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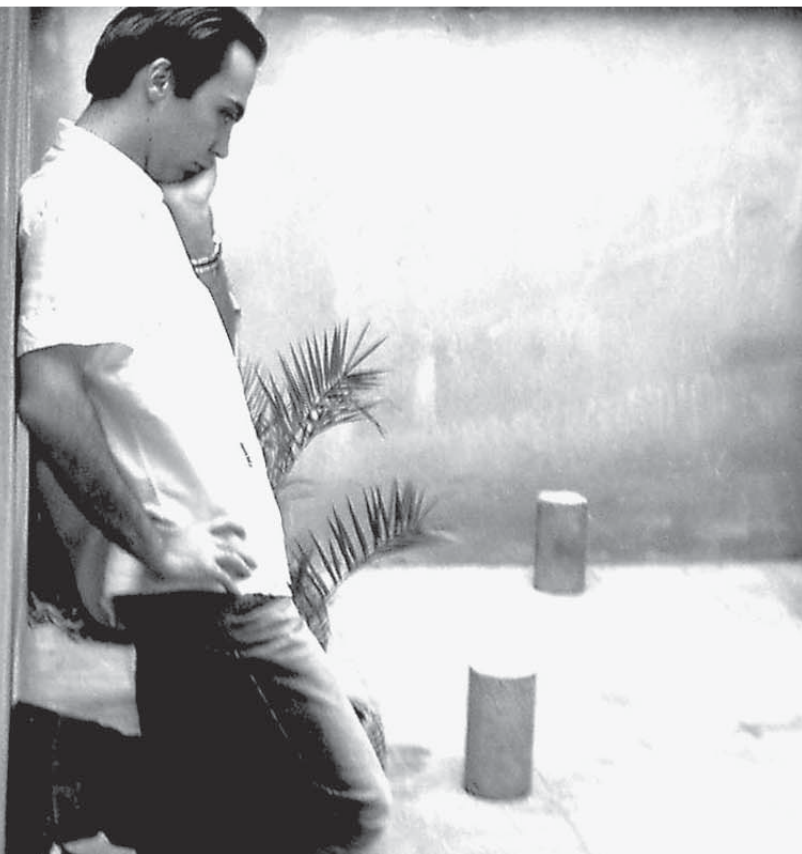
CHRIST ALONE • GRACE ALONE • FAITH ALONE • SCRIPTURE ALONE



He Will Exult Over You With Loud Singing

Jerusalem, a City of Pieces

# Jesus Only:

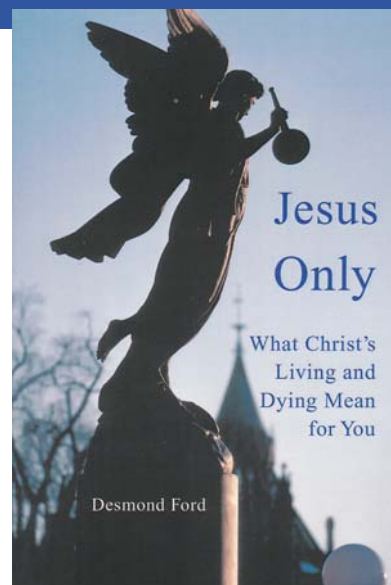


## What Christ's Living and Dying Mean for You

**For almost 2,000 years** millions of readers of the Gospels have found them to be self-authenticating—the 'inner witness' of their divine inspiration is given to all who read with a surrendered will. Dr. Desmond Ford, who has studied the New Testament records for 70 years, believes that thoughtful readers of this devotional study will have that experience.

This book is Christ-centred, Cross-centred and gospel-centred. Those who give it close attention will conclude that compared to the knowledge of the glad tidings from Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, all other knowledge is chaff. Gems from scores of Christian scholars are encapsulated in these pages. To gather them can make anyone richer than Solomon.

Desmond Ford was a seminary teacher for decades in USA, Canada and Australia. He has written approximately thirty books on theological and life-style themes, as well as lecturing over radio and TV for many years. Ford has a strong interest in helping young people entering the ministry, and his wife is a strong supporter in all his efforts to that end.



by Desmond Ford

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# Editorial

RON ALLEN

**Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.**

**(Matt. 7:13-14)**

ON THE NARROW road, your freedom is restricted; your choices are limited; you cannot do just as you like. One of the things that distinguish living things from inanimate ones is their ability to create order out of chaos by resisting easy options. A rock weathers away in the wind, sun and rain, but bees, with enormous effort and discipline, produce highly organised societies yielding the wonderful side benefit of honey for human consumption.

The wide road is travelled by creatures, who seek only to obey the law of least resistance. Among human beings it is very popular. To 'run with the pack' or 'go with the flow' has its appeal. But the secret for life at its best lies not with the majority. Ease, conditions of existence that do not call for a narrowing down of gratification and a regulated application

of resources and energy usually do not sustain or initiate life.

Most people would have some idea of Jesus' meaning when he spoke of the two roads. I know, in my most reflective moments, that to the degree I practice self-limitation—to the degree I choose to do without, to suffer some level of privation make some sacrifices—to that same degree do I begin to live and to be life-giving.

So Jesus' teaching about the narrow road expresses a principle that suffers not from lack of illustration in the world. But there is another way of understanding the text, and this is its best part. The narrow, not so easy road that leads to Life is seen absolutely in Jesus himself. Access to the life of God is to be had through One person. He that has the Son has life! The Road of Life takes its character from Jesus' own experience.

The closer Jesus drew to the Cross, the less company he had. While Jesus was seen as a miracle worker—someone to heal leprosy and lameness, feed the hungry, raise the dead and, as a man, to smooth out life's rough patches—people flocked to him. But when they saw that he intended to follow his unerring course of compassion for societies unwanted and unloved no matter what the cost, they lost interest.

Whenever the religion of Jesus has been presented as a costless, accommodating boulevard of dreams come true, it has lost its life-giving power. Wherever Christian faith is easy, it is mediocre. The fastest growing Christian communities in the world today are in places like China, where you can lose your job and end up in prison for following Jesus.

Do not seek that which is easy to believe in. Look for that which is *great* to believe.

Be merciful, even as your father in heaven is merciful. Love one another as he has loved you. Love your enemies and pray for those that persecute you. Forgive, not seven times, but seventy times seven.

Is any of this easy? Is any of this simple? Not at all! The central values of the Christian gospel are impossibly high. If ever there was a narrow road, this is it. On this road we are invited into the service of the most taxing ideals, the most exacting of principles. Yet, for all that it is a royal road, the most joyous and rewarding of pathways. ❄

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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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# He Will Exult Over You With Loud Singing

SMUTS VAN ROOYEN

**D**URING THE London Olympics, Bert Le Clos stole the hearts of the staid Brits when his son Chad beat the legendary swimming superstar, Michael Phelps, by five-hundredths of a second and won the gold medal. Overjoyed and emotional Bert began to gesticulate wildly in the spectator stands. Six times he shouted the word 'Unbelievable!' then added, 'Look at him, he's beautiful. I love you, I love you!'

When he was interviewed by the BBC's Clare Balding, he exulted, 'I have never been so happy in my life. It's like I've died and gone to heaven. Whatever happens in my life from now on is just plain sailing'. Then he promised that there would be a huge party at the Le Clos home in South Africa when they got back.

