

# good news

## *Unlimited*

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CHRIST ALONE • GRACE ALONE • FAITH ALONE • SCRIPTURE ALONE



Building Shrines on the Mountain Top

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

# God's Amazing Grace in Romans

formerly, *Right With God Right Now*

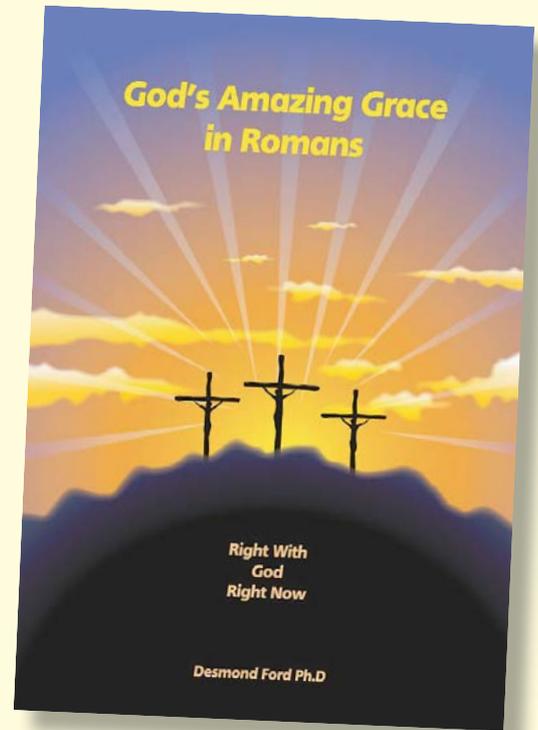
by **Desmond Ford**

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# Editorial

**P**ETER MARK ROGET, the son of a Protestant clergyman from Geneva, was born in London in 1779. His youth was plagued with problems. His mother, who tried to dominate his life, suffered considerably from depression. His sister and daughter also had severe mental problems, and his father died when he was just five years old. His illustrious uncle committed suicide before Roget could wrestle the razor from his hands.

Roget, who also suffered from depression, coped with his affliction by keeping himself busy making lists of synonyms. He put together a book of synonyms, which he called a Thesaurus, after the Latin word for treasure. He completed this unpublished compilation, which was purely for his personal use, when he was just 26 years of age.

In spite of these afflictions and to escape them, Roget studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh and became a doctor. Later he also became a writer, editor, researcher, and lecturer on anatomy, physiology and other topics. He was also one of the founders of London University.

Roget retired from professional life in 1840, but kept himself busy revising and expanding his Thesaurus, all by longhand.

This obsession kept his mind so full there was no room there for the demons of depression to torture him. His Thesaurus was first published in 1852 and went through 28 printings before Roget died at the ripe old age of 90.

After his death his son John revised and expanded the Thesaurus, a work later taken up by John's son, Samuel. My copy of Roget's Thesaurus is a 1991 reprint. It has over 1300 pages containing 250,000 words and phrases—a mammoth compilation. I treasure this volume, which opens to me the nuances of tens of thousands of words in the English language.

It is significant that Roget is best known for the work he did after his retirement. It is also significant that Roget's compilation of lists of words provided him with an escape from his personal demons. The man has to be honoured for both achievements. He did not submit to either indolence or depression, but overcame them both right to the very end. Roget left the English-speaking world with a superb legacy that will bring far more honour to his name than would a bronze statue of him in one of London's famous squares.

What I learn from Roget is that too many people use their health or age as an excuse to retire from service to others, when, with a little effort they could do something constructive to improve themselves and the lot of humanity.

Sir Edmund Hillary's greatest achievement was not in being the first to conquer Mount Everest, significant as that was, but in his humanitarian work

for the Nepalese people, a work in which he was deeply involved right up until his death at the age of 88.

Moved by the Spirit of God, he said,

It is impossible not to see that they lack all the things that we regard as essential in life. They don't have schools and they don't have any medical care or anything of this nature. And I suddenly decided that instead of just talking about it—why didn't I try and do something about it.

Subsequently, Hillary was responsible for building many clinics, hospitals, 17 schools and 2 airstrips for the impoverished people of the Himalayas. In the midst of this work his wife and daughter were killed in a nearby plane crash. He was naturally devastated, but never used that tragic accident as an excuse to withdraw from his labour of love.

To assist him in his mission he founded the Himalayan Trust, an organisation that is still dedicated to improving the lives of people living in the Himalayas. ✨



**RITCHIE WAY**

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### Mission Statement

Christians united in offering to all meaning and direction in their lives through a knowledge of God's reconciliation with humanity through his Son, Jesus Christ.



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# About Building Shrines on the Mountaintop

SMUTS VAN ROOYEN

After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah". While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid." When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

(Matt. 17: 1-9)

I'VE SUGGESTED a few embarrassing things in my life too, so I'm not overly inclined to pass judgment on Peter, but Luke does not share my sensibilities. He comes right out and says of the Apostle, 'He did not know what he was saying' (Luke. 9:33). That is, Peter was significantly naïve. Matthew is not as candid but clearly shared Luke's sentiments. And how did Peter succeed in putting his foot in his mouth? Well on the Mount of Transfiguration he made an impulsive suggestion, and to Jesus at that, 'Lord, if you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah'. Now, even when one makes allowances for the fact that Peter had been overwhelmed by the splendour of the occasion (imagine Christ transfigured from head to toe, shining like the sun, and Moses and Elijah casually dropping in from heaven), his proposal was out of line.

Clearly, certain equivalencies should never even be implied let alone plainly stated in good company. Moses (representing the law) and Elijah (representing the prophets) may not be put on an equal or competitive footing with Jesus, ever. There simply are no grounds for equality between creature and Creator, between mere word and the Word. No three shrines please. But

Peter, speaking off the top of his head proposed just that. Mercifully the heavenly Father interrupted him midstream in his ineptitude 'while he was still speaking' to proclaim, 'This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!' (cf. Deut. 18:15). At this Peter and his two colleagues fell to the ground terrified. But Jesus gently touched them and when they looked up, 'they saw no one except Jesus'.

So what is the point of this story? Well it's a story about hermeneutics. That's right hermeneutics, but in its large contours rather than in its micro-specifics such as grammar and syntax, etc. A good tracker makes headway not simply by reading the meaning of broken twigs and scratches on rocks, but by understanding the overall shape of the terrain to see which way the animal would tend to go. This magnificent story puts Jesus at the heart of Christian hermeneutics. It designates for Christians whose voice is the supreme authority within the Bible. So, yes, the face of Moses shines beautifully like the sun and is certainly not without its light, but his Sinai light is as nothing when compared to the complete splendour of Christ whose feet, head, body, and clothing scintillate with unbearable brilliance. In short the final authority on earth has been appointed, and neither Moses nor Elijah are it.

The supremacy of Jesus to discriminate what holds and does not hold in the Law and the Prophets is also emphasised by other New Testament writers. The apostle John makes this astounding assertion about the Word, 'In him was life and that life was the light of men' (John 1:4). It's simple: his life is the normative light. Then, too, there are the opening verses of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which argue that, although God has spoken to us in the past by the prophets, he has now spoken to us by his Son who is amongst other things the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being. Which of the prophets has such credentials? There is an exactitude about Jesus that does not hold for the prophets. Christians believe that by means of the incarnation God himself walked among us and explained himself to us and that brilliance is normative. Therefore all views of God given by the prophets before that incredible event are lesser light. Moreover all views of God given by prophets after the incarnation also are lesser light.

Some of us might be asking what would make it necessary to call the absolute authority of the Law and the Prophets into question in the first place. Must



they not be taken at face value as a final that's-that in their view of God and of life? To concede such is to leave us stuck in a cultural and ethical morass that paralyses and confuses our walk with God. Did God really instruct Samuel to tell a lie when he went to anoint David (1 Sam. 16:1-4)? Was an evil spirit sent by God to tempt Saul to throw his spear at David (1 Sam. 18:10)? Did God encourage Israel to own slaves albeit only from other nations (Lev. 25:44)? Is it still permissible to take an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth (Lev. 24:19,20)? Should we stone incorrigible children and Sabbath breakers (Exod. 35:2)? Such issues make it clear that we desperately need an authoritative internal guide, a canon within the canon to help us through our Scriptural perplexities and to protect the character of God? We simply cannot, like Peter, treat everything in the Scriptures as having equal value because of our

philosophy of inspiration and leave Jesus sidelined. Everything in life and in the whole Bible must be held up to his life.

But there is much more to the authority of Jesus than coming to terms with things in the Old Testament that hurt our funny bone. There is also the crucial matter of growth and development of something gloriously new on our land. With Christ, the kingdom of God advances like a kernel of wheat that germinates, then sprouts a blade, then swells a cluster of green seeds, then ripens into a mature head of wheat ready for harvest. When Christ came, brand new benefits came with him. Consider the joyful inclusion of the Gentiles (that's us) within the people of God, and the writing of the law upon our hearts in the New Covenant, and the binding of the strong man Satan, and, of course, the sterling sacrifice of Jesus once for all. It's enough to take one's breath away. The coming of the beloved Son who pleases the Father is a seismic event that has pushed up new mountain ranges onto the hermeneutical plains. Jesus has come and how we view the Word of God has been drastically and magnificently altered, forever. We declare the truth as it is in Jesus. Please, no more shrines. ✨

## Daniel 9:24-27

is a *crux interpretum* [difficult passage], with as many problems as there are cells in a honeycomb.

Charles Spurgeon was fond of saying about difficult Bible passages, 'The harder the shell, the sweeter the kernel', and that is true of this passage.

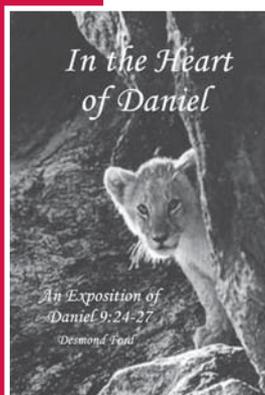
Dr Desmond Ford has studied Daniel for 60 years and has written thousands of pages about this Scripture book.

Non-scholars, as well as the erudite lay researcher, will benefit from this book, and

will find many solutions to perplexing questions.

