and looks like staying there for a while to come. The Shaare Zedek hospital in Jerusalem, when they set up their new coronavirus unit, named it the Keter unit, using another Hebrew word for ‘crown’.

The crown features in many passages of the Bible. Taken together, these references are overwhelmingly positive in tone; something to encourage and invigorate us in these dark times. The Old Testament prophet Ezekiel

lived at a time when the crowned heads of the nation of Israel had deserted their God and led the nation into apostasy and exile. But God inspired him to look forward in hope:

‘Remove the turban, and take off the crown; nothing shall remain the same... It shall be no longer, until he comes whose right it is, and I will give it to him.’

Ezekiel 21:26

Jesus is the one who has that right.

He came to fulfil the words the angel Gabriel told Mary before his birth: *‘the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David... and of his kingdom there will be no end’* (Luke 1:32-33). The crown of thorns will be forgotten. Jesus has promised to come back, a ‘Prince of Peace’ to rule over Israel and the world on a revitalised planet, to bring healing and reformation to all nations.

As he came to the end of his life, the Apostle Paul looked with unshakeable faith beyond his imminent violent death to a crown of a different sort:

‘There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing’.

2 Timothy 4:8

As the world continues to wrestle with all the effects of the world-wide coronavirus, believers can look beyond these troubled times, to the promised appearance of our king and our saviour. If we are found faithful to our calling, we *‘will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away’* (I Peter 5:4).

Cyclamen growing on Mt Carmel in Israel



the **signs** of the **times**

A vision of empires

If you are a regular reader of the 'Signs of the Times' series you will often see references to a vision given over two thousand five hundred years ago to Nebuchadnezzar, king over the ancient empire of Babylon (now in Iraq). All these years later, the explanation of the vision that Daniel gave to Nebuchadnezzar is still one of the best ways to look at Bible prophecy about historical events, current events, and events still to happen. It really is amazing. It relates particularly well to the two other subjects I want to consider in this article.

Either as a refresher, or a first time reading, let's look at both the vision and its explanation from the Bible. I have highlighted the specific parts that are especially relevant to this article. The dream is described in Daniel 2:31-35.

The explanation which recounts the dream is as follows:

'This is the dream.

Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory... you are this head of gold.

But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron...

Nebuchadnezzar's dream

Daniel chapter 2



head of gold
BABYLON

chest
and arms
of silver

MEDOPERSIA

belly
and thighs
of bronze

GREECE

legs of iron
ROME

feet of iron
and clay

DIVIDED NATIONS

Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay... the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile... they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay.

And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold – the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.'

Daniel 2:36-45

Before we move on, just a few more words about this prophecy. However else people may interpret the details of the prophecy, two things are clear. The first is that a timeline is represented starting with the head and concluding with the feet, the part '*the stone*' strikes. The second is that the part relating to '*the stone*' is yet to happen.

The composition of the feet as iron and clay that do not stick together is a wonderfully apt description of the broken world that we live in. And it seems to be a world where division and partisanship, within countries, and internationally, is increasing. And that leads us to the first current event I want to look at.

Justin Trudeau's speech to the UN

Justin Trudeau is Canada's Prime Minister. In late September 2020, a pre-recorded speech he prepared was played to the UN General Assembly. It made an impact at the time, but like most things that happen, has fallen quickly out of the media cycle. Given the content of the speech, that is a little surprising perhaps. The headline of an article I read about this speech was:

'Justin Trudeau: "The World Is In Crisis, And Things Are About To Get



Much Worse”¹ (Huffpost World News dated 26 September 2020 by Jeremy Blum). The content of the speech certainly matched the headline. Here are some words that especially struck a chord with me as a student of Bible prophecy:

‘The world is in crisis, and not just because of the last few months,’ Trudeau said, ‘Not just because of COVID-19. But because of the last few decades. And because of us.’