Scores of moved people immediately responded to this father's enthusiasm for his son on Twitter. One twitter (or is it tweet?) read, 'Bert Le Clos you have just made my night'. Another asked, 'Is there an Olympic event for proud dads? Give the gold to Bert Le Clos'. And still another, 'You are a legend. Your love and pride of your son is heart-warming'.

Here is a dad who not only recognizes his son's accomplishments as significant, but sees him as intrinsically beautiful, and subsequently loves him for both. There is a light in his eyes for his son. What a father! Now, what I need to know is whether God would ever respond to me in such an over-the-top fashion. Even a more subdued reaction on his part would be just fine. This need of mine to understand where I sit on God's continuum of worth is not prompted by idle curiosity, or sheer impertinence, but by my experience of abuse as a child.

My father drummed a sense of existential uselessness and repulsiveness in to my head by beating me about the face with his hard,

flat hand. Consequently, it was natural for me to view myself as devoid of any intrinsic value. After my father sent me packing from home, I attended a boarding school. There I met a group of boys who suffered from a touch of Adventist Academy Oppositional Disorder. One of their innovative but insightful pranks was to request that we sing 'Alas and Did My Savior Bleed' when favorite hymns were solicited. But they had no intention of singing the whole song. Instead they held back in silence until we reached the line that asked, 'Did he devote that sacred head for such a worm as I?' This wormy phrase they bellowed out with obvious delight and then fell instantly silent again. The effect was profound and made a deep impression on me. I had many a heated argument with them, not because I was offended by their sacrilege,

but because they would not concede that we *are* all worms. How could they be so blind? But it was a providential beginning of a journey for me.

Prominent Protestants besides Isaac Watts, the author of the fine hymn just referenced, have failed to see the distinction between being unworthy of grace (which is true) and being worthless persons (which is not true). I am unworthy of my wife's love, but I am not a worthless person. I can never be worthy of the death of Jesus, but I hold my head high as his creation. When the Psalmist looks at the heavens and is intimidated by their splendor, he asks the question of God, 'What is man that you are mindful of him?' The answer is not what one might expect. It's not, 'An insignificant speck, a mere nothing, a meaningless absurdity'. Instead, David declares that we



Above: Gold Medalist South Africa's Chad le Clos (centre), Silver Medalist USA's Michael Phelps (right) and Bronze Medalist Japan's Takeshi Matsuda receive their medals after the Men's 200 metre butterfly final.

Top and opposite page: Chad's father, Bert Le Clos.

Photo source: [www.dailymail.co.uk](http://www.dailymail.co.uk)

are fantastic, excellent beings made only a little lower than the angels and crowned with glory and honor.

John Calvin asserted that God does not love us for who we are but for Christ's sake alone. God, he said, finds the reason to love us totally within himself and never within us. This thinking undergirds his doctrine of predestination, which has a high view of God, but a low view of humanity (which, according to him, is totally depraved). The greater God is, the more insignificant humanity becomes. Calvin's noble intention, with which I agree, is to protect salvation from the pollution of human effort, but he nullifies our humanity in the process.

This, in my view, is an overstatement of righteousness by faith without works. It goes beyond the thrust of the Scriptures. We do in faith choose to accept salvation. God would not save us if we did not want him to. He values and activates our inherent power of choice; he also makes our choices viable by presenting us with an option of salvation that we could not generate ourselves. So we cannot take the credit for choosing to receive what we could not accomplish. Nevertheless, deep inside every human is a wonderful capacity to consent to what God has done for us in Christ. We are unworthy, but not worthless.

Now, I grasp that humans in the presence of God deprecate themselves. C. S. Lewis argued that 'The real test of being in the presence of God is that you forget about yourself altogether or see yourself as a small dirty object' (*Mere Christianity*, p. 124.) True, but of course the question is whether God concurs with such an estimate of ourselves.

Certainly in the story of Job this is not the case. Although Job does declare, 'I am unworthy—how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth....' God's response is to challenge him to be the man that he really is: 'Brace yourself like a man; I will question you and you shall answer me.' God wants Job to stand and not to wilt



before him. It was Elihu, Job's misguided friend, who argued that God regarded even the best of humanity including Job as worthless. 'Is he not the One who says to kings, "You are worthless"' (Job 34:17). But neither Job nor God would accept that label as true. We must not forget that the story begins with God asking Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job?' This is nothing less than an assertion of pride in Job. God clearly is impressed with the man and wonders whether the Devil has noticed Job's excellence.

As long as any part of the image of God remains in us, we are valuable and lovable. A human is a fallen chandelier shattered into a thousand inconsistencies on the marble floor. But when the wind moves the lace curtains late in the day, and the long light of the sun shines on our brokenness, a rainbow radiates from our crystal and we are still incredibly beautiful. Stand in amazement before the mother who carries her emaciated child a hundred miles to the refugee camp. Gasp at the accomplishment of the young man who frees his arm from

the rock by cutting it off at the elbow with his pocketknife. Smile with pleasure at the child who shares her ice cream with her little sister on a hot summer day. There is just cause to wonder at the magnificence within us.

But, back to God and Bert. Would God ever cheer for me with Bert's unbridled joy? Well, not if he's waiting for me to beat Michael Phelps. I'm part of that group that cannot dog-paddle well, that bellyflops off the low dive, that pretends the snaps on soda cans are gold medals. But we've heard God jubilating wildly in the grandstands over our modest successes, and we love it. The prophet Zephaniah shows God's ecstatic reaction to us by proclaiming,

The Lord, your God, is in your midst,  
a warrior who gives victory;  
he will rejoice over you with gladness;  
he will be quiet in his love;  
he will exult over you with loud singing  
(Zeph. 3:17)!

Loud singing! Quite something, don't you think? ❄

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# *All that Glitters . . .*

***One of the annoying yet wonderful things about platitudes is that they are usually right. Take this one: 'All that glitters is not gold'. Everybody knows that. Everybody believes that. But few people practice it.***



**Y**ES, EVERYBODY knows that appearances are deceptive, but how quickly and how constantly we forget it. God even had to remind one of his favourites—the prophet Samuel. As he beheld the firstborn of Jesse it seemed so clear that this was the man who was to be the Lord's anointed. But God said to him: 'The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart' (1 Sam. 16:7).

The Son of God on Earth had the same conviction. Not long before his death he warned:

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean (Matt. 23:27).

And on an earlier occasion he adjured us all, 'Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgement' (John 7:24). Paul and James taught the same (see 2 Cor. 5:12; 10:7; Jas. 2:2-4).

When the patriarch Isaac judged by the way things seemed to him on the outward, he got the wrong son (see Gen. 27:21). When Israel ignored this principle, they

chose Saul as king and inherited shame and loss. When the Jews looked on Christ in Pilate's judgement hall, after he had been flogged and abused, they saw no beauty that they should desire him (see Isaiah 53:2), and so rejected him.

Have you ever brought anything that, prior to the purchase gleamed and glistened and promised much, and on returning home, found your purchases did not match the promise of its advertisement? Of course, I, for one, have done it times without number. We are slow to see the truthfulness of the adage that if a thing looks too good to be true, it probably is. Many a gleaming car on the lot of the second-hand car dealer has been in a smash and been written off by the insurance company. Those who buy one may get a lemon.