Dr Ford considers interpretations advocated by dispensationalists and groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses, as well as the traditional view of the last two millenniums.

The book's main emphases are upon 'Messiah the Prince' and his 'atonement for iniquity' as applicable to both inaugurated (the Cross) and consummated (the Second Coming) eschatology.



### *In the Heart of Daniel*

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# Dietrich Bonhoeffer

ALAN SMITH

**'He still speaks, even though he is dead'**

(Heb. 11:4).

**W**HAT DO you know about Dietrich Bonhoeffer? Let me challenge you. What you don't know is well worth knowing. Here are a few snippets, which hopefully will spur a desire to read and learn a lot more about this amazing man. There is much that is worthwhile on the Internet, and a recent book by Eric Metaxas (*Bonhoeffer, Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy*, Nashville, 2010, Thomas Nelson, Paperback), which is available from Koorong, fills out the account admirably.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was born in 1908 into a 'fabulously illustrious family', with forbears tracing back several centuries. Very early in the lives of each of the eight children, a 'welter of wonderfulness that was their heritage seems to have been a boon, one that buoyed them up so that each child seems not only to have stood on the shoulders of giants, but also to have danced on them', wrote Metaxas.

Fifty years ago Dr Ford talked to us about some of the factors that were determinants of longevity. 'Choose your parents well!', he joked. And, as one reads about the Bonhoeffer family, one realizes that the brilliance of the family did not suddenly shine forth in one generation without eminent precursors.



It reminded me of a study that is often referred to in literature, about the Edwards/Jukes family trees. Jonathan Edwards, famed American revivalist, lived contemporaneously with a ne'er-do-well named Jukes. Edwards' descendants include Supreme Court Judges, teachers, lawyers, professional people in many areas, a couple of famous politicians—truly an illustrious line. Jukes, a 'nobody' by contrast had descendants who for the most part were drifters and criminals—people of mean report.

The 'Jukes' had no inherited capacity or training upon which they could safely presume. Their only chance lay in nursing every germ of hope by means of industry and education, through the discipline of

# Dietrich Bonhoeffer

the shop, the training of the schools and the inspiration of the church. Did they appreciate this? Far from it! Instead of developing capacity by training, not one of the 1,200 secured even a moderate education, and only twenty of them ever had a trade, and ten of these learned it in the state prison.

Among the 285 college graduates of the Edwards family there are thirteen presidents of colleges and other higher institutions of learning, sixty-five professors of colleges, and many principals of important academies and seminaries. Forty-five American and foreign colleges and universities have this family among the alumni. From this family have come presidents for Yale, Princeton, Union, Hamilton, Amherst, the University of California, the University of Tennessee, the famous Litchfield (Conn.) law school, the Columbia law school, and Andover Theological Seminary. Among these are such men as President Timothy Dwight (Yale, 1794-1817); Theodore Dwight Woolsey (Yale, 1846-71); Timothy Dwight II (Yale, 1886-97); Jonathan Edwards Jr. (Union, 1799-1801); Daniel C Gilman (Johns Hopkins); Merrill E Gates (Amherst), and Edwards A Park (Andover). 'It is pre-eminently true that a mighty intellectual and moral force does plough the channel of its thought and character through many generations.'

Thoughtful people today are talking about a crust of morality, that keeps America from complete collapse, and lament that we have no contemporary Miltons or Edwardses to redirect a sensate society. However, seldom in great families is illustriousness traceable to just the father. The world is in desperate need of Hannahs and Jochebeds, wise Abigails, of virtuous Marys. Jonathan Edwards and, like him, Dietrich Bonhoeffer had marvellous mothers.



Back to Bonhoeffer. His father Karl was one of Berlin's most eminent psychiatrist/neurologists. With misgivings he watched Hitler's antics during the 1920s, and when Hitler became German Chancellor in January 1933, he, in alarm, predicted, 'This means war'. Hitler, in his book, *Mein Kampf*, had but thinly veiled his determination to avenge the wrongs he rightly attributed to the French in the peace settlement of 1919.

There are few physical reminders of Hitler's vision for Germany still in existence today, but there are some. Ten

years ago we spent a few days at one of the resorts he built for some of his officials at Lake Chiemsee, in Bavaria. It was splendid; he built well. Morale within a despondent Germany, within months, soared, and it took ten years before the German people began to realise that he could go wrong.

Within weeks, however, Hitler began taking control of trade unions, youth organizations, churches and independent schools. Bonhoeffer sought to resist these moves. He was by now a devout Lutheran pastor, and had absorbed well Luther's penchant for keeping the tentacles of the state free from church activities (despite what he advocated in the Peasant's Revolt).

Slowly Bonhoeffer was forced to yield to the power of the Gestapo, but until 1937 he was able to maintain an isolated, illegal seminary in the sand hills of northern Pomerania. Within a couple of years he was forbidden to speak or write in Germany. However, he had become friends with an influential black preacher in New York, as well as an Anglican bishop in London during short stints in those places, and these contacts, he hoped, would lead to England's earlier intervention and curtailment of Nazism. He was also active in vainly seeking the help of American evangelical pastors.

An initial lethargy on the part of overseas leaders was replaced by a recognition that initial success by Hitler had blinded the German people to the possibility of eventual failure. The Germans were euphoric about Hitler's achievements until the tide began to turn against Germany in 1943.

During Bonhoeffer's teens, his father expected his son to pursue a career in either the army or in medicine like some of his forefathers. Dietrich also pondered a musical career, because he was a gifted pianist. But when he reached his late teens he had determined to avoid being

a soldier and early in the war he was a virtual pacifist who agonised about the need to assassinate Hitler. He was only slowly drawn into the circle of Canaris, Dohnanyi, Rommel and other military generals, who were bent on killing Hitler as the war progressed. There were dozens of such plans and schemes, but Hitler's proverbial unpredictability resulted in one after another of them being aborted. By the middle of the war such planning became almost hopeless.

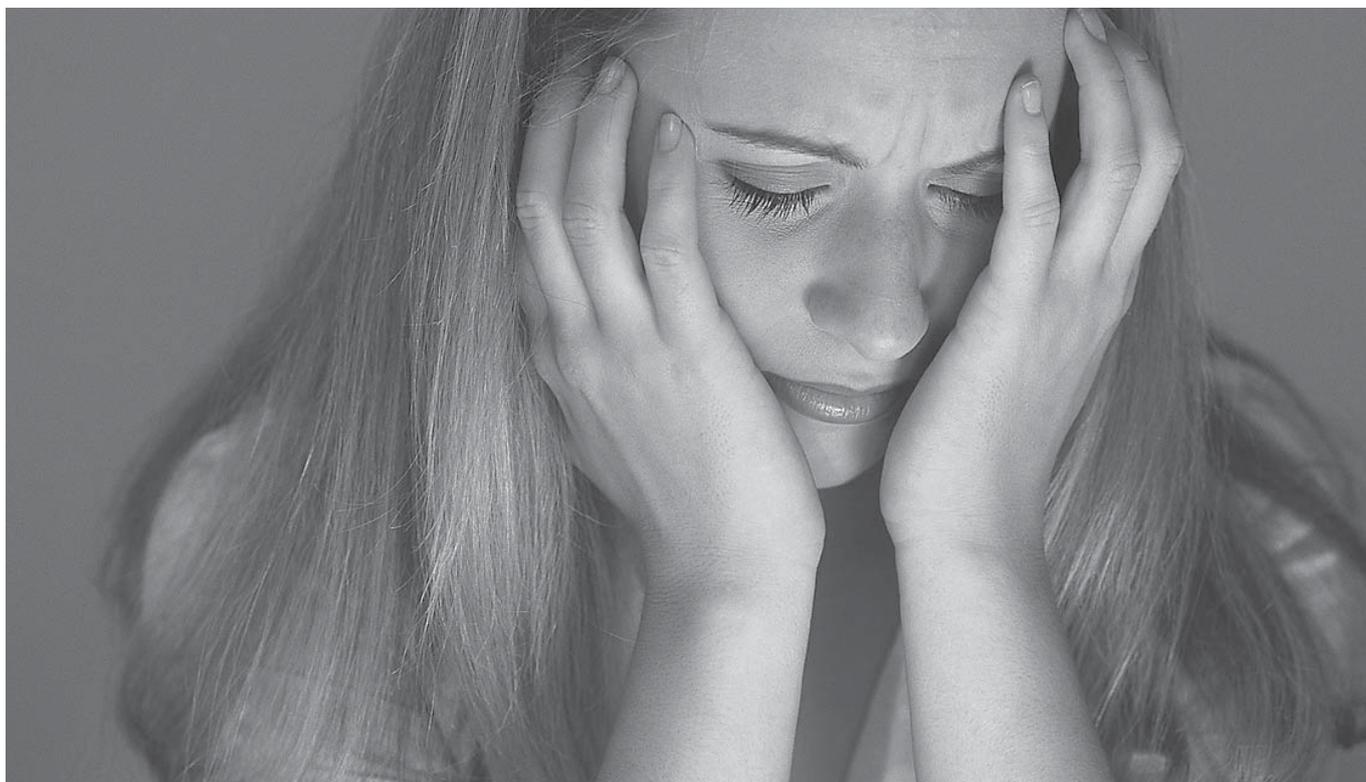
Von Stauffenberg's famous attempt on July 24, 1944 came closest to success, but as people even remotely involved in the plan were rounded up by their thousands, it seemed to the planners and plotters that only the eventual victory of the Allied armies would see Hitler eliminated.

As the black shadow of impending war loomed over Germany in early 1939, some of Bonhoeffer's friends within Germany and abroad decided that he must escape to the United States to save his life, and so he went. However, within hours of landing in New York, he felt that he was deserting his fellow Christians back home, and so within weeks he returned to his homeland.

He fully foresaw that this would result in his early death. He knew that the Gestapo was watching and listening to everything he did.