Trudeau described the COVID-19 pandemic as a ‘wake-up call’ and argued that organisations formed in the wake of two world wars, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, are no longer effective because of red tape and because countries repeatedly push their own interests. Trudeau said: ‘The international approach we relied on since the second half of the 20th century was built on an understanding that countries would work together. But now the same countries are looking inward and are divided. We need to recognise where we are. The system is broken, and the world is in crisis. And things are about to get much worse **unless we change.**’

The need for change

I have highlighted the last three words. No doubt they were sincerely uttered, a ray of hope being proposed. But what do you think the real

chances for change are? After all, there is a great deal of talk about it and some countries are acting on the environmental issues that were a core part of Trudeau’s warning. Humankind has the capacity to deal with many of the problems that Trudeau described. But will they? And to the degree needed? History suggests not; for the problems are human in origin. The Bible makes the nature of human beings very clear. We are capable of both great good and great evil, but our natural tendency is always toward the evil as Paul reminds us in his letter to the Romans:

‘I know that nothing good lives in me, that is in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do — this I keep on doing.’

Romans 7:18-19 NIV

If that applied to a great servant of God, the Apostle Paul, it surely applies to the rest of us!

Nations, and the people within them, just don’t seem to be able to work together. One more reference to the coronavirus that also has something to say about the divisions in politics. A BBC reporter recently suggested that, at least at the time he was writing, a discussion he had with one supporter of each side of politics in

the US, shortly after President Trump was announced to have COVID-19, encapsulated the US for him. The Trump supporter said something to the effect that COVID-19 was all a hoax, and the Democrat supporter said the President was pulling a stunt for political purposes. Objective fact seemed not to be relevant to either of them. That is extreme, but there are just so many examples everywhere of 'broken' systems and bitter divisions.

'Brexit' is perhaps the best recent example of division. How can you create a consensus (the true function of politics) in a situation where a decision is either yes or no and the split is almost 50/50? It cannot be done. Increasingly, such is the nature of so many countries and their politics, systems, and more.

Peace in the Middle East?

A combination of US diplomacy and, arguably more so, the fear of a common enemy, together with an abandonment of unreserved support for Palestinians, has recently led to several Arab countries normalising their relations with Israel. There are indications that there will be more. And the big one, Saudi Arabia, is also looking possible. In some ways that doesn't matter. The Saudis and Israel have been cooperating closely in intelligence sharing and other military matters for a number of years, and the Saudis made a low-key

announcement some time ago, that recognised Israel has a right to exist.

These moves all come as no real surprise to Bible students who believe in any kind of 'end time' scenario involving war in the Middle East between two opposing alliances. These are described in detail by the Old Testament prophets Ezekiel and Daniel. For example, Daniel described this 'end-time' scenario like this:

'At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through.' Daniel 11:40

Most of Daniel chapter 11 concerns conflicts between a king of the South and a king of the North. It's referring to past events a little before the time of Christ. Two of Alexander the Great's generals set up kingdoms to the north and south of Israel, respectively. Both they, and their successors, in order to attack each other, first had to pass through Israel. Of course, being the 'meat in the sandwich' of war between these two forces, didn't go well for Israel and it was occupied by one then the other for many years. Ancient history indeed. Why is it in the book of Daniel? Well, it certainly meant something at the time to the Jews.

And it means something to us as well because it established a pattern. That pattern seems to be repeating itself today.

Broadly speaking it is not hard to describe Israel and its new and existing allies as ‘southern’. Conversely their enemies are to the north and, in the case of Iran, to the north-east and east of Israel. Historically most invasions of Israel have come from the north. That is certainly where the current actual and potential threats to the State of Israel are.

Precisely when the phrase ‘*the time of the end*’ applies, is open to interpretation, with some regarding it as past and some thinking it is still future. But something the Bible says is clearly future. The group of nations described in the verses quoted below is yet to attack Israel and overwhelm them.

‘Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, “Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him, and say, “Thus says the Lord GOD: “Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out, with all your army, horses, and horsemen, all splendidly clothed,

a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords. Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya are with them, all of them with shield and helmet; Gomer and all its troops; the house of Togarmah from the far north and all its troops—many people are with you’.

Ezekiel 38:1-6

But God is against this northern invader, and Jesus will return and save Israel (Ezekiel 38:21-23). Then he will set up the world-wide kingdom of God on Earth. Hence the section about ‘*the stone*’ referred to above.

Conclusion

The vision I referred to at the start ends with the words :

‘...the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this.

The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.’

These words are a great comfort to anyone who believes God’s Word. Especially so in these continuing strange and troubled times! The two words - ‘*certain*’ and ‘*sure*’ - are lovely to read and believe. Yes, God’s plan will be concluded exactly how He intends it to be. I hope for all of us, that it happens soon.