The scenario we are discussing is acted out thousands of times a day at supermarkets. Everyone knows that packaged cereals look so much more attractive than does brown rice in a plastic bag. Yes, they look a hundred times better, but they are deceitful, because they may be one-third sugar and three-thirds refined grains—typical of the glamorous looking foodstuffs that contribute successively to constipation, appendicitis, diverticulosis, diverticulitis

and colon cancer—in that order. When choosing your food remember, 'What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder'. That principle applies to more than marriage, it applies to the refining of food. Would you drastically reduce the chances of your ever having a heart attack, cancer, diabetes or a hundred other ills to which human flesh is heir? Then, as much as possible, eat food, as it is grown. Let your diet be chiefly *fresh whole food* mainly of *vegetable* origin. Then you have a good chance at laughing at the doctor and the undertaker. The major cause of the killing organic diseases is neglect of this simple truth that God knew better than the manufacturers how to provide food for our health. Judge not by appearances, but judge by righteous judgement.

I remember forty years ago, when I was seeking to buy a car, I took fancy to a huge model reminiscent of a tank. I traveled in it and can still feel the joy of those minutes. It was very powerful. 'No!' said my friend, the mechanic. 'It's not for you. It is pulling constantly to the right and the cause will not be easy to fix. It could kill you.' So I am still alive with a nostalgic memory of my first love in cars.

Ever thumbed through a college annual of yesteryear and looked especially at the faces of those in your graduating class?

You looked at the faces of those you thought to be rather quiet and altogether lacking in glamour. In contrast to many of the others, some of these are now well-known and making significant contributions.

Take courtship and marriage. I would not like to be married to someone hard on the eyes, though I am glad my wife apparently doesn't feel as strongly about this as I do. But a legitimate principle can be used illegitimately if we forget other principles of even greater importance. This is the theme of a million books.

No, I am not exaggerating, and I don't mean only books since Gutenberg. It is chiefly men who are the suckers in this regard. They have been warned repeatedly, but nobody was listening. Most men have gone along with Keats though he was dead wrong when he wrote: 'Beauty is truth, truth is beauty—that is all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'

Admittedly the experts have not been unanimous. Someone put this collage together:

Socrates called beauty a short-lived tyranny; Plato, a privilege of nature; Theophrastes, a silent cheat; Theocrites, a delightful prejudice; Carneades, a solitary kingdom; Domitian said that nothing was more graceful; Aristotle affirmed that beauty was better than all the letters of recommendation in the world; Homer, that 'twas a glorious gift of nature; and Ovid, alluding to him, calls it a favour bestowed by the gods.



Scripture plainly teaches that beauty in all areas is the gift of God but it also clearly affirms that its value is subsidiary to other values. Take the words of King Lemuel's mother: 'Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised' (Prov. 31:30).

But the author of the proverb speaks only of that beauty which is not linked with goodness. And so it is with other writers. Take Sir Walter Raleigh, Shakespeare and others. They sound the proverb's warning but forget to add that beauty is twice blessed when linked with righteousness. The danger was and is so great that they all stressed the negative.

Remember, if you marry for beauty, you bind yourself all your life for that which, perchance, will neither last nor please you one year once you have it ....

Beauty is but a vain and doubtful good  
A shining gloss that fadeth suddenly  
A flower that dies when first it 'gins to bud  
A brittle glass, that's broken presently;  
A doubtful good, a gloss, a glass, a flower  
Lost, faded, broken, dead within an hour.  
—Shakespeare

That transitory flower; even while it lasts  
Palls on the roving sense, when held too  
near, or dwelling there too long; by fits  
it pleases  
And smells at distance best; its sweets  
familiar  
By frequent converse, soon grow dull  
and cloy you.  
—Jeffrey

Beauty is as summerfruits, which are  
easy to corrupt and cannot last and for  
the most part it makes a dissolute youth,  
and an age a little out of countenance.  
—Bacon

Tough words—but here is a warning  
against a tough experience.  
Montaigne gave similar thoughts.

I see no marriages where the conjugal  
intelligence sooner fails, than those that  
we contract upon the account of beauty  
and amorous desires; there should be  
more solid and constant foundation  
and they should proceed with greater  
circumspection; this furious ardor is  
worth nothing.  
(Montaigne, *Essays* III.5, p. 411, *Great  
Books of the Western World*.)

We insist, however, that beauty is  
God's gift and plays its right place when  
linked with holiness of life. We have  
this, for example, unexpectedly in a  
MAN of Scripture—but we only have it  
of him because thereby he typified the  
Lord Jesus.

'He was ruddy, with a fine appearance  
and handsome features' (1 Sam. 16:12).

'Yes, beauty is God's jewel but its sparkle  
is deceitful unless accompanied by  
goodness'—*Caveat Emptor*.

Come now to other instances of  
our principle that appearances can be  
deceptive, for all that glitters is not gold.  
Take the matter of envying another's  
success.

How readily we forget that while we see  
the crown of others we rarely perceive the  
thorns of those crowns and *every crown  
has its thorns*—the crowns of success, of  
wealth, of talent, of position, of power.  
Get to know better the one who wears  
the crown you envy, and ultimately  
you will perceive the thorns and thank  
God you do not have to feel their regular  
pain.

Look more closely at happiness.  
Hollywood is a glaring example here and  
we mean glaring. It has sparkling glamour  
that glares indeed. Its very name conjures  
up visions of youth, beauty, fame, wealth,  
fun and excitement. But over the decades  
there have probably been few places  
in the Western world where there has  
been as much heartache per acre as in  
Hollywood.

All that glitters indeed is not gold.  
The shining sparkling lights of Hollywood  
reveal a thin sheen that falsifies reality. Fun  
is not happiness; pleasure and fame and  
wealth are not happiness.

Strangely, happiness is more often  
linked with that which was secured by  
pain—such as having a baby, or earning  
a degree, or by winning a soul for Christ.  
Think about it, lest glamour swallow you  
up in its deception, yielding barrenness  
and heartache.

Now let us turn the tables. As surely  
as all that glitters is not gold so all that  
looks repulsive may not be worthless.  
Christ says 'If any man would come after  
me, let him take up his cross and follow  
me'. Sounds like an invitation to death.  
It is—death to self-will and death to  
selfishness. But every bursting seed tells  
the story that there is no fruit, no real life,  
apart from death.

He that will save his life will lose it, but  
whosoever will lose it for Christ's sake,  
the same shall find it. He bids us take his  
yoke, and it sounds like slavery, but to  
the believer's delight the yoke is found  
to be light and easy.

Yes, lift the cross and it will lift you—it  
will become to you as wings to a bird and  
sails to a ship.

All that glitters is surely not gold, but  
once the Cross, through the Spirit, begins  
to glow in your heart you have found the  
only gold worth keeping!





# Jerusalem

## a City of Pieces



**The word 'Jerusalem' means a foundation of peace, but Jerusalem today is anything but that. Frank Goodenough called Jerusalem, not a city of peace, but 'a City of Pieces.' It is terribly divided.**

### RITCHIE WAY

**T**HE OLD CITY of Jerusalem is divided into the Jewish Quarter, the Moslem Quarter, the Armenian Quarter, and the Christian Quarter. Inside the city there are Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Coptic, Armenian, and Ethiopian churches and church properties.

Orthodox Jews and non-orthodox Jews live there, as do Ashkenazi Jews and Sefardi Jews. And there are Islamic Arabs and Christian Arabs living in the city. The great religions of the Jews, Christians, and Arabs—each contending to be the only true faith—hold Jerusalem as their sacred city.

### The history of Jerusalem

Back in the time of Joshua the city was called Jebus, and it was ruled by king Adoni-zedek.