Many of Bonhoeffer's books are still in print. His *Cost of Discipleship* is a clarion call to Christian fidelity. His writings about the nature of the Church, considered against the backdrop of Hitler's takeover of the church, are classics today. His trenchant, incisive thinking is as vital for today as when it stirred the small group of faithful evangelicals in Germany eighty years ago. There are abundant examples on the Internet. To neglect them is to experience great loss. Hitler killed Bonhoeffer just a few days before he committed suicide himself. Bonhoeffer is dead but his writings live on. ✨

# Tears and Tragedy: Birth Pang or Death Cry?



**Much of our ability to cope with tragedy has to do with how we view it. No one likes pain, but some have the ability not to be devastated and destroyed by it. This rare skill to see pain as a birth pang on the way to something better is one that we should develop.**

## DESMOND FORD

CONSIDER the man who made the entire world laugh—Mark Twain. His father was a morose person, a derelict who never played with children and rarely expressed affection. Samuel Clemens (that was Twain's real name) was brought up as a neurotic little tramp. The family was always on the move, and always suffering from dreadful poverty. From childhood, he saw slaves whipped and men shot in the streets. When he was in his early teens he lost a brother and a sister in death. At the age of twenty-three, his hair went white after another brother was burnt to death when a steamboat exploded on the Mississippi.

When Twain was thirty, he pointed a revolver at his forehead. Fortunately for the world he lacked the courage to pull

the trigger. His first child died soon after birth. Another child died because of his neglect. In a moment of forgetfulness he forgot to cover her when she was out in the baby carriage in the snow. She died of pneumonia. A third one nearly died when he carelessly let go of the pram at the top of a hill. When he was away on a lecture tour, Susie, his most talented daughter, died. Not long after he returned, another daughter died of an epileptic seizure while taking a bath.

Yet, Mark Twain must surely be one of America's most gifted writers. Most of the men that have made the world laugh have been those who have been through the hell of tragedy. Consider Charles Dickens. Dickens was born a feeble little child and suffered repeated convulsions. His father

said: 'He'll never grow up to experience the bitterness of maturity'. But Charles Dickens did grow up, in spite of numerous disadvantages.

His father never knew how to handle money, so the whole family was clothed in rags. When his dad went to a debtors' prison, every afternoon poor Charles would walk up to see Papa behind bars. This boy who had convulsions, who had known poverty and who was raised more or less in the gutter, was soon to weave into his books all his sorrows in such a way that it would bring about reform throughout the whole British empire—reforms for children and reforms for workers.

The men who have made the world laugh have wept in secret. Sorrow and tragedy should not become death cries, but rather, the pangs of birth.

Take the men that have made the world weep. I think of Dostoevsky, perhaps the greatest of Russian writers. He received the sentence of death because of his political activities. He was made to stand in the cold. He saw the coffins just a hundred yards off. He faced the firing squad, but at the last moment he was forgiven, yet nevertheless he was sent to Siberia for years. With chains on his hands and feet

he lived with the worst of Russia's thieves and murderers.

Someone put a Bible into his hands at a railroad station on the way to Siberia. By the few rays of light that came through the glazed frozen window Dostoevsky read the Scriptures and found Jesus Christ. The great themes of the New Testament show through in all his books. And the tears that have been shed by the readers of Dostoevsky's books have been, in many cases, the tears of penitence as people found God.

With Tolstoy it was the same. Tolstoy tried every way he knew to commit suicide. He tried hanging but the rope snapped. He tried to shoot himself, but something went wrong. For years he slept with a loaded revolver under his pillow in case he got the courage to try it again. He finally found Christ. Tolstoy made the world weep with the power and pathos of his prose and his brilliant insight into human life.

For those who have made the world wonder and adore, the story is the same. Beethoven! We would never have had the music that thrills us so, but for his deafness. Mozart died and was buried in a pauper's grave after being poor all his days.

Did you know that when Bunyan wrote *Pilgrim's Progress* he was in prison? The thing that made prison so bitter for him was that he knew his blind, motherless daughter was outside. He made shoelaces to earn some money to keep her alive. 'Don Quixote', that famous satirical work of humour, was written by Cervantes who was also a prisoner. The last book of the Bible was written by an apostle in lonely exile. Many of the New Testament letters were written by Paul in prisons (See 2 Corinthians 11:23).

You have heard of Joyce Landorf who has authored a number of Christian books. She had suffered for years from TMJ, a joint disease of the jaw. She says:

In six years I have been to eighteen specialists, all experts on TMJ. I have been treated with physical therapy, holistic medicine, acupuncture and biofeedback, and have changed my diet. I have gone through all of those procedures, and this painful problem is my point of greatest learning.

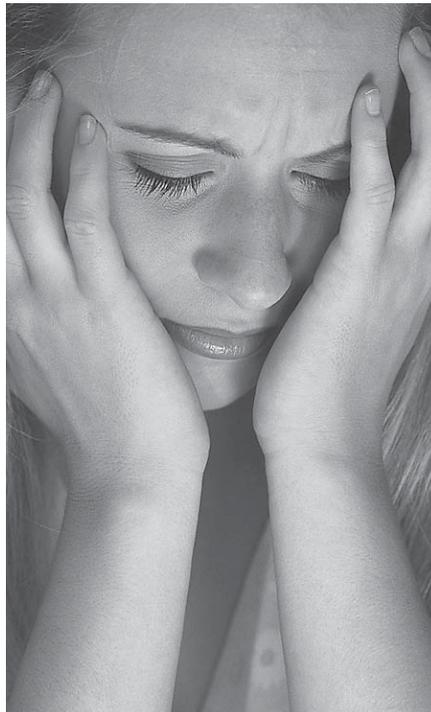
This physical pain is chronic. Chronic pain is the hardest pain in the world to deal with, because I either have it with me daily, or I don't know when it is going to come. I was incapacitated by the high intensity of pain to the point that I couldn't write, think or anything else. But it has also been the point of my greatest growth.

The mail that hurts the most is the kind from people who tell me that there is

sin in my life, or that I don't have enough faith, why don't I just claim healing? When you are hurting, when you are almost out of your mind with pain, to get a letter like that from a fellow Christian, is to be so wounded by a brother or sister and so put down! When my pain is at its highest intensity, I can't express how I feel, other than that I feel abandoned by God ... .When we read about the lives of the saints, they were persecuted and afflicted and wandered in the desert and died. Yet there was nothing wrong with their faith.

My mainstay lately has been Hebrews 11, where I read about the heroes of the faith—heroes like Abraham and Moses. Hebrews 11 also lists other heroes who were whole in their faith who died, unhealed and unrescued... Physical pain has been the point of my greatest personal growth in the last six years. I have hated every minute of the pain, and yet, I have learned that the sovereign will of God is what I want in my life (*Decision*, 2 February 1982, p. 7).

I think of Joni Eareckson-Tada, that beautiful woman who became paralysed from the neck down after diving into Chesapeake Bay. After enormous struggle, faced with despair, a sense of hopelessness and a longing for suicide, she finally let Jesus Christ bring triumph out of her tragedy. She now paints with the brush in her mouth. She has written books to the glory of God about how to survive in tragedy.



Perhaps Christ is still saying, in some of these situations, 'For your sake I am glad I was not there' (John 11:15). Perhaps he has a much bigger plan than the one we would thrust upon him immediately. This we know—our God does all things well. Our perspective is so cramped and we see but dimly.

The Bible gives us some clues. We read in Exodus 20:21 that Moses drew near to God who was surrounded in thick darkness. God isn't always to be perceived just in the light and glory. He's also in the darkness.

According to Scripture, justice and righteousness are the foundation of his throne, but clouds and darkness are round about him. The eternal stars shine brighter in the darkest of nights.

Isaiah 46:3-4 states:

Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all you who remain in the house of Israel, you whom I have upheld since you were conceived, and have carried since your birth. Even to your old age and grey hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you.

The same book continues:

When you pass through the waters I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. ... You are my witnesses, declares the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen (Isa. 43:2, 10).

The Bible tells us we are never alone in the darkness. There is one who holds our hand, a very present help in trouble.

We read in John 11:15 that Jesus said, 'I am glad for your sake that I was not there.' How strange! He was glad because he had a bigger plan. He raised Lazarus from the dead to encourage all who would lose loved ones in death. He gave encouragement to the bereaved of all ages.

There is a verse in Scripture that says, 'Gather up the fragments that nothing be lost' (John 6:12). I believe when we reach the kingdom of heaven we'll find that no fragment of pain has been lost. God will have used it all to feed the world.

God is there. We see darkly. We stumble. We wonder in our pain. But we see a God that loves supremely, who is there, and cares. And we realise that tears are often the birth pangs of greatness. ❄

From: Desmond Ford, *How to Survive Personal Tragedy*, pp. 14-22

# Did God Create Sin?

LIONEL HARTLEY

ISAIAH 45:6-7 reads, 'I am Jehovah, and there is none else, Forming light, and preparing darkness, Making peace, and preparing evil, I am Jehovah, doing all these things' (*Young's Literal Translation of the Bible*).

So, did God create evil? Perhaps this is best answered by asking, 'What is evil?' In a perfect world evil would not exist because evil is a 'nonentity reality' (a phrase I have coined). Now, before you label me a heretic, let me explain, for I do believe in evil!

We know that God did not create Darkness; he created Light. Darkness can't be made because Darkness is simply the absence of Light. Take away the Light and you are left with Darkness.

Now I would like to suggest that God didn't create Coldness either; he created the Sun (Heat). Coldness can't be made because Coldness is simply the absence of heat. A refrigerator gets cold only because the heat is removed, not because Coldness is made. Take away the Heat and you are left with Coldness. And God didn't create



Vacuums. A Vacuum is simple the absence of matter (e.g. air). Take away the Air and you are left with a Vacuum. Neither did God create Silence. Silence is simply the absence of Sound. Take away the Sound and you are left with Silence.

In the same way God didn't create timidity. 'For God did not give us a spirit of timidity; but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline' (2 Tim. 1:7). Timidity is the

absence of power, love and self discipline.