David Gamble
Melbourne, Australia

The challenge of depression

‘The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.’

Psalm 34:18

The purpose of this article is to consider depression in the context of Bible teaching, and the conflicts that might arise in the mind of anyone who is trying to follow Christ and who struggles with depression. All Bible quotations are taken from the New International Version except where noted in the text.

I am aware that suffering from depression is an individual experience, and this is very much an overview of this difficult and debilitating illness, and cannot fully explore all the intricacies and personal experiences that the readers may have had or may continue to live with.

Are we meant to be happy?

Are we as human beings meant to be happy? How do we know we are happy? Is the desire to be happy like a hunger that can never be satisfied? It is something that our human nature continually strives after isn't it – happiness and fulfilment in our lives? Is it achievable? Does God want us to be happy? The Psalms and the Book of Proverbs are full of encouragement to serve God and be happy. Here is

one example: *‘Happy is that people, whose God is the LORD’* (Psalm 144:15 KJV). That is happiness connected to serving God, but what of a life without God?

We perhaps think of Solomon's life, and his evaluation of striving after happiness recorded in the book of Ecclesiastes. He was a man that had been given everything this world could offer, but still his human nature was not satisfied. He realised that without God in your life everything is ultimately meaningless.

But is depression just a state of not being happy? We can all, I would suggest, experience times in our lives when we might describe ourselves as feeling low in mood or sad. Maybe this is related to a recent bereavement or difficult life event, or even listening to the news of another problem in the world. But these things are different for the person who suffers from depression. It goes beyond what could be seen as a natural sadness or response; feelings of being low can become more entrenched, more out of control and difficult to overcome. They can become a long-term state of being, and are not always caused or triggered by an obvious event, which makes it even harder for others to understand.

The reasons for depression

As science, and in particular Psychiatry, has advanced, chemical deficiencies such as the reduced levels of Serotonin (a chemical within the brain affecting and moderating the mood – see below) have been highlighted as biological causes of depression. Therefore what might have been perceived as a weakness of character, is now seen as a medical condition. In other words it is not a choice, it's an illness.

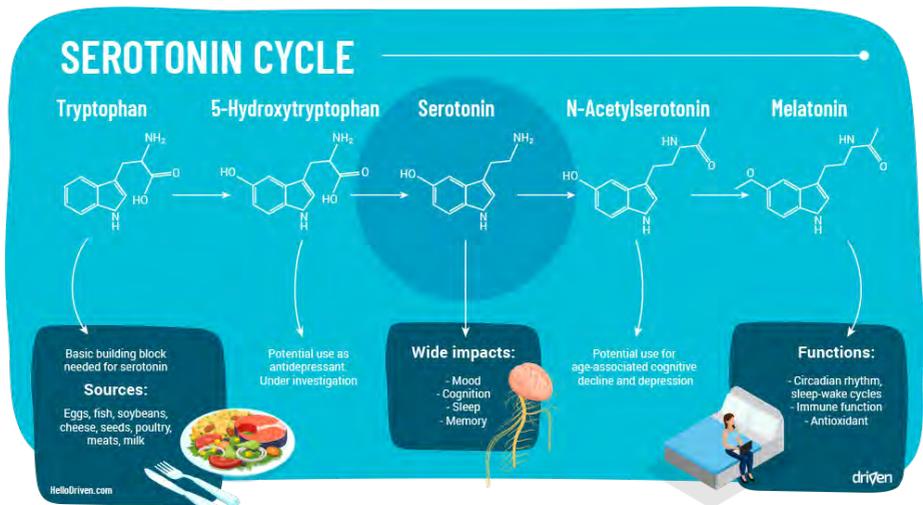
Recent statistics in England (MIND – Mental Health Charity 2020) show that in any given week, one in six people will be experiencing symptoms of depression and/or anxiety. Living in this world is tough going for many. Depression affects all ages and can lead to many problems such as lack of sleep, reduced appetite and weight loss, no motivation, lack of self-confidence and lack of enjoyment of events. This can lead to social isolation, no sense of a positive future and, sadly, in extreme cases,

dwelling and acting on suicidal thoughts.

Depression then is an illness, invisible to the eye, but can be as debilitating as any physical illness. Depression can affect the sufferer in many ways and is not easy for others to understand. Statements such as 'pull yourself together', 'just cheer up', 'what have you got to be sad about?' are some of the misguided comments made.