The Israelites were unable to conquer the well-positioned and fortified city, but the tribe of Benjamin conquered all the surrounding land and eventually lived at

peace with the Jebusites in the city.

King David wanted the city as his capital because it was on the border between the tribes of Benjamin and Judah, and its location would avoid raising jealousies. David, from the tribe of Judah, wanted a safe city in the midst of the two tribes that had always supported him. David captured the city after Joab entered the fortification at night, via the underground aqueduct from the Gihon spring, and opened the gates for David's forces. At that point, about a thousand years before Christ, Jerusalem became a Jewish city.

Jerusalem became a city of renown in the days of King Solomon with the building of the magnificent temple and palaces, glorified with gold from Ophir.

In the fifth year of the reign of Solomon's son, Rehoboam, Pharaoh Shishak of Egypt overran Jerusalem and took away all the treasures that King Solomon had stored there (2 Chron. 12:1-9).

In 587 BC Nebuchadnezzar from Chaldea destroyed the city and took the inhabitants to Babylon where they toiled as slaves digging irrigation canals, maintaining the levees and tilling the fields.

Seventy years later the Persians set the Israelite slaves free and they returned home and rebuilt the temple and the city walls.

Rome ruled Jerusalem from 63 BC forward. It was under Roman rule, during the tenure of the governor, Pontius Pilate, that Jesus lived and died. A generation

after the time of Jesus the Jews rose up against their Roman overlords, but their rebellion was brutally squashed in AD 70, by Titus Vespasianus.

In AD 132 the Jews again revolted against the Romans, but this time the Romans completely levelled the city, leaving not one stone sitting upon another. Emperor Hadrian built a Roman city on the site, which he renamed Aelia Capitolina, but Jews were prevented by law from living there. It was not until the reign of Constantine, some 200 years later, that the Jews were allowed back into the city.

Since that time Jerusalem has been captured by Muslim Arabs in AD 638; Turks in 1077; Crusaders in 1099; Saladin, sultan of Egypt and Syria, in 1187; and the Ottoman Turks in 1517.

In 1542 Suleiman the Magnificent rebuilt the walls of the old city as we see them today. The so-called Tower of David is an excellent example of his building skills.

In 1917, during the Great War, the British, under General Allenby, captured Jerusalem from the Turks.

### Eretz Israel

Back in the 1800s Zionism was born, and the expression 'Eretz Israel' was on the lips of Jews all around the world. Eretz Israel means 'the land of Israel'. Once more Jews were beginning to look to their ancestral land.



There was a problem, however, because Muslims who had lived there for about sixty generations inhabited the land. What were the Jews to do? Well, they could move to Palestine and buy land. That would give them the land, but not the government. By 1914 ninety thousand Jews had moved to Palestine, as it was then called, and forty-three Jewish agriculture settlements were established there, many of them supported by Baron Rothschild.

In 1917 Lord Balfour, in England, called for a national homeland for the Jews, a proposal that the Arabs strongly opposed. Meanwhile the Jewish population in Palestine was increasing by the month. By 1939, 445,000 Jews had immigrated to the 'holy land'.

On 29th November 1947, the United Nations became involved. It divided Palestine into both Arab and Jewish sections. Palestine, however, was still under British rule. Both the Arabs and the Jews could live there as British citizens.

But the British decided to withdraw from the country and surrender their authority over it. About a month later, in January 1948, the Arabs attacked Israel but were overrun by the Zionists. On the 14th May the Jews proclaimed the State of Israel.

Arabs all around the world were very angry that the Jews had conquered Palestine, and Jews living in Arab countries became the targets of their anger. As a result many of these Jews fled to Israel to escape this persecution, often leaving their property and possessions without compensation. Three hundred thousand came from Morocco, 129,000 from Iraq and Kurdistan, 60,000 from Iran, 53,000 from Tunisia, 48,000 from Yemen, 35,000 from Libya, 29,000 from Egypt, 16,000 from Algeria, 10,000 from Syria, 4,500 from Afghanistan and 4,000 from Lebanon.

So the Jewish population rapidly increased by transfer growth. East Jerusalem, however, remained under the control of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan until the whole city came under Jewish rule at the time of the 1967 war.

## The Jew and the Arab

Abraham had two sons, Ishmael was 'born of the flesh' (conceived with Sarah's handmaid Hagar; Isaac was 'born of the Spirit of God' (conceived with the aging Sarah). From the very start the two boys, egged on by their mothers, were antagonists, so God ordered that they be separated. Ishmael became the father of the Arabs, and Isaac became the father of the Jews. To this day the offspring of Ishmael and Isaac have been at war.

When Israel first took control of the West Bank Arab territories, there was relative peace. They improved the living conditions of the Arabs by giving them electricity

and other civic services in their towns. But when they started building settlements on abandoned Arab land the Arabs objected strongly and occasionally reacted violently by killing settlers. In retaliation the Jews hit back with excessive force. Since then there has been an unending cycle of increasing violence between Arabs and Jews.

## The politics of the situation

Large sections of Israel are Arab dominated. Nazareth, the second largest city in Israel, is Arab. Bethlehem is Arab. The Gaza Strip is Arab. And all the land surrounding Jerusalem is Arab. These Arab territories are known as the West Bank, because they are located on the west bank of the Jordan, whereas most Arabs in the region live on the east bank, in the country of Jordan.

It is of concern to the Israeli people that, within a few years, these Arabs will be able to outvote the Israelis in elections due to the fact that they have larger families than do the Jews.

## Arabs, Christians and Jews

There is another factor in this conflict between Arabs and Jews that few consider: it is not just a clear-cut case of Jew versus Muslim, for many of the Arabs are Christians.

When the Jews hit back at the Arabs they sometimes kill Christians who, for the most part, refuse to be involved in violence, but are often the innocent victims of the conflict. And since the majority of the Jews in Israel are atheists, the conflict is not always between Jew and Arab, but between atheists and Christians. In such circumstances, who should have our sympathy—the atheistic Jews or the Christian Arabs? While it is a very difficult

and complex situation, Christians have an obligation to support fellow Christians, no matter what their ethnicity.

## What does the New Testament have to say about all this?

When the Jewish Messiah, Yeshua (Jesus), came to Earth, he introduced us to a higher level of spiritual understanding than we had previously known—which was to be expected. The changes he instituted, however, weren't always welcomed because they disturbed the status quo.

Jesus revealed that his kingdom wasn't a kingdom with national boundaries such as Israel had. Rather, the citizens of his kingdom were those who worshipped the King wherever they lived (Luke 17:20-21).

Anyone, regardless of their nature—good or evil—can be a citizen of the nation of Israel, but only those who are indwelt by the Spirit of Jesus can become citizens of the 'better country' which has a city prepared for them by the Lord (Heb. 11:16; Gal. 4:26).

Jesus also revealed that the citizens of his kingdom would not belong to any particular ethnic or racial group. 'There is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved"' (Rom. 10:12-13). Jesus illustrated this in his first sermon: God cared for the Canaanite widow in Zarephath and the Syrian army commander, Naaman, when many Jews in Israel, with similar problems, were not given any divine help (Luke 4:25-28).