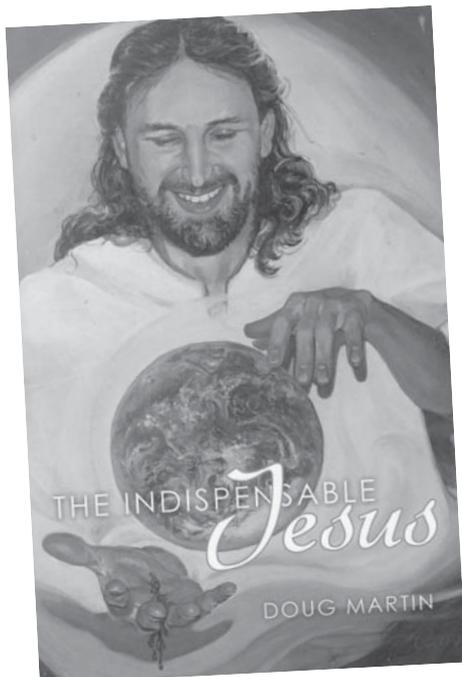
Now back to our discussion of Evil. Evil is the absence of God. *God didn't create evil* but when he gave man freedom of choice, man could then choose to live either with a righteous God or apart from God and His Law. Evil or Sin then, is the result of being apart from God and His Law. The Bible's definition of sin is 'lawlessness' (1 John 3:4).

But while sin is separation from God, it will never separate us from his wooing love. 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble, or hardship

or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? .... Neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Rom. 8:35, 39).

Sin is so serious it cost Jesus His life just to bring about a reconciliation between us and God.

So did God create Sin and Evil? Absolutely not! ❄



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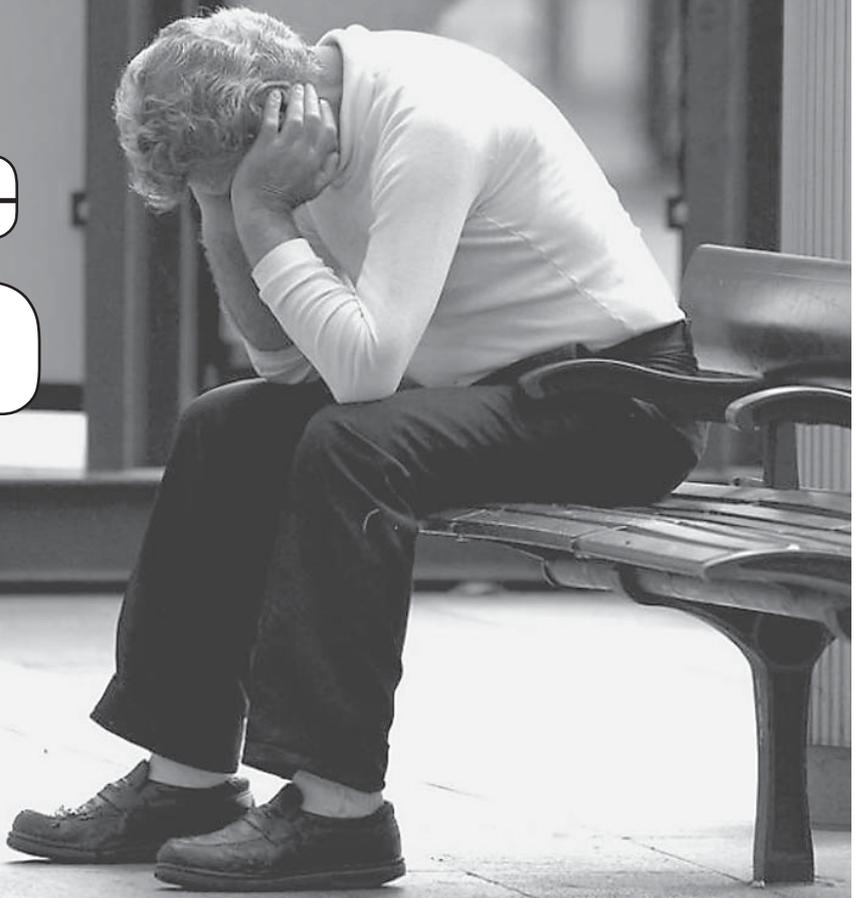
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# Should We Blame God?

*'The wrath of God has come upon them at last' (1 Thes. 2:16b, NIV).*



**T**HIS PASSAGE troubles me. It gives me the impression that Paul has grown impatient with God. The sentence indicates God has finally brought down His wrath on the heads of those who crucified Jesus. It appears that those Judaisers who are persecuting Paul and the Christian believers have also suffered God's anger. With the suitable tone of voice there is even a hint that Paul is taking some vindictive delight in the suffering of his enemies.

Surely I must be drawing the wrong conclusions.

Whenever I cannot understand an English translation I go back to the source, my Greek New Testament. Usually I find an explanation that satisfies me.

I am first startled to find that the word 'God' is missing in the original text. Paul simply uses the word *orge* (wrath). It also means vengeance, violent emotion, or punishment from authorities. However, Paul is not thinking of God as the one who is punishing the Jews. For some reason the translators fell into the common trap of blaming God for all calamities.

The second thing I notice is that the verb 'has come' is in the aorist tense, one that indicates the action, in one sense, is completed but in another sense is ongoing. That would suggest that the calamity falling on the persecutors of

## MILTON HOOK

Jesus and His followers is not just one event but, rather, a series of calamities.

And the words 'at last' (literally 'to end') has no definite article. It cannot be translated as *the* end of time. Paul is not indicating a specific time span for the wrath or calamities. Instead, he seems to be more interested in the quality or intensity of the wrath. It is one that reaches to the depths, to the uttermost or altogether calamitous.

Having looked at the original I am now more at ease: My initial impression that Paul is impatient or vindictive is diminished. And God is no longer in the picture as the source of the wrath. The statement could even be regarded as somewhat prophetic because the calamities seem to be projected from the time of Paul and into the future for an indefinite period.

Having crucified Jesus, did calamity come upon the unbelieving Jewish nation? Did Jewish persecutors of the Christian believers experience angry punishment from certain authorities?

The Jews were, indeed, swept into an increasing whirlpool of rebellion and retribution. During one Passover a Roman soldier taunted some Jews by exposing his *derrière*. The Jews immediately rioted. A large contingent of Roman soldiers marched on them, causing a panic stampede that crushed and suffocated many in the narrow Jerusalem streets.

After Paul wrote to the Thessalonians the Jews began skirmishing with the Syrians. In order to quell the fighting the Romans put many Jewish insurgents to death. The animosity persisted and when some Syrians in Caesarea mocked the Jews by sacrificing a rooster outside the synagogue then a riot ensued that destroyed parts of the city.

The Roman procurator marched his men to Jerusalem, demanding seventeen talents of silver as compensation but Jewish youths insulted him by throwing small change at him. Roman troops attacked, slaughtering and crucifying many. They tried to take the Temple but were repulsed and six hundred soldiers became trapped in Herod the Great's citadel. They were overrun and butchered by the Jews.

A Syrian army was mustered to assist the Romans but Jewish fighters killed five thousand of them before they retreated.

*Continued page 12*

# The Moneylender



RITCHIE WAY

**Jesus said to Simon the Pharisee, “Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he cancelled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him the more?”**

**Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt cancelled.”**

**“You have judged correctly”; Jesus said (Luke 7:40-48).**

**M**ONEY-SHARKS are notorious for their cruel exploitation of borrowers—taking cars, whiteware and homes from those who cannot pay their debts.

In Bible days they would even sell the debtors into slavery to recover what was owed to them (see 2 Kgs 4:1). The moneylender in this parable, however, was an extraordinary person, so different from the stereotypical money-shark.

One borrower owed him the equivalent of sixteen month’s wages and the other almost two month’s wages. Neither could repay their debt, so he forgave them both and let them off scot-free. This moneylender was a giver rather than a taker.

Now we are all debtors to God. Some are deeply in debt to him because of the great sins they have committed; others, who have lived more ‘righteous’ lives, are not so deeply in debt.

Simon, like many other religious people, assumed because he was more ‘righteous’ than the sinner, Mary Magdalene, that he loved God more than she did.

Jesus put him right by telling him that it was actually the other way round. Mary’s devotion to Jesus revealed that she loved him more than Simon did, and she acted that way because Jesus had

freely forgiven her great debt. In other words, the life she now lived was due to what the Lord had done for her, rather than what she did for the Lord.

Jesus told Simon that love is measured by its giving rather than by its receiving. Mary showed that she loved Jesus more than Simon because she, out of gratitude, washed his feet, kissed him, and anointed him with oil, none of which Simon did, even though it was customary for the host to do perform these traditional courtesies for his guests. The root of Mary’s love was what Jesus had done for her in forgiving her sins.

Jesus’ question in verse 42, ‘Now which of them will love him more?’ points to the focal point of this parable. Love has a root, and love has fruit. If it has the right root, it will have the right fruit.

Simon didn’t have the right fruit because he didn’t have the right root. The root of all our theology, of all our attitudes, and of all our actions, should be the ultimate sacrifice that Jesus made for our sins.

Because Jesus is the one who has forgiven our great debt we, like Mary Magdalene, will willingly and humbly give our all to him in return, holding nothing back. That is the fruit that God looks for. ❄

... Should We Blame God?  
Continued from page 11 ...

Back in Rome the Roman general who had conquered Britain, Vespasian, was chosen to lead a huge army to attack Jerusalem from the north. Titus went to Egypt to gather another army and approach Jerusalem from the south. This pincer movement led to the well-known overthrow of the Temple in 70AD.

Some historicists claim that was the end of the Jewish nation, but historicists often engineer history to suit dubious interpretations of prophecy.

The Jewish nation continued despite the loss of their Temple. They had done so before, during the Babylonian captivity.

When Emperor Hadrian’s boy lover drowned in the Nile he ordered that statues of the lad be placed throughout the Empire for everyone to worship, instead of trying to negotiate as the Herodians had successfully done on occasion when they ruled Judea. In response a Jewish leader named Simon bar Kokhba led a revolt against the Romans.

In the early days of this uprising his men wiped out an entire Roman legion. Hadrian’s vengeance attracted devastation. He ordered his general, Julius Severus, to wipe out the Jews.

Severus did it piecemeal, cutting the Jews into small pockets of resistance and either starving them to death or slaughtering them. By 135AD, 985 villages were razed and more than 585,000 men, women and children lost their lives. Others were enslaved. Only a handful survived in remote caves.

From that time the territory known as Judea was called Palestina, a derivative of the word Philistine.