Depression is not a new phenomenon related to twenty-first century life. In Bible times there were many who struggled with depression and all that goes with it. The word depression is not specifically used in the Bible, but we can find many examples of individuals experiencing symptoms that psychiatry today would say indicate a depressed state of mind.

Some Bible scholars suggest that Solomon, at the end of his days, had become depressed at the realisation



that all was meaningless. This comes across in the writings and reflections recorded in the Book of Ecclesiastes of a life without hope. The Proverbs of Solomon also describe the experience of a depressed state of mind: *'A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken'* (Proverbs 15:13 KJV).

We think of David and his poetic expressions recorded in the Psalms; a window into his state of mind during periods in his life when he was in despair:

'My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, "where is your God?" Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God.'

Psalm 42:3,11

We also think of Job, who endured great losses and hardships, perhaps more than most people could bear. This is how he described his state of mind:

'Why is light given to those in misery, and life to the bitter of soul, to those who long for death that does not come, who search for it more than for hidden treasure...I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil.'

Job 3:20-21,26

Should a Christian be depressed?

If we as Christians struggle with depression, does that mean our faith is weak? Believers are not immune to the illnesses in the world, for we know that from the beginning of time, mankind (because of sin) was warned that life would be difficult, full of hardships and pain, with a bleak future without the intervention of God and the redemptive work of His Son Jesus.

For a believer in God to admit that they are depressed may worsen their feelings of not being good enough. They may fear they will be viewed as having a weak faith, not being able to hold on to the hope of the Bible. They may feel that they have let God down and all is lost. Maybe they feel their sins are too great, and become so focussed on their deficits that they can't hear the message of God's Word, that of forgiveness and grace.

And what of those who look upon the depressed person and see it as perhaps attention seeking - 'what have they got to be depressed about?' - words that we might expect from the harsh world in which we live, but not we would hope from the lips of someone who is trying to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. His example teaches us to come alongside those who are struggling and offer comfort, strength and support.

Relief, support and comfort

The world's doctors offer medications in an attempt to relieve the symptoms of depression. Therapists offer talking therapies to listen and interpret and to try and understand the complexities of human life, relationships and disappointments that can lead to a despondent state. Self-help books line the shelves of book shops and, for many, these supports and treatments are helpful.

More importantly, the Bible tells us that we can turn to God to help us, to endure and manage our suffering. God's care for His people is demonstrated in these words of the Old Testament Prophet Isaiah:

'So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.' Isaiah 41:10

The great fortress of Aleppo in Syria

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul wrote to the believers at Corinth:

'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.'

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

The English word 'comfort' in this passage is derived from the Latin word 'fortis' (as in fort or fortress – see below) meaning to strengthen or make strong. Therefore, the comfort we can receive from God can give us courage to face the trials of this life.

The Prophet Isaiah foretold hundreds of years earlier, that Jesus was *'a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering'* not only through what he experienced but also we are told: *'he took*



The LORD is my rock and my fortress

Psalms 18.2

up our infirmities and carried our sorrows' (Isaiah 53:3-4). Therefore he understands the mind and the thought processes that go with being depressed. So although the sufferer may feel alone, they can have Jesus beside them. True believers can be assured by his words:

'I have told you these things, so that you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.'

John 16:33

The teaching of Jesus tells us *'do not worry'*, and we can read his words in the Sermon on the Mount, where he encourages us to seek God and His coming kingdom, rather than get caught up in the worries of this life which can lead to depression (Matthew 6:25-34).

This is a challenge for us and not easy to achieve, but we are encouraged to come to God through prayer and read His Word to help put our lives in perspective. We are reassured that at the darkest times in our lives God is ready to offer us repose: *'God is light; and in him there is no darkness at all'* (1 John 1:5).

Depression as a trial – to make your faith stronger or weaker?

The Bible tells us that God sends us trials to shape our characters, to change us, to steer us on another route, but never to break us: *'Consider*

it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance' (James 1:2-3). And if we can persevere despite our trials, James tells us: *'Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him'* (James 1:12).

The certainty of God in an uncertain world

Therefore, in our darkest times, we have to try harder to remember this and to come closer to God, for we are told that if we come close to God, he will come close to us (James 4:8). Paul encouraged the believers at Philippi, who were suffering persecution for their faith, to pray to God:

'Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.'