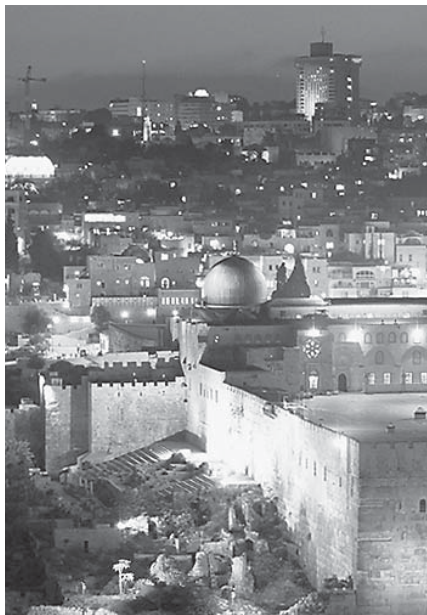
The New Testament makes it clear that there is now 'neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise' (Gal. 3:28-29; see Col. 3:11). In God's sight there is now no difference between Jew and Gentile; there are only the saved and the lost.

What did God promise to give to the seed of Abraham? He promised them only as much as they could care for and rule over after leaving Egypt—the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:6-7). Jesus, however, revealed that his people would eventually 'inherit the earth', not just Canaan (Matt. 5:5), and that they would receive this inheritance in full when he returned (Matt. 25:34).

## What about Luke 21:24?

In this verse Jesus says: 'They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled upon by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.'

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The first part of Luke 21:24 says, 'They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations'. In AD 132 the Jewish people who survived the siege of Jerusalem were sold as slaves to the nations around the rim of the Mediterranean.

The second part of Luke 21:24 says: 'Jerusalem will be trampled upon by the Gentiles'. Jerusalem became a Roman city. Then it became a Persian city, and then an Arab city. For a short time it became a Crusader city, after which it became a Muslim city.

The third part of Luke 21:24 says that Jerusalem would continue to be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles 'until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled'.

In 1948 the Jews got part of the city back. In 1967 the whole of the city was

restored to them. So can it be claimed that the time of the Gentiles came to an end in 1948, or, to be more exact, in 1967?

It is a rather superficial judgement to claim that the old city of Jerusalem is no longer trampled down by the Gentiles. Most of the people who live in Jerusalem are Muslims. The temple mount—the most sacred place to the Jews—is dominated by the Muslim Dome of the Rock, and is closed to Jews and the followers of Jesus. So, in a very real way, Jerusalem is still trodden underfoot by the Gentiles.

We need to remember that the prophecy of Luke 21:24 is a segment of the prophecy that climaxes with Jesus' Second Coming. Biblical scholars understand Jesus—in his prophecy of Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21—was quoting from Daniel's prophecies. And Daniel has the time of the Gentiles concluding with the second coming of Jesus, depicted by the coming

of the Rock in Daniel 2, and the coming of the Son of Man in Daniel 7.

Only from that time forward would Jerusalem not be trodden underfoot by unbelievers.

The prophecy about the treading down of Jerusalem by unbelievers also has a spiritual application. Jesus established spiritual Jerusalem by his death on the Cross.

Since that time we followers of the Messiah have no earthly city here (Heb. 13:14). Instead we belong to 'the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God' (Heb. 12:22), a city that is beyond the reach of unbelievers (Rev. 22:15).

If you have washed your garments and made them white in the blood of the Lamb then you are a citizen of this eternal city (Rev. 7:14-15; 22:14). The gates to this city are open to all who put their full trust in Jesus. ❄

## Letter from the Pastor

RON J. ALLEN

**'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me'**  
(Acts 9:4)?

WITH THIS ONE short question the risen Lord lanced open the life of Saul of Tarsus. The truth began to dawn on him: this Jesus whom he had written off as a deceiver, and whose followers he had sought to destroy, was alive. Moreover, Jesus' disciples were in mysterious and lively communion with him. The sufferings they endured at the hands of this Jewish patriot found their true mark in Him.

The whole effort of Saul's life—which had seemed so true and noble to him—was seen to be a terrible mistake; a campaign against the Son of God, his fellow Jews, and Christ's method with him.

Saul used the tools of influence that make sense to those who think of God in terms of law, decrees, commands, boundaries, penalties and punishments. But Christ's intervention in Saul's life, though dramatic, was not severe or compulsive. It was gracious. Saul's human integrity was respected, not violated.

He was not dragged into the city.

He was not threatened or brainwashed. He was spoken to as a person; Christ appealed to him as a man. Why all this cruelty, Saul? Why this inhumanity? Don't you see that it is against me?

Saul was prompted to examine himself in terms of his impact on fellow human beings. Was he helping them? Was he doing good? By calling him to measure himself according to the yardstick of love, Jesus left the way open for Saul to respond in kind.

Do I practice a form of religion that trades on judgements, threats and enforcements? If I do, I cannot love God; I can only fear him. The grace of God led Saul to repentance (Romans 2:4) that day on the Damascus road. And what a change it wrought in him.

He began to understand that God had revealed his true glory, not by 'lording' himself over mankind, but by becoming their servant. He saw that God shows himself not by exacted allegiances, nor by threats and intimidations; he comes not brandishing a book of rules

and traditions; he doesn't bother the human family with denunciations and talk of excommunications—not at all, none of these!

God is seen and known in the One who gives himself to men and women in their every shape and condition—rich, poor, high and low, educated and ignorant, admired or despised, weak or strong—with particular emphasis on the rejected and the forgotten. The One who values unreservedly, the degenerate, the irreverent and foolish, as much or even more than steadfast upholders of the established order—he is God's man. The love of God is in him.

Sometimes Christians have earned a reputation for being intolerant, angry and uncharitable. And this has come about because those same Christians thought they were protecting the truth of God. Sadly, they were not. They were protecting a tradition. They were not following Jesus; they were fighting to preserve a code of practice.

Following Jesus is not the same as following an ideology. Law mongers are not life-givers. 'The meanest man I ever saw, always kept inside the law.' Faithfulness to a tradition is never enough; it is too impersonal.

Only faithfulness in relationship to God's Son can make us loving. 'Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but have the light of life' (John 8:12).

God deliver me from a dangerous zeal; give me love instead. ❄





# David—the King

## Part 2



RITCHIE WAY

### David and Abigail

Shortly after the death of the prophet Samuel, David moved his company down into the desert of Maon (1 Sam. 25:1-2). Nabal, a very wealthy man, grazed 3,000 sheep and a thousand goats at nearby Carmel. David ensured that his men treated Nabal's shepherds and flocks with respect, and that they protected them from attacks by bandits and wild animals.

Shearing time was always an occasion for celebration in Israel (1 Sam. 25:36; 2 Sam. 13:23-24). When David heard that Nabal was shearing his sheep he sent ten young men to him in the hope that Nabal would share his bounties with those who had freely provided security for his shepherds and flocks. But Nabal, a surly and mean man, replied, 'Who is this David? Many servants are breaking away from their masters these days. Why should I take my bread and water, and the meat I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men coming from who knows where?' (1 Sam. 25:10-11).

When the message got back to David, he was livid. In the heat of passion he told four hundred of his men to gird their swords and follow him. In his thinking Nabal deserved to die for such an outrageous insult.

One of the shepherds who had overheard Nabal's insulting reply to David's men went and reported the exchange to

Nabal's wife, Abigail. The shepherd told Abigail that the whole time they were out in the field near David's company nothing ever went missing. 'Night and day they were a wall around us.' In spite of this Nabal 'hurled insults at them.' 'See what you can do,' he advised, 'because disaster is hanging over our master and his whole household.'