‘For the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost’ (KJV) is an accurate translation. Similarly, ‘But wrath has come upon them to the uttermost’ (NASB) is sound.

When I reflect on the history, I see the fulfilment of Paul’s words to the Thessalonians. He may only have intended the brief passage to be a throwaway line, without being intentionally prophetic.

Nevertheless, I am led to conclude that Paul did not fret and stew because God was dilatory or derelict with regard to any punishment of the Jews. Rather, I think Paul foresaw the inevitability of calamity because the Jews had cut themselves off from the greatest revelation of God that had ever occurred—the person of Jesus Christ.

By their fractious nature they themselves attracted the wrath of the Romans. The calamities did not come from the hand of an enraged God.

We must be careful not to blame God for what we bring upon our own heads. ❄

# David

## and the

# New Capital



### Part 4

RITCHIE WAY

**S**OON after David had been crowned king of all Israel, he began to think about choosing a new capital for the nation. The city would need to be easily defended, and to avoid jealousy, it would be best if it were not the possession of any particular tribe. The city that fitted these specifications was Jerusalem. It was built on a rocky outcrop midway between the territories of Judah and Benjamin, the two tribes that accepted David as their king seven years and six months before the others.

Of equal importance was the fact that Jerusalem was strategically located on the east-west highway that ran up from Jericho over to the Mediterranean coast road. It was also beside the most significant north-south road that runs through the hill country. Furthermore, the city didn't belong to either the Benjamites or the Judeans; it belonged to the Jebusites who weren't Israelites.

These Jebusites had lived peaceably among the Israelites since the twelve tribes had first entered Canaan. They weren't, however, about to hand their city over to David, for as soon as his intentions became known to them they locked the gates and posted guards. When David came up against the city with his troops the Jebusites felt so secure they taunted him: 'You will not get in here; even the blind and the lame can ward you off'.

The Jebusites, nevertheless, were not aware that David knew about the secret underground shaft that took water into the city from an outside spring. David waited until the middle of the night, and then unearthed the entrance to the shaft and sent some soldiers through it to open the city gates from the inside. He captured the city without bloodshed, but allowed the Jebusites to continue to live on their farmlands around the city.

Once in possession of the city David undertook measures to expand and strengthen it. Hiram, king of the great maritime city on the coast, Tyre, sent a team of builders and materials to construct a palace for David.

The Scriptures say about David at this time, 'After he left Hebron, David took more concubines and wives in Jerusalem' (2 Sam. 5:13). Marriage among royalty was political rather than relational. Most of David's wives weren't taken into his harem because he loved them, but because they gave him favour with the people in the territory that each wife came from. A serious problem with this practice, however, was that David's foreign, unbelieving wives raised the children.

The Philistines, along the coast, were very concerned when they heard that David had become established as the new king over Israel. They decided to nip his kingdom in the bud before it became too powerful to handle, so 'they went up in full force' to deal with him. But David outmanoeuvred them and sent them fleeing.

After licking their wounds the Philistine generals held a debriefing to ascertain how David had gained his advantage over them. When they felt they understood David's strategy and battle tactics they devised their own counter strategy to entrap him next time they met in battle.

Once more the Philistines came up and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim; so David enquired of the LORD, and he answered, "Do not go straight up, but circle round behind them and attack them in front of the balsam trees...". So David did as the LORD commanded him (2 Sam. 5:22-25).

He overran the Philistine command post and sent the Philistine soldiers fleeing a second time in a panic.

To ensure they would not be in a hurry to return, he struck them down all the way from Gibeon to Gezer, half way to the coast.

### The Ark of the Covenant

David wanted to make Jerusalem the spiritual centre for his new kingdom, but there was a problem. After Saul had slaughtered all the priests and their families in the sanctuary town of Nob, the elders in Israel shifted the sanctuary building to Mount Gibeon, just a few kilometres northwest of Jerusalem.

There they set up the sanctuary with its altar of burnt offering, and the Holy Place

*Continued page 14*

## David and the New Capital

Continued from page 13

with its sacred furniture. The Most Holy Place, however, was empty.

The sacred chest that held the Ten Commandments—known as the Ark of the Covenant, which was normally housed there—had been absent since it had been captured in battle by the Philistines back in the last days of Eli.

After capturing the Ark, the Philistines proudly took it home as a war prize, but its presence in Philistia caused nothing but trouble for the nation, so after just seven months they sent it back to Israel on a cart drawn by two cows.

This Ark of the Covenant, which had always been hidden away in the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary, was an object of curiosity to the people of Beth Shemesh. What did it look like? Was it really gilded with gold? When seventy men, who had been harvesting wheat nearby, lifted the covers to look into the Ark, there was a blinding flash and they all dropped dead. The tragic loss of so many of their bread-earners terrified the people at Kiriath Jearim so they asked the people at Kiriath Jearim to take the Ark up there and look after it. With their agreement the Levites carried it up to Abinadab's house where it was stored throughout the reign of King Saul. Saul, not known for his spirituality, never gave it a thought.

David, however, did care about it. David knew, though, that any attempt to shift the sanctuary from Gibeon to Jerusalem would meet with a lot of resistance from the traditionalists, so he decided to take the Ark of the Covenant to his new capital and build a brand new sanctuary for it there.

The Ark of the Covenant was the most important piece of furniture in the sanctuary, and with very good reason—it was the throne of the LORD Almighty (2 Sam. 6:2). David, well aware of this, had summoned 30 divisions of specially chosen men from Israel to play a part in this historic transfer. He had a brand new cart constructed on which to transport the Ark. Abinadab's two sons, Ahio and Uzzah, who had cared for the Ark while it was in their house, were asked to be its special attendants on the journey. Ahio led the oxen, and Uzzah walked beside the cart, keeping his eye on the Ark.

This was a grand occasion and the procession, led by a band of harps, lyres, tambourines, and cymbals, was singing the songs of Zion and dancing with joy before the Lord. At the threshing floor of Nacon the oxen stumbled on a rocky outcrop in the road causing the cart to

lurch to one side. Uzzah, to prevent the Ark from toppling, reached out his hand to steady it. But the LORD'S anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down and he died there beside the Ark of God' (2 Sam. 6:7).

One moment the people were rejoicing with all their hearts and souls, the next there was a deadly silence, which erupted into wails of grief that spread through the procession like a wave.

What had gone wrong? Why had the LORD done such a terrible thing? Most of the people had no idea. David, bewildered by what had happened, decided that they wouldn't take the Ark any further at that time, but would leave it there at the nearby home of Obed-Edom.



One thing we learn from David's attempt to move the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, is that no matter how much effort you put into a spiritual project, no matter what a grand occasion you make of it, if it is not done in harmony with God's will it will not succeed.



Let us take a moment to consider why God didn't want anyone to come into the presence of his throne; why it was totally out-of-bounds to anyone but the High Priest.

The floor plan of the sanctuary consisted of two large adjacent squares aligned east to west. The Ark of the Covenant was always placed on the spot where the diagonals crossed in the western square. Similarly, the altar of burnt offering was placed on the spot where the diagonals crossed in the eastern square. The Ark of the Covenant and the altar of burnt offering were thus identified as the two focal points of the sanctuary.

The Ark of the Covenant was kept in the Most Holy Place that had an entrance that no person could pass through and live. The service of the Day of Atonement reveals that the only safe way into the Most Holy Place, which housed the Ark of the Covenant, was through the blood of the atoning sacrifice that was slain on the altar of burnt offering.

On that day the High Priest entered the Most Holy Place with the blood of the atonement, which he sprinkled on the atonement cover of the Ark to atone for sins against God's Law. The only thing that could prevent our sins from destroying us was the atoning blood.

This ceremony was a picture of the true Day of Atonement when Jesus died on the Cross. It was his shed blood that opened the barrier between us and God (Matt. 27:50-51). From that time forward we have been invited to boldly enter into God's presence (Heb. 10:19-22). That is the gospel. Only the death of Jesus on the antitypical altar of the Cross removed the barrier of our sins that kept us from God.

You can see, then, that no matter what grand schemes we put together as a church, if we fudge the gospel we put people's lives at risk. Only the shed blood of Jesus is sufficient to cover the Law's condemnation of our sins. God was teaching Israel that none could enter his presence unless they were protected by the blood of Jesus that would be shed on Calvary.



Three months after the incident with Uzzah, it was reported to David that God was richly blessing the family and crops and herds of Obed-Edom because of the Ark of God (2 Sam. 6:11-12), so David was encouraged to make another attempt to bring it to Jerusalem. This time, he heeded the instructions of Scripture and ordered that 'No-one but the Levites may carry the Ark of God, because the LORD chose them to carry the Ark...!' It was because you, the Levites, did not bring it up the first time that the LORD our God broke out in anger against us. We did not enquire of him about how to do it in the prescribed way' (1 Chron. 15:2, 13).

At every seventh step the Levites sacrificed a bull and a fatted calf in acknowledgement that their covenant relationship with God was based on the shed blood. That day was an occasion of great celebration. David and others danced their folk dances before the Ark,

## David and the New Capital

while the people shouted praises and the priests blew their trumpets.

As they entered the city, Michal, Saul's daughter, watched the procession from an upper palace widow, and was highly indignant that David, the king of Israel, on such a public occasion, was wearing a simple linen garment and not his royal robes. She felt he should be more dignified, and cuttingly criticised him when he came in.

David was hurt that one of his wives should condemn him for humbling himself in acknowledgement that the LORD was the only rightful King on that special occasion. From that day forward he never called Michal to his bed again and she died childless, which was a great shame for an Israelite woman.

### The new sanctuary

One day David said to Nathan the prophet:

"Here am I living in a palace of cedar, while the Ark of God remains in a tent".

Nathan replied to the king, "Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the LORD is with you" (2 Sam. 7:2,3).

That night, however, the Lord told Nathan to go back to the king and tell him that he was not the one chosen to build a house for him. Instead the Lord would build a house for David.

While the Lord denied David the privilege of building Israel's first temple, he gave him a promise that more than compensated for that loss. The Lord said:

"I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish his throne for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son" (2 Sam. 7:12-14).