Philippians 4:6-7

We may be enduring many hardships as the world spirals downwards into one crisis after another. There is no perfect happiness to be found in this current world, but we are encouraged to put our faith and hope in God and

the certainty of His promises. We read in Isaiah: *'You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. Trust in the LORD for ever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal'* (Isaiah 26:3-4). We have the example of His Son Jesus to follow, and to place our hope in the promise of his return: *'We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure...'* (Hebrews 6:19).

A world without depression

The true followers of Jesus can look forward to a time and place promised in the Bible, where we are told that ultimately there will be no illness either physical or mental. This is the real message of the Bible, the goal of every true believer, not the hopeless future that this world offers. The Apostle John received visions and a message from Jesus, and recorded in

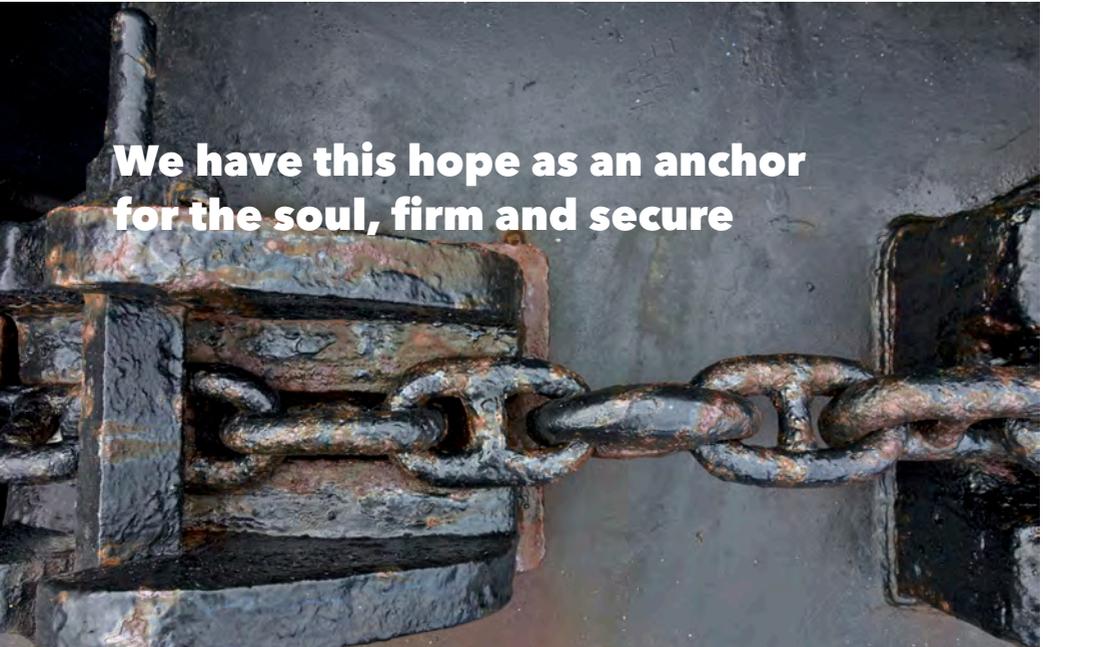
the last book of the Bible what he saw and heard:

'And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away'

Revelation 21:3-4

The Bible message gives us good reason to respond to Christ, to become associated with him, and the salvation made possible by his death and resurrection, and by our faithful answer to the call to be baptised into his saving name.

Richard West
Norfolk, UK



**We have this hope as an anchor
for the soul, firm and secure**

an introduction to **Biblical ‘Types’**

What is a ‘type’? In Biblical terms, it can be defined as something which points forward to something in the future. A study of Biblical types can be fascinating, even exciting and instructive. The Bible is an extensive book, comprising a large collection of writings inspired by God, compiled over many centuries, in different places, by different writers. These combine to describe a great plan stretching from Creation at the beginning to the Kingdom of God at the end.

This wonderful plan is developed through the lives of faithful men and women, and then through God’s chosen nation of Israel, culminating in the ministry of Jesus Christ. The plan then widens to freely embrace both Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews). It will find its fulfilment when Jesus returns from heaven to set up the Kingdom of God on earth. This is the message of the Gospel.