As David and his warriors stormed down a mountain ravine on their way towards Nabal's ranch, they met Abigail coming towards them, preceded by a caravan of donkeys loaded with 'two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five dressed sheep, thirty-seven litres of roasted grain, a hundred cakes of raisins, and two hundred cakes of pressed figs'.

When Abigail saw David she got off her donkey and bowed down before him and said:

My lord, let the blame be on me alone. Now let this gift, which your servant has brought to you, my master, be given to the men who follow you. Please forgive your servant's offence, for the Lord will certainly make a lasting dynasty for you, my master, because you fight the Lord's battles. Let no wrong-doing be found in you as long as you live.

Abigail's intercession made a big impression on David. He replied, 'May you be blessed for your good judgement and

for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands.'



David, seething with revenge, had been about to slaughter every male in Nabal's employ, guilty or otherwise (1 Sam. 25:34). But in deciding upon this action he was no better than King Saul who killed the priests of Nob and their families. David grossly over-reacted because what he intended to do was far in excess of what Nabal had done to him. It was only through the intercession and personal sacrifice of Abigail that David was prevented from staining his hands with innocent blood.

Jesus said, 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.' Today's world has a great need for peacemakers. There are far too many hotheads fanning the flames of hatred and revenge. Instead of taking sides between X & Y in any conflict, Christians should take the side of Jesus who came to our world with a message of truth and reconciliation.



The following day, when Nabal had recovered from his partying, Abigail revealed to him how narrowly he had avoided being slaughtered for his insults.

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# David—the King

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The shock at hearing this was so great, 'right then and there he had a heart attack and fell into a coma' (TMB). About ten days later he died.

After the funeral David asked Abigail to be his wife. David had married Michal, but after he fled from Saul, Saul gave her as a wife to Paltiel. David then married Ahinoam. He now asked Abigail to be his wife also, and she accepted.

## David at Ziklag

To avoid being chased all over Judea by Saul, David decided to move down into Philistine territory. He covenanted with Achish, the king of Gath, that he would support Achish in his battles against his enemies in exchange for Ziklag as a home for his followers.

Meanwhile many of Saul's supporters were abandoning him because of his merciless slaughter of the priests of Nob and his morally indefensible attempts to kill David. While at Ziklag David was joined by notable warriors from Benjamin—relatives of King Saul—'armed with bows and arrows and ... able to shoot arrows or to sling stones right-handed or left-handed' (1 Chron. 12:2). Some of Saul's army commanders also defected to David. These men, all Gadites, were 'brave warriors able to handle the shield and spear'. Their faces 'were the faces of lions, and they were as swift as gazelles in the mountains'. 'Day after day men arrived to help David, until he had a great army.'

At this time the Philistines called up all their reservists from their five chief cities and their surrounding villages in order to make a concerted land grab of Israelite territory. When Achish asked David and his army to back him up, David was placed in a very compromised position. He had twice refused to kill Saul when he had the chance, so what was he to do now? For a night and a day David sweated over the embarrassing situation he had gotten himself into, and prayed fervently for the Lord's help.

By the second day all the Philistine companies and regiments had arrived at Aphek, the assembly point for the army corps. That evening the Philistine commanders came to Achish and demanded to know why the Hebrews were assembled there with his troops. Although Achish defended David, the commanders insisted that he send David home, as they did not want to take the risk of having him turn against them in the midst of the battle. Apologetically Achish went to David to explain why he could not fight with the Philistines and told him he should leave for

home the next morning as soon as it was light.

Two days later, when David and his men came in sight of Ziklag, they saw to their horror that the town was a desolate smoking ruin. With shouts of distress his troops broke into a run and rushed into the settlement searching for their wives and children. While there was not a living person to be seen, it was some consolation to them that there were no corpses there either. The distress of losing their families was so great 'David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep'.

David's men were bitter because of their missing loved ones, 'but David found strength in the Lord his God'. He told Abiathar the priest to fetch the ephod. When he brought it to him David asked the Lord, 'Shall I pursue this raiding party?'



The answer was, 'Yes'. Then he asked, 'Will I overtake them?' Again the answer was 'Yes'. 'Will I succeed in rescuing our loved ones?' Once more the answer was, 'Yes'.

David lost no time in choosing six hundred men to accompany him. They set out immediately, following the raider's trail liberally marked with cattle, donkey and camel dung. Never before had David pushed his men so hard. The forced march was so gruelling that, by the time they got to the one-hundred-metre-wide Besor Ravine, two hundred men dropped out with exhaustion, leaving four hundred to continue the pursuit.

Not long after leaving the ravine, David's men came across an Egyptian slave who had been abandoned by the Amalekite raiding party because he had become too ill to travel. The man had not eaten or drunk for three days, so David's men gave him water to drink plus a cake of pressed figs and two cakes of raisins to eat. When he had revived sufficiently he revealed to them the intended route of the Amalekites. By taking a short cut, David's men came

down the mountainside just on dusk to find the Amalekites spread out across the plain below eating, drinking and revelling because of the great amount of plunder and slaves they had gathered in their raids.

Caught completely by surprise, and befuddled with too much wine, the Amalekites were unable to organise themselves into an effective defence. David and his men, running on adrenaline, fought them all through that night until the evening of the next day. No one escaped except for four hundred young men who fled on camels. David recovered everything the Amalekites had taken from Ziklag, including all the adults and children, plus a large amount of booty from other conquered cities. After a well-deserved and very long sleep they loaded the enemy's mules, donkeys, carts and wagons with the plunder and departed, driving ahead of them the flocks and herds of captured livestock.

When David got back to Ziklag he divided the plunder into portions and sent these gifts to the elders in over a score of towns and cities in Judah. As the future king of Israel he would need the support of these local leaders.

## The death of Saul and Jonathan

On the third day after David's men had returned to Ziklag from defeating the Amalekites, a young man arrived in the town with a report about the battle between the Philistines and the Israelites. He told David that the Israelites had been badly beaten and that Saul and his son Jonathan were dead.

'How do you know Saul and Jonathan are dead?' demanded David.

'I was there on Mt. Gilboa when Saul was in the throes of death', lied the young man.

'When the king saw me he asked, "Who are you?"'

'I am the son of an Amalekite', I replied.

'Do me a favour and put me out of my misery', Saul asked.

'So I stood over him and killed him', the Amalekite lied.

(This Amalekite had actually not been there during the battle, but had gone onto the battlefield the night after the battle in the hope of scavenging some booty for himself.)

'What's more', the Amalekite said to David, hoping to win the new king's favour, 'here is the crown that was on Saul's head and the band that was on his arm'.

David retorted, 'Your blood be on your



# David—the King

own head. Your lips condemned you when you said, “I killed King Saul”.

David then ordered one of his soldiers to execute the Amalekite for raising his hand against the Lord’s anointed.

David had a very strong conviction that if the Lord anointed a person for a particular ministry, only the Lord had the authority to remove that person. He demonstrated that conviction in his own treatment of Saul.

David grieved the death of Saul and Jonathan and afterward wrote a lament for them entitled ‘The Lament of the Bow’ (2 Sam. 1:19-27).

## David at Hebron

Now that Saul was dead and no longer a threat to David, David asked the Lord, ‘Shall I go up to one of the towns of Judah?’ The Lord told him to go to Hebron, so David and his host moved to Hebron in the hill country of Judah. When the men of Judah heard that David had come ‘home’ they went to Hebron and anointed him king of the southern kingdom, Judah (2 Sam. 2:4).