Over the succeeding centuries the Jews realised that the prophecy made of David's son had a wider application than just to Solomon (Psa. 131:11; Jer. 33:14-17). So who was this future son of David whose kingdom would never end? The answer is given in the New Testament which begins with these words: 'A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, *the son of David*' (Matt. 1:1), and ends with Jesus' words: 'I am the Root and *Offspring of David*' (Rev. 22:16). This future son of David came and established a kingdom on earth that would never pass away. He came and built a house for God's name, but it was a house of living stones rather than a house of bricks and mortar.

Because David always acknowledged and repented of his sins, and never deliberately turned his back and walked away from the Lord, he was chosen as the progenitor of the dynasty that would produce the Messiah whose kingdom would never end—a kingdom whose door has now been opened to every one of us who accept Jesus as our Messiah/King. ❄

# Don't Give Up!

PASTOR IAN

### Calvin Coolidge once said:

Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.

Great people are just ordinary people with an extraordinary amount of determination. They simply don't know how to quit. They just keep on 'keeping on'.

I believe that a person's greatness is not determined by his or her fame,

position, or wealth but rather *what it takes to discourage that person*. You can tell a lot about someone by watching how they respond to criticism or failure. It reveals character.

What does it take to discourage *you*? Things don't go your way? Expectations are not met? Someone disapproves of how you did it?

The Bible says this: 'Let us not get tired of doing what is right, for after a while we will reap a harvest of blessing, if we don't get discouraged and give up' (Gal. 6:9).

Things that last usually require more time and determination than usual. When God wants to make an oak tree, he takes 60 years. When he wants to make a mushroom, he takes 6 hours.

Do you want your personal life to have the stability of an oak tree or a mushroom? Do you want your career to be an oak tree or mushroom? How about your business?



Consider: 'What have I been tempted to give up on, that I know is the right thing to do?'

Pray this: 'God, give me the energy to persist this week.'

Remember this: 'I can do **all** things through Christ who gives me the strength' (Php. 4:13).

So hang in there! ❄

# Only Kafirs ask Questions



GRANT LOCK\*

## Islamabad.

I wish that big kid would stop tapping on the window while I'm reversing out of the hardware bazaar. Tap, tap, tap, tap. It's acutely irritating, but I won't look directly at him. It's much harder to disengage from a beggar once you make eye contact.

Tap, tap, tap, tap. He's certainly persistent. But he hasn't seen my to-do list for today. I've got a director's report to prepare, then there's my class, and I have to summarise the student assessment tests. 'This better be quick', I mumble as I relent and wind down the window.

He's small but must be in his twenties, with an intelligent face.

Why is he swaying? Drugs maybe? They're easy enough to get here in Pakistan. No, couldn't be. He's too alert for that. Whatever! I'm in a hurry.

I glance downwards. Even though they are stabilised by a crutch under one arm, his legs are all wobbly. I know that unscrupulous beggar kings break the legs of babies so they look grotesque, but this is clearly polio. His voice has a desperate yet confident tone.

'Sir, I need your help.'

I'm surprised he speaks in English, good English. I'm not to know that he is fluent in five languages and has taught Arabic and Islamics in between his university studies.

I pull out a generous five rupee note and thrust it through the window. He gives it back. That's irritating. I don't have time for his ungrateful negotiations.

A whisper quietly reverberates from the deep portals of my brain: 'Come on, Grant, help him'. How can I deal with every beggar who comes along? I argue with the whisper, especially when I'm running late.

I can't believe it. I must be crazy. I'm pulling out the ridiculous amount of 300 rupees. 'There, I've never given a beggar

more than ten rupees, so that should help him. Okay?' The whisperer is not impressed. 'You are only trying to silence me so that you can get on with your precious little program. Can't you see he needs a friend?'

Oblivious to the conversation in my head, the man thrusts the 300 rupees back. 'It's too much, Sir!'

That's weird. Three hundred rupees is three days pay for a skilled workman. Any self-respecting beggar would have rapidly disappeared around the corner, smirking at the gullibility of the easily duped foreigner. Yes, this guy is definitely different.

'Okay', I say, 'get in. Come home and have lunch with me.'

'Thankyou, Sir. My name is Wurzan, and I come from Iraq.'

Over lunch he tells me his story. 'I am a Kurd from Halabja, the town that Saddam Hussein gassed'. I remember the incident.

It was labelled as the biggest gas attack on civilians in history. 'Saddam sent his brother, Chemical Ali, to pay back the Kurds for resisting his army. They buried thousands in mass graves and then they tried to blame Iran'. His face hardens, 'But it was genocide.'

'Is that why you left Iraq?'

'No! The main reason was that I asked too many questions.'

'About what?'

'About life and about our religion.'

Janna and I wait for him to enlarge.

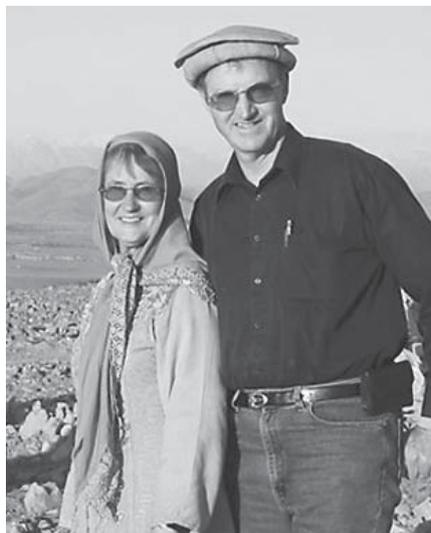
'I couldn't do the things my friends could do so I did a lot of reading. Questions kept coming up. My father is a teacher and a very religious Muslim, but he couldn't answer them'. Wurzan reaches hungrily for his fourth piece of naan. 'My father took me to the local religious leaders, the Maulvis. They were not happy.'

'But you are too young to be challenging our learning', they said, 'come back when you have grown up, and after you have read these'. Then they put a heap of books in front of me. They were surprised that I had already read half of them. On the way home my father told me that I had embarrassed and dishonoured him. 'Only kafirs ask questions', he said.

I take up our guest's concern. 'I've often wondered why people can't ask questions in Islam, Wurzan. It claims to have the answers for life, yet it seems oversensitive about people wanting to scrutinise it. And it's particularly sensitive if a Muslim investigates another religious system. That isn't the sign of a confident religion; it's a sign of insecurity and control.'

Wurzan nods. 'Young people are told to be quiet and just accept everything. But in the university my lecturer encouraged us to explore and evaluate.'

'What university studies did you complete?' Janna asks.



Grant Lock with wife Janna.

He sets his jaw. 'They wouldn't let me finish. They threw me in jail and made sure I stayed there during the final examinations.'

'But why?'

'I was a student of law and I was asking questions about human rights in our country.'

'When Saddam Hussein was running things, was that a good idea?'

Wurzan lifts his shoulders and takes on a maturity beyond his years. 'Mrs Janna, in 1948 Iraq voted for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the United Nations.' He continues in barrister-like fashion, 'My question is this: Why don't the citizens of Iraq have the freedom to participate in our society? Many young Kurds in university are asking this question. Why should we be treated worse than animals?'

I can't help but admire the pluckiness of this young Iraqi intellectual. His question is one that most dictators would not want to hear, let alone one as repressive as Saddam Hussein. 'You're right, Wurzan. Along with Iraq, many Islamic countries voted for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But do you know that they're now trying to amend it?'

'Why is that, Sir?'

'Because it doesn't line up with Islamic sharia law. Sharia law severely restricts religious and gender freedom, as well as freedom of speech.'

'Which you are finding out the hard way,' Janna adds. 'So, tell me, Wurzan, how did you get out of jail?'

'My relatives arranged it, but I was frightened. I knew I would always be watched. If Saddam could kill five thousand Kurds with gas, he could easily deal with me.'

'So you got out.'

He nods. 'I came via Iran, and I have already been to the United Nations here to apply for asylum in a Western country.'

I can see that this young refugee doesn't let the grass grow under his unstable feet. 'Well, Wurzan, we wish you well in the West. At least you'll be able to ask questions more freely.'

**Editorial note:** Are there some corners of Western religion where penetrating questions may be met with ridicule and be ostracised? Would that indicate a similar insecurity and control that Lock talks about? ❁

---

Grant Lock is an Australian stud beef cattle breeder and, with wife Janna, has spent twenty-four years in Pakistan and Afghanistan directing Christian charity projects in eye care, micro hydro-electricity and the empowerment of widows.

This is an extract from his recent book, *Shoot Me First*, available from Koorong and Word bookshops, Amazon.com and Kindle ebook.

See also [www.shootmefirst.com](http://www.shootmefirst.com)

# Healthy Tips

## Bowel cancer

Bowel cancer is more common as you get older, particularly from the age of 50. Bowel cancer affects more men than women. A diet relatively high in red meat and animal fats, and low in fruit, vegetables and fibre, may contribute to the development of bowel cancer. Lack of exercise is also a risk factor for bowel cancer.

(Ministry of Health, New Zealand)

## Fasting

Mounting evidence suggests the therapeutic value of intermittent fasting, that is, of taking the occasional day off food either once a week or once a month. Studies of animals show that those put on occasional fasting diets tended to live longer, have less cancers and less cognitive decline in ageing compared with animals that had continuous access to food. A mass study of people revealed that those who fasted for 24 hours once a month, with nothing but water to drink, had a 40 per cent reduction in heart disease compared with the control group.

## Slowing memory loss

Professor Art Kramer, director of the Beckham Institute of the University of Illinois, who has studied the effect of exercise on the brain for more than 20 years, says we can slow down and even reverse the rate of memory loss by going for a regular walk just three days a week for 45 minutes a day. Kramer says a year of regular exercise will result in a 15-20 per cent improvement in cognitive abilities, as demonstrated by performance in attention, accuracy and decision-making tasks.

## High blood pressure

About 10 per cent of people have the aberrant TT genotype gene, which cannot attach itself to vitamin B2, a vitamin essential for the maintenance of good blood pressure. In a controlled 16-week study, patients with the TT genotype gene who had their diets supplemented with riboflavin (Vitamin B2) had an average decrease of 9.2mm of mercury in systolic



readings and 6.00mm in diastolic levels. Some of the richest sources of riboflavin are milk and milk products such as cheese and yoghurt. Green leafy vegetables such as broccoli, spinach and silverbeet are also good sources, as are legumes, mushrooms, almonds and yeast.