Throughout the Bible, God has included a number of ‘types’, in which people, objects, and events are used as a pattern or type for the future. When we discover these types, we can see how they provide us with evidence that God’s purpose is clear and consistent; and as history

repeated itself in various ways, they provide firm evidence that everything is working out as He intended. The sheer variety, and the circumstances in which the types were fulfilled, assures us that these things could not have happened by chance.

There is a further benefit which is that, while human philosophy and religion has sought to find its own answers to the fundamental questions of life, and inevitably changed according to culture or era, God’s purpose declared in the Bible remains unchanged. Through His Word, and through the types found within it, God has provided answers to questions which humanity struggles with to this day, and has given us reason to trust and believe in Him.

Pointing forward to Jesus

Many of the types find their ultimate fulfilment in the work of Jesus Christ, and therefore we discover them in the Old Testament, long before Jesus was born. Jesus was, after all, at the very centre of God’s plan of redemption for mankind, and so we are not surprised to find significant types from the very earliest pages of God’s Word, in the book of Genesis, which point forward to the coming of Jesus. The most impressive way to appreciate these types is to see how they

were explained after their fulfilment, as we read in the New Testament. For example, in Paul's letter to the Romans, there is a striking comparison between Adam and Jesus:

'... just as through one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned... death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a **type** of him who was to come...

For if by the one man's offence death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the one, Jesus Christ.'

Romans 5:12,14,17

We may not have expected the man who brought sin into the world to have the status of a type of Jesus, who was sent to take away the effect of that sin, but this certainly teaches us how Jesus was sent to reinstate what Adam's sin had taken away, and the need for that role to be fulfilled by a man who had the nature of Adam.

A type of baptism

Another notable illustration of the use of types, with crucial relevance to human salvation, is found in Peter's

first letter, where the apostle referred to Noah's ark, which Genesis chapter six tells us was made in faithful obedience to God, in full view of a wicked and Godless world. Peter wrote:

'... God waited patiently in the days of Noah, while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water. And this water symbolises baptism that now saves you also - not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience towards God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.'

I Peter 3:20-21 NIV

Noah and his family emerged after the Flood into a clean, fresh world, where no trace of the wickedness which had corrupted the old world remained. This symbolised the essential act of baptism, by which a believer confesses their sin and becomes a true follower of Jesus Christ. This is explained by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans, where he wrote: '*... we are buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*' (Romans 6:4).

The cleansing waters of the Flood are thus seen as a type of the waters of baptism. In addition, Noah became a type of Jesus. Following a faithful life

of obedience, God saved him, along with his close family who believed as Noah did. They shared with him the reward – a new world in which the old order had been swept away.

Did people in Old Testament times benefit from the types? If the type was fulfilled during and after the ministry of Jesus, we may ask if people in earlier times were deprived of a major support to their faith. They could not see what we can see by looking back. What, for example, did Adam or Noah know about Jesus?

The answer is that they knew God would send a saviour for mankind. Adam heard God's promise in Eden (Genesis 3:15) and Noah heard God's promise when the Flood was over (Genesis 8:22). Whilst they and many others may not have appreciated the significance of everything that God had done, it is evident that they understood what God required of them, and that they could share in

the future which God had promised. This is made very clear in the New Testament Letter to the Hebrews where we read concerning people like Noah: *'These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, they were assured of them...'* (Hebrews 11:13).

The full benefit of the types, however, was reserved for a minority of believers in the generations that followed, who were exposed to a vast array of false religion, including a corrupted Christianity, for whom the harmony and clarity of God's Word shone as a light in a dark world.

The Letter to the Hebrews

In this letter there is a detailed account of how the system of worship followed by the children of Israel after the Exodus foreshadowed the work of Jesus. As a letter to 'Hebrews', we are reminded that the main recipients were the



descendants of the Jews of Old Testament times. The letter refers to the time when they had been delivered from slavery in Egypt, a defining moment in their history which was never to be forgotten. They were given a new and highly symbolic form of collective and individual worship in the wilderness. The centre of their worship was the Tabernacle, which Moses was commanded to build, as a dwelling place for God in their midst (see Exodus chapter 40).