Meanwhile Abner, the commander of Saul’s army, took Saul’s son, Ishbosheth, to Mahanaim in Gilead, on the eastern side of the Jordan River, where he crowned him king of the northern kingdom, Israel. However, the difficulty of governing the northern kingdom from so far away proved to be too great, so two years later King Ishbosheth and his troops returned to Gibeon. Their return, however, quickly resulted in the inevitable clash between the northern and southern armies, the outcome being that ‘Abner and the men of Israel were routed by David’s men’.

In this battle Asahel, the brother of Joab, David’s commander-in-chief, pursued Abner, the fleeing commander-in-chief of the northern army. Asahel was keen to make a name for himself by returning wearing Abner’s armour and carrying his spear—which was the prize commonly accorded to the victor. Abner pled with Asahel to give up the chase because he didn’t want to be responsible for slaying the brother of Joab. Asahel refused but was outclassed by the more experienced warrior, and slain. That night Abner and his men fled back to Mahanaim on the other side of the Jordan.

Over in Gilead King Ishbosheth and Abner, the commander of his army, fell out over something Abner was alleged to have done. Abner was so offended by the king’s accusation he sent a message to David offering to transfer Saul’s kingdom over to him. David accepted the offer on condition that his first wife, Michal, was also returned

to him, because he wanted a link with Saul’s family that would automatically entitle him to the royal prerogatives of the northern kingdom. Michal, however, was in a happy marriage and didn’t want to return to David. Her new husband, Paltiel, followed her to Bahurim weeping all the way, until he was told to return home ‘or else’. This forced break up of her second marriage left Michal very bitter.

## David becomes king of all Israel

When Abner and his entourage of twenty high-ranking officers arrived at Hebron, they were warmly welcomed and invited to a feast in their honour. At the conclusion of the festivities Abner said to David, ‘Let me go now to make arrangements for your coronation as king over the whole nation. I will call all Israel to this grand occasion.’

After Abner and his party had departed, David’s commander-in-chief, Joab, arrived back in Hebron with a load of plunder from a raid on one of Israel’s enemies. David hadn’t yet begun collecting taxes to pay his soldiers, so relied on them collecting enough plunder to meet their own needs.

When Joab heard that Abner had been there, meeting with David, he immediately assumed that Abner had come to spy out David’s situation so he would be at an advantage in the next battle between Israel and Judah, and hotly told David so. Then, unbeknown to David, Joab sent messengers after Abner to bring him back. In the gateway of Hebron Joab took Abner aside as though to speak with him privately, and there he deceitfully stabbed him in the stomach and killed him in revenge for the death of his brother, Asahel.

Getting revenge for his brother’s death was more important to Joab than was the unification of the kingdom of Israel, which is why Joab was a soldier and not a politician. Jealousy may have also played a part in Joab’s assassination of Abner as he may have seen Abner as a rival commander-in-chief in the future united kingdom. Whatever the motivation, Joab, a truly great soldier, overrode King David’s plan and used subterfuge to murder an innocent man.

Joab, in murdering Abner in cold blood, put his own interests ahead of the interests of the man God had anointed to be king, and the unity of the whole nation of Israel. Joab and his supporters were justified in their own eyes, but history would judge otherwise. Their action was rebellious, inconsiderate, selfish and treacherous.

It is very difficult when you are at the top of your organisation and a person you rely on for the success of your operation overrides your decisions and acts contrary to your will. You would like to get rid of that person, but the factors involved in his or her dismissal are outweighed by the need to keep them on. That is the place where David found himself.

When David heard about the murder of Abner he confessed, ‘Though I am the anointed king, I am weak, and these sons of Zeruiah [David’s half sister] are too strong for me’ (2 Sam. 3:39).

David was nothing without his army, and Joab, the commander-in-chief, knew this. He had appointed his own brothers as commanders, and they would revenge any move that David made against Joab. David could only pray, ‘May the Lord repay the evildoer according to his evil deeds’. And that was the right action to take in such circumstances. Many years later, when Solomon succeeded David on the throne, he had Joab executed for the murders of Abner and Amasa.



When news of Abner’s murder reached David’s ears he broke down; he was absolutely devastated. He put on a state funeral for Abner, and dressed in sackcloth and wailing aloud he walked behind the bier to the cemetery. When the people urged him to eat something he refused to touch any food until sundown. The representatives of the Northern Kingdom took note of this and realised that David had no part in the murder of Abner.

Soon after this two of King Ishbosheth’s commanders treacherously murdered and decapitated their master while he was having his noonday siesta. Travelling all night they carried the head of King Ishbosheth to David, hoping to win David’s favour. David, shocked by their treachery, told them what he had done to the man who claimed to have killed Saul, and ordered his guards to execute the two traitors. He then buried the head of Ishbosheth with Abner.

Years before, the Lord had said to David, ‘You shall shepherd my people, Israel, and you shall become their ruler’ (2 Sam. 5:2). All the tribes of Israel, encouraged by these words, came to David and anointed him as king of the united kingdom of Israel.

David, who had ruled over Judah in Hebron for seven years and six months, now, at the age of thirty, was crowned king of all Israel. His life so far had been full of challenges, but there were far bigger ones to come.





# What a Book!

RITCHIE WAY

**I want to tell you about the world's best selling book—the book that outsold Harry Potter every year. This book is published in more languages than any other book—over 2,400 at last count. And this book is both the world's oldest book and its most up-to-date book. It's the most up-to-date book because it deals not only with the present, but also with the future. You've guessed it: it's the Bible!**

**T**HE BIBLE is like no other book in the world. It had forty authors from a variety of backgrounds and professions. There were two kings, a military leader, three civil servants, priests, historians, prophets, apostles, a physician and two of Jesus' brothers. These authors wrote from Egypt, Israel, Persia, Mesopotamia, Europe and Asia.

The book they wrote has several names: it is called the Holy Bible, which means the holy book. It is also known as the Scriptures (John 5:39), which means 'the writings'. And its other name is the Word of God (Luke 11:28), because it is God's word or message for us.

If you open your Bible to the Contents page at the very front, you will see that the contents are divided into two main sections: The Books of the Old Testament and the Books of the New Testament.

The thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, from Genesis to Malachi, were written over a period of 1,100 years, while the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, from Matthew to Revelation, were written over a period of less than 100 years.

Between Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, and Matthew, the first book of the New Testament, there is an interval of 400 years known as

the Intertestamental Period. So the writing of the Bible took about 1,600 years.

The books of the Old Testament were written *before* Jesus, while the books of the New Testament were written *after* Jesus.

The purpose of the Old Testament was to point forward to the God who would come and dwell with his people. He would walk among them, and not despise them (Lev. 26:11-12). He would be their Messiah—the anointed King of Israel. The purpose of the New Testament was to point to the God who came in Jesus of Nazareth and dwelt with his people. He walked among them and did not despise them.

The miracle of the Bible is that, although it has so many authors from so many countries and ages, it has only one theme: your salvation. This theme is divided into three sub-themes:

1. The One who brings you salvation: Jesus
2. The way of salvation: the teachings of the Bible
3. The people who receive salvation: the history of Israel and the early Church.

## How reliable is the Bible?

### Hittites

There was a time when the critics claimed that much of the Old Testament was fictitious. They claimed, for example, that the authors invented the Hittite nation—which is mentioned 46 times in the Bible—because no records of the Hittite nation, outside the Bible, had ever been found. 'It is possible for a city to disappear', these critics said, 'but not for a whole nation'. That was a real problem, because, according to the Bible, the powerful Hittite nation (2 Kgs 7:6), which occupied the entire western Fertile Crescent (Josh 1:4) had an army that was the equal of the Egyptian's.

Then the German archaeologist, Hugo Winkler, dug up a vast library of cuneiform tablets at Bogazkoy in modern Turkey. When the language on the tablets was deciphered, it was discovered that Bogazkoy had been the Hittite capital, Hattusa. Ancient monuments depict the Hittites as stocky people with retreating foreheads, large noses and thick lips. The reigns of some Hittite kings could be dated by their correlation with events in Egypt after the death of Pharaoh Tutankhamun who lived about 120 years after the Exodus.

Tutankhamun, at the age of 19, suffered a badly broken leg, which became infected. That, together with an attack of malaria, killed him, leaving his wife, Ankhesenamun, a widow without any children.

Because Ankhesenamun, the daughter of Akhenaten and Nefertiti, had no son, she was expected to marry her grandfather, Ay, whom she feared. Once married to the queen, Ay would become king.



In her desperation Ankhesenamun wrote to Suppiluliuma I, king of the Hittites: 'My husband has died and I have no son. They say you have many sons. You might give me one of your sons to be my husband. I do not wish to take one of my subjects as a husband. I am afraid'.

After checking out the facts, Suppiluliuma sent Prince Zannanza to be her husband, but he never arrived. He was killed en route, possibly by an agent of Ay, who then married Ankhesenamun and became pharaoh. The suspicious death of the Hittite prince resulted in hostilities between the Hittites and Egyptians, which climaxed in a huge battle at Kadesh on the Orontes River, in 1274 BC.

This battle at Kadesh is believed to be the largest chariot battle ever fought, involving five to six thousand chariots. While there was no clear victor, Egypt's influence in Asia was restricted from that time forward.

The fact that an Egyptian queen had been prepared to marry a Hittite prince, gives an indication of the status of the Hittites at that time, confirming what the Bible said about that nation. The knowledge of the great Hittite kingdom had been lost to the world for centuries, but it had been preserved in the Bible and is a testimony to the reliability of its historical records.

### Sargon II

The prophet Isaiah wrote: 'In the year that the supreme commander, sent by Sargon king of Assyria, came to Ashdod and attacked and captured it—at that time the LORD spoke through Isaiah son of Amoz' (Isa. 20:1-2).

For many centuries the Bible was the only known place in the world where king Sargon's name occurred. Many scholars questioned that such a king ever existed and cast doubts on the accuracy of the Bible account.

Then, in the early 1840s, French archaeologist, Paul Emile Botta, began digging in the mound Khorsabad, north of present-day Mosul. He discovered that this was the site of the ancient city of Nineveh, where he found the palace of the Assyrian king, Sargon II, who is referred to in Isaiah 20:1.

In his famous 'Display Inscriptions', Sargon reported, 'I besieged and captured Samaria, carrying off 27,190 of the people, who dwelt therein'. This siege is reported in 2 Kings 17:6: 'In the

ninth year of Hoshea [c.722 BC], the king of Assyria [Sargon II] captured Samaria and deported the Israelites to Assyria'.

Long before Sargon became known to the secular world, the only extant account of his existence was in the Bible.

### Ebla

In 1975 Paolo Matthiae and his archaeological team, unearthed two palace rooms, in the ancient city of Ebla, that contained a library of 16,000 tablets.



This large city, which was a great manufacturing and trading centre with a population of 260,000 people, existed in Syria up until 250 years before Abraham. The name of this great city has been found in Egyptian and Akkadian inscriptions as far back as 2300 BC. In the palace of Ebla was found Egyptian were inscribed with the names of Pharaoh's Khafra (2650 – 2480 BC) and Pepi I (2332 – 2283 BC).

The palace archive of cuneiform tablets, dating back to 2250 BC, contains scores of personal names including Adam, Abraham, Ishmael, Esau, Saul, David, and Michael, thus revealing that these names, which are also names of people in the Bible, were common names in that period.

Also found in the Ebla archives are the city names of Salem (the city of Melchizedek), and Jerusalem, which is mentioned as a separate city from Salem.

Of significance to both Jews and Christians is the mention of the five cities of the plain: Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar (Gen. 14:8). These cities are mentioned in the Bible as being in existence in the time of Abraham (Genesis chapters 18-19), but sceptics had concluded that these accounts were mythical rather than

factual. The witness of these tablets from Ebla confirms for us the historical accuracy of the oldest records of Scripture.

### Read your Bible every day

I knew a couple in Gore, down in the south of New Zealand, where the husband refused to talk to the wife after she became a Christian. She spoke to him but he never replied. He would occasionally leave her a note, but communications never progressed beyond that.

What do you think of the state of their marriage? It was a marriage only in law. There was no intimacy, no sharing.

How many Christians live like that? They have God's Word on the shelf, but they rarely open it, rarely enquire to see what God has to say to them. That is not a good relationship at all. Such a relationship will ultimately condemn them. If they are not interested in hearing what God has to say to them, what would be the advantage of them living with the Lord in the age to come?

The wall of silence between the couple in Gore continued for several years until a Christian man, with similar interests to the husband, made friends with him and helped him bridge the gulf.

I pray that if you have not been reading your Bible that the Holy Spirit will break down the barrier between you and God so that you will hunger for his words.

When Jesus said, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God' (Matt. 4:4), he was stating a fact of life. Man is more than an animal whose whole life is focused on getting physical food; man has a soul that must also be fed if he is to reach his highest potential. Without a daily partaking of this bread of life man will become aware of an unfilled emptiness in his innermost being.

I encourage you to read your Bible every day. Just as you have regular times for your meals, make a regular time, each day, when you can spend some time reading God's Word. And as you read be aware of what the Holy Spirit is saying to you through that passage.

Read especially the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, which tell the story of Jesus. Soak yourselves in them. You will become amazed at the changes for good that God will make in your life.



# What is the Unforgiveable Sin?

SANTO CALARCO

In Matthew 12:31-32, Jesus said:

**“And so I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven ... Anyone who speaks a word against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.”**

**W**HAT DID Jesus mean? What is the unpardonable sin? How is this connected to blaspheming the Holy Spirit? In thirty years of ministry the most common question I have been asked by genuine believers is whether or not they have committed this sin and so are beyond the reach of grace.

These questions are best answered by examining these verses within the context of the chapter and the book as a whole. The verses in question form part of a controversy between Jesus and the Pharisees, which concluded by focussing on Jesus' identity as Israel's Messiah. This is important to understand since it forms the specific context within which Jesus' words were spoken and are thus to be understood.

In verses 1-13 of chapter 12 we find Jesus engaged in two Sabbath controversies in which the Pharisees attempted to find some charge against him. In the latter episode, and in the Pharisees' presence, Jesus irrefutably and miraculously healed a man. As a result of this Sabbath healing miracle the Pharisees for the first time plotted how to kill Jesus (v.14).

This story is soon followed in verses 22-24 and is connected to another conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees, which has strong Messianic overtones. A demon-possessed man is brought to Jesus and healed. As a result of this miracle the crowds announce their hope that Jesus might be the son of David, the Messianic king. The Pharisees countered this expressed hope by asserting that Jesus performed his