## Multiple sclerosis

In New Zealand the incidence of MS increases proportionally the further south a person lives, where sunlight levels are lower. The prevalence increases from 50.8 people per 100,000 in Northland to 134.6 people per 100,000 in Southland. MS affects women at a rate three times that of men and is most often diagnosed in the late teens to early 30s. There is no cure. Professor Trevor Kilpatrick, Melbourne University's director of neuroscience, said studies have revealed the potential involvement of vitamin D—the sunshine vitamin—in averting the risk of developing MS. It is direct exposure of the skin to sunlight that converts vitamin D into its active form.

## TV dinners

Research commissioned by the New Zealand Families Commission in 2011 concluded that teenagers who sit down to family meals, with the TV off, are less likely to be depressed or take risks with alcohol, sex, and drugs. Young people who ate with their parents reported better connectedness and communication. ❁

# EATING RIGHT FOR TYPE 2 DIABETES

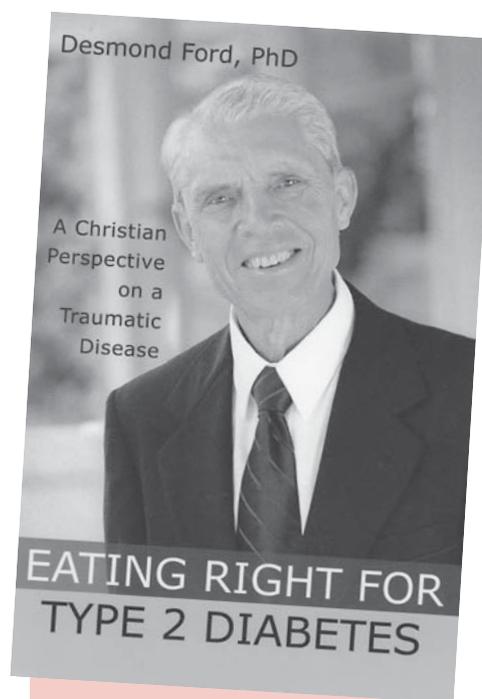
**I**N A WORLD where diabetes was once a rarity, it has now become an epidemic. At the present rate of increase it will become a pandemic later this century, affecting half the families of earth. Present therapies leave much to be desired. The use of diabetic pills is fraught with dangers and even insulin has its downside, though necessary for some. Many can pursue a better approach by knowledge and discipline. Right diet and adequate exercise are the best keys to the control of diabetes.

Inevitably, diabetes brings rigors and stressed that can threaten to be overwhelming. Often the sufferer is plunged into depression. In this battle, Christians can be 'more than conquerors', trusting in the One whose name is Love and whose absolute sovereignty extends even to a sparrow's fall.

This book gives counsel regarding the physical, mental and spiritual aspects of successful diabetic therapy and life-style changes. It can bring untold relief to many.

Dr Desmond Ford is a much-traveled speaker and author, well known to many Americans from his TV and radio programs. He has now written on diabetes, which outstrips AIDS in its meteoric spread. From his own experience, Dr Ford offers the cutting edge of diabetic control. His book encapsulates a successful approach in order for the type 2 diabetic to keep positive and maintain his or her health.

Dr Ford lives on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, Australia, and swims and jogs every day.



*Here is the paradox of current therapy for diabetics. It is admitted that it is primarily the consumption of carbohydrates that raises blood sugar; yet diabetics are counselled to have a diet consisting chiefly of the very class of foods which cause their trouble. In almost all books on the topic, authors recommend 50-60 per cent of calories as carbohydrate. No wonder thousands of type 2 sufferers endure frustration three or more times a day as they endeavor to follow such impossible directions. I am, of course, referring chiefly to those diabetics not taking pills and/or insulin.*

Diana W. Guthrie, R.N., Ph.D.,  
and Richard A. Guthrie, M.D.,  
*The Diabetes Sourcebook*, p. 21.

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# 2013 SEMINARS

## PEACHESTER SEMINARS

Fellowship meetings are held at Mango Hill Farm  
159 Commissioners Flat Road, Peachester QLD 4519, on the  
second and fourth Saturdays of each month from 2:30pm –  
4:30pm, led by Dr Desmond Ford.

Our next series will be on New Testament Theology, in other words, what does the New Testament teach on all the chief doctrinal areas, such as soteriology (the study of salvation), ecclesiology (the study of the Church), Christology, etc. To watch them live, go to [www.desford.org.au](http://www.desford.org.au) and click on Des Ford Live. If anyone is willing to help defray the expense of making the programs ADVERT FREE (\$50.00 per session), please contact Jayden Lawson at [jlaws@sidekick.com.au](mailto:jlaws@sidekick.com.au)

## TWEED HEADS BIBLE CLASS

Fellowship meetings are also held 9:30am (NSW time):  
GNU office at 2/54-60 Industry Drive, Tweed Heads South,  
NSW 2486 on selected Saturdays, led by Pastor Ron Allen.

2 and 16 February	3 August
2 and 16 March	7 and 21 September
6 April	19 October
1 and 15 June	16 November
6 and 20 July	7 December

## 2013 CITY SEMINARS

**Melbourne** 16 March 2013, 9:00 am - 3:30 pm

**Venue:**

Carey Baptist Grammar School Chapel  
Kew Campus, Danielle Place, off Barker Road  
Kew, VIC 3101

**Session One:** 9:30 - 10:30am  
**Speaker:** Pastor Dr Desmond Ford  
**Topic:** *The Gospel in Eschatology—1*

**Session Two:** 11:00 - 12:00  
**Speaker:** Dr Adrian Turner  
**Topic:** *The Gospel in Eschatology—2*

**Session Three:** 2:00 - 3:00pm  
**Speaker:** Pastor Dr Desmond Ford  
**Topic:** *The Gospel in Eschatology—3*

**Brisbane** 20 April 2013, 9:00 am – 4:30 pm

**Venue:**

The Royal Geographical Society of Queensland  
237 Milton Road, Milton Qld 4064

(Opp. Milton Railway station—use pedestrian tunnel under Milton Rd then walk towards XXXX Brewery. Venue is last building on left before brewery.)

Limited free parking is available at St Francis Theological College, 233 Milton Rd, Brisbane. Parking nearby \$4 for the day is available for a limited number – book with GNU.

**First meeting:** 9:30 am  
**Speaker:** Pastor Ron Allen  
**Topic:** *Giving up on Prayer—  
God and His Scoundrels*

**Second Meeting:** 11:00 am  
**Speaker:** Pastor Desmond Ford  
**Topic:** *The Final Antichrist: His Mark and  
Number—The Gospel in Eschatology.*

**Third Meeting** 2:00 pm  
**Speaker:** Pastor Desmond Ford  
**Topic:** *The Final Antichrist: His Mark and  
Number—The Gospel in Eschatology.*

**Cooranbong (Dora Creek)** 15 June 2013

**Venue:**

Uniting Church Hall, cnr. Kahibah and Awaba Sts, Morisset

**First meeting:** 9:30 am  
**Speaker:** Dr. Milton Hook  
**Topic:** *The Gospel in the Sanctuary Service*

**Second Meeting:** 11:00 am  
**Speaker:** Pastor Desmond Ford  
**Topic:** *The Gospel Key to Armageddon*

**Ballina** 13 July 2013, 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

**Venue:**

Ballina Island Motor Inn, Pacific Highway, Ballina NSW 2478

**First meeting:** 10:00 am  
**Speaker:** Pastor Doug Martin  
**Topic:** *The Crucifixion of Truth*

**Second Meeting:** 11:15 am  
**Speaker:** Pastor Ron Allen  
**Topic:** *Jonah: Man NOT on a mission:  
Bus drivers and their ilk.*

**Third Meeting:** 2:00 pm  
**Speaker:** Pastor Ron Allen  
**Topic:** *Jonah: Man NOT on a mission:  
To hell and back*

**Brisbane** 17 Aug 2013, 1:00 pm – 4:30 pm

**Venue:**

The Royal Geographical Society of Queensland  
237 Milton Road, Milton Qld 4064 (opp Milton train station)

**First meeting:** 1.30pm  
**Speaker:** Pastor Des Ford  
**Topic:** *The Gospel and Immortality—1*

**Second Meeting:** 3.00pm  
**Speaker:** Pastor Desmond Ford  
**Topic:** *The Gospel and Immortality—2*

**Ballina** 2 Nov 2013, (provisional)

**Venue:**

Ballina Island Motor Inn, Pacific Highway, Ballina NSW 2478



# Letters from Readers

GNU is a meeting of minds from a wide range of church affiliations and therefore opinions expressed in our articles may differ from that of our readers. Recognising that opinions can differ and we all have much to learn and unlearn, we encourage our readers to participate in this forum.



## THE ANTICHRIST

**Dear Pastor Ritchie,**

I have a question for you about the antichrist of the Last Days.

Will he actually appear as Satan himself, or will he hide behind his agent, whoever that may be?

A.S.

### Ritchie's Reply

**Dear A.,**

Paul, in his second letter to the church in Thessalonica, stated that the Second Coming of Jesus would not take place until the antichrist was revealed (2:3). The word used here for the revelation (apokalupsis) of the antichrist is the same word used for the revelation of Jesus in the clouds of the sky at his second coming (1 Pet. 1:13).

The same word, however, is also used in Revelation 1:1 to refer to the revelation of Jesus, not only in person (Rev. 1:7), but also through his ministry of salvation. One aspect of this revelation of Christ was witnessed in his death on the Cross (Rev. 15:4); the other in his return in glory (Rev. 6:12-17).

What is true with the revelation of Jesus, may also be true with the revelation of the antichrist: first his nature and works are revealed, after which he will be revealed in person (2 Thes. 2:3, 8).

delineated. Then I wondered, if evolution were true, when did such speciation take place. And is there any evidence that it is still taking place in our day?

Do you have any information on this?

C.P.

### Ritchie's Reply

**Dear C.,**

Because moths and butterflies would be very difficult to preserve as fossils, any changes in their morphology over the aeons would rarely if ever be recorded. It is known, however, that other small creatures, such as centipedes—one of which is the oldest fossil ever found—are essentially the same today as they were millions of years ago.

Charles Darwin expected that his theory of evolution would be supported by the discovery of fossils in the transition stage between one form and another. That hasn't happened. Most of the so-called discoveries that seem to have supported evolution at the time have later been quietly dropped as evidence for the theory, due to better interpretation of the remains.

The only real evidence for evolution is in the fossils, and not in the theory itself. But such evidence is in very short supply. The species that exist today are very similar to the species whose remains are recorded in the oldest deposits.

Is there any way I can free my mind of the torture inflicted by the memories of those twisted times? I know Jesus has forgiven my sins, but it seems to me that while forgiveness wipes my slate clean, it can't change what happened back then. That's what concerns me.

Sorry to burden you with my personal problems, but there's no one else I can ask.

With kind Christian regards, E.C.

### Ritchie's Reply

**Dear E.,**

We Christians are fortunate because there is a Judgement coming in which we will be given the opportunity to address and resolve these issues with the people involved. Jesus made that clear. So be at peace, and be patient. One day you will be given the opportunity to sort out and make right all these issues.

In the meantime consider carefully how the following passage of Scripture may apply to you. Take it to heart and leave your burdens with Jesus. 'Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled [by the blood of Jesus] to cleanse us from a guilty conscience' (Heb 10:22).

And here is a promise that, while it applied to Israel, also applies to us on the personal level: 'You will forget the shame of your youth' (Isa. 54:4).

Everything will come right in the end if you commit your past to 'Him who was', your present to 'Him who is', and your future to 'Him who is to be'.

*Grace and peace to you.*



## CREATION AND EVOLUTION

**Dear Ritchie,**

The other night a beautiful moth, attracted by the light in our bathroom, flew in and settled on the wall. It was such a beautiful creature I looked it up in a compendium that listed all the known species of moths in our country.

I was very impressed by the fact that all the different species are so clearly



## SHAME

**Dear Ritchie,**

I have been a mature Christian for many years now, but every so often I am plagued by the troubling thoughts of the worldly, addictive and utterly useless life I lived as a youth. I would do anything to be able to go back and at least apologise to the people whose lives I blighted at that time. But, of course, I can't because many of those people have now passed on.



## THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK

**Dear Pastor Ritchie,**

In John 16 Jesus tells his disciples that after he leaves this world he would send the Holy Spirit to convict us of sin,

judgement, and righteousness (vv. 5-11). I can't reconcile this work of the Holy Spirit with Jesus' commission to proclaim the gospel. Do you have any suggestions?

J.P.

### Ritchie's Reply

Dear J.,

I think of it this way: Sin describes the world that you and I live in; righteousness describes the realm that God lives in; and in between there is a barrier of judgement that will destroy anyone seeking to enter God's righteous realm from our sinful world. This barrier is portrayed in Genesis 3:24 as a flaming sword flashing back and forth between God's eternal world and man's temporal world. In the Hebrew sanctuary, this barrier was represented by a heavy curtain between God's realm and ours.

Is there, therefore, no way for us to return to God? Jesus endured God's full judgement in his body on the Cross. When that fiery sword slew the

Lamb of God, its fire was extinguished by his blood.

The moment he died on the cross the curtain that kept us from God was torn aside (Matt. 27:50-51). Jesus' death opened the way, for us who accept his death in place of our own, to leave our sinful world and return to God's righteous realm (Heb. 10:19-22). Sin, righteous and judgement is what the gospel is about.

### WALK THROUGH LOCKED DOORS?

Dear Editor,

When Jesus rose from the dead he appeared to his disciples in a room with locked doors.

Does this mean that we, in our resurrected bodies, will also be able to pass through solid matter, such as locked doors?

S. R.

### Ritchie's Reply

Dear S.,

I expect that we will no more be able to walk through locked doors in our post-resurrection bodies than we can walk on water in our pre-resurrection bodies. Jesus was able to do these things because he was divine.

## CORRECTION

In the December 2012 issue of Good News for Adventists we published an article entitled, 'Churches of the People!' attributed to Peter Roennfeldt.

We apologise to Pastor Roennfeldt for this was not written by him but was a compilation from his blog and materials he had shared on house churches, put together by one of our contributors.

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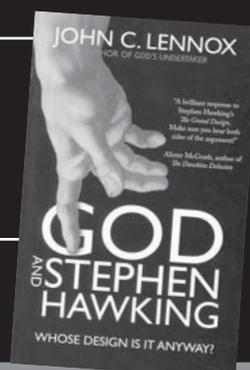
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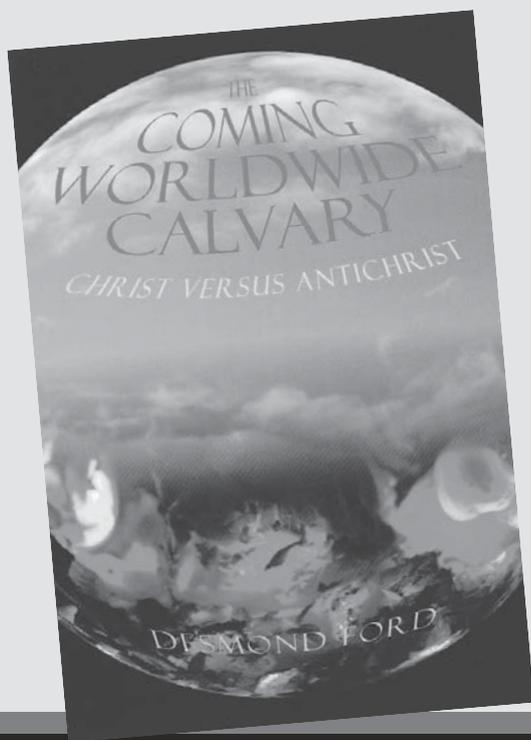
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# The Coming Worldwide Calvary

## CHRIST VERSUS ANTICHRIST

### by Desmond Ford

**The most important New Testament prophecy is also the most neglected and the least understood, despite our Lord's command to 'know and understand it'. See Matthew 24:15. 'The abomination standing in the holy place' launches the tribulation such as never was, bringing a worldwide Calvary that threatens to annihilate the Christian church.**



This scenario is also discussed by Paul the Apostle in 2 Thessalonians 2 under the title of the 'man of sin', the Antichrist who sits in the temple of God at present restrained by the mysterious 'hinderer'. This book is written for the layperson longing to know what the Bible actually teaches about the future and what will happen at the end of time. In it Dr Desmond Ford describes Antichrist's nature and work and clarifies the gospel of Justification by Faith that Antichrist seeks to destroy.

Both our Lord Jesus and Paul stress that only those who live by the everlasting gospel will be prepared for this last crisis of earth. Ford's most recent book combines these two emphases.

Ford researched this enigmatic prophecy for his 1970 Ph.D. under the tutelage of Professor F.F. Bruce at Manchester University in the U.K. The thesis was later published by the University Press of America and is now in many seminary libraries. But here is a presentation for the layperson who longs to know what the Bible actually teaches about the future—not the popular exegetical travesties so popular today.

Ford has been quoted in a number of Bible Dictionaries and Commentaries as an expert on this topic. He has spent much of his professional and private life studying eschatology, 'the Last Things', and the heights and depths of the Christian gospel, which alone fortifies the believer against all the errors of Satan, the supreme Antichrist.

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# THE TIME IS AT HAND!

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It's a book from Jesus Christ about himself, his gospel, the future, and what will happen to the saints at the end of time.

Desmond Ford's, *The Time Is at Hand*, an introduction to the Book of Revelation, is the fruit of decades of study plus research at the University of Manchester under Professor F. F. Bruce. Ford offers a much-neglected key—this sacred book can only be unlocked by understanding the preceding 65 books of the Bible and, in particular, the life, teachings, and death of Jesus.

The main message of Revelation is that the church is to repeat the experience of its Lord. After its final proclamation of the gospel, it will be condemned to martyrdom.

And this climactic sin of the world will precipitate the return of Christ in glory.

Note also that *God's Amazing Grace in Romans (Right With God Right Now)* by Desmond Ford is up and live as an e-book on Kindle.

The Kindle price on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), \$US6.99 US, includes international wireless delivery via Amazon Whispernet.

Access God's Amazing Grace in Romans at: [www.amazon.com/dp/B008OV9EUE](http://www.amazon.com/dp/B008OV9EUE)

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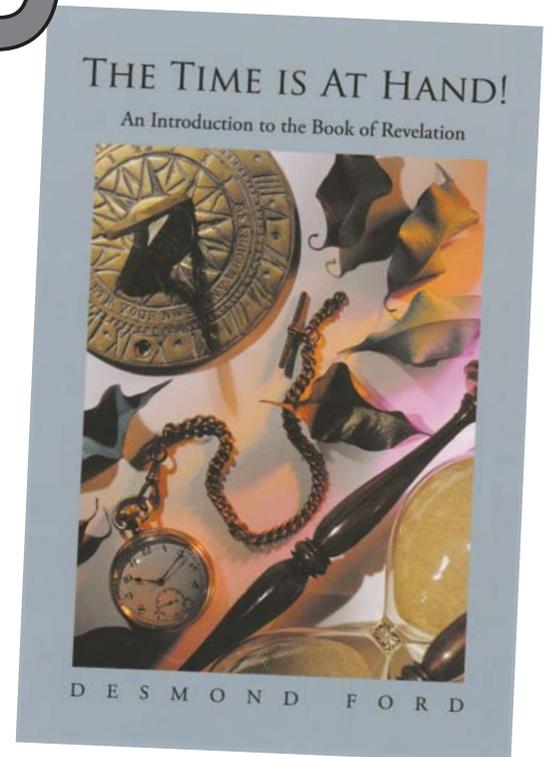
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**Note that a number of Des Ford's latest books are already on Kindle, published by iUniverse at: [www.iuniverse.com](http://www.iuniverse.com)**

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The heart of the gospel is forgiveness. Jesus' last words to his disciples were: 'Repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in my name to all nations ...'

— (Luke 24:46).