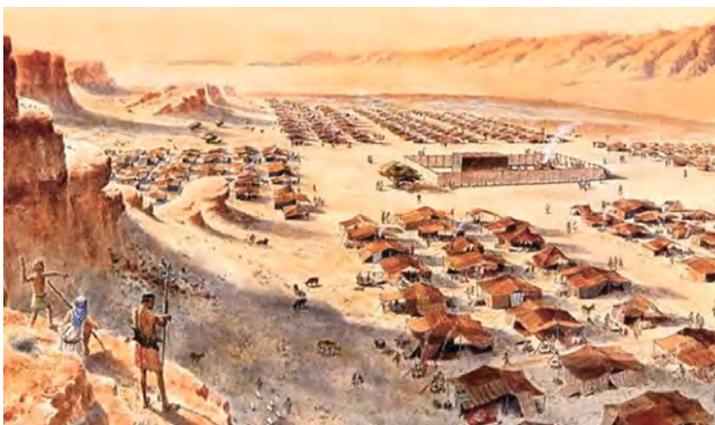
There are many types in the features of the Tabernacle, with its two rooms, the fabrics and coverings, the clothing of the priests, the offerings and sacrifices, and in the wilderness location itself. But the focal point came on the annual Day of Atonement, when the High Priest went into the Most Holy Place, part of the Tabernacle, into the very presence of God.

Hebrews chapter nine tells us that *'it was symbolic for the present time'* (verse 9), meaning that it served a purpose at the time but looked forward to something greater to come. This is the very essence of a type in the

Bible. It continues: *'But Christ came as high priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is, not of this creation'* (verse 11). Then we read: *'How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?'* (verse 14).

The rich symbology of Israel's worship in the wilderness not only looked forward to the future ministry of Jesus, but was consistent with the patterns or types which had been established much earlier, as recorded in Genesis. Some have already been mentioned. The necessity for sacrifice, involving the shedding of blood, was clearly explained to Adam and his immediate family. The fig leaves with which Adam and Eve attempted to cover their nakedness were divinely replaced by 'tunics of skin' (Genesis 3:21), and this principle followed through into the animal sacrifices offered throughout Old Testament times. The fulfilment

The camp of Israel in the wilderness with the Tabernacle at its centre



of these types was provided by the blood of Jesus, a complete and perfect sacrifice which no animal could provide (see Hebrews 10: 4,11,12).

Abraham as a type

The future provision of such a sacrifice was completely understood by Abraham. God made far-reaching promises to Abraham, in which he totally trusted. These are outlined in Genesis chapter 12 and later chapters. Genesis tells us how God told Abraham to take his only son Isaac and offer him as a sacrifice. As they both went on their way to the appointed place, Isaac asked his father where the lamb was. Abraham replied: *'My son, God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering'* (Genesis 22:8).

When Abraham was on the verge of slaying his son, an angel stopped him; but both the faith of Abraham and the type were confirmed, as the letter to the Hebrews reminds us:

'By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called"', accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.'

Hebrews 11:17,19

Abraham's agonising act of obedience was not a barbaric act of primitive mankind but foreshadowed the merciful provision God made for that perfect sacrifice: *'... God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life'* (John 3:16). Jesus did die; but God raised him from the dead, and Abraham was certain that God had the power to raise the dead.

A type for us

Examples from the past illustrate how the fulfilment of the types can apply to both Jesus and to faithful believers. In addition to the example of Noah, Jesus referred to the world of his day in a powerful message to his disciples. In his teaching called *'the Mount Olivet prophecy'*, he was answering a question by his disciples about the end of the Jewish era, and applied that to the Gentile era as well, in which we live today:

'But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.'

Matthew 24: 37-39



The Flood was therefore a type of God's judgements at the end of the age; and just as it came upon the Jewish nation at the hands of the Romans in retribution for their rejection of Jesus, so it will come on the world at large as a result of its rejection of God and His laws. These are the times we are living in – corrupt, violent, self-centred, and godless. But, like Noah, we have an opportunity to escape.

The Apostle Paul was a repentant Jew and his mission was to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. His example is one we should carefully note. He wrote to Timothy:

'... Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all long-suffering, as a pattern (a type) of those who are going to believe on him for everlasting life.'

I Timothy 1:15,16

If we listen to what Jesus and Paul said, and act upon it, we can be given a place in the coming Kingdom of God on earth, and so become part of the fulfilment of the type that Paul wrote to Timothy about.

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

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if I do not remember you..."

PSALM 137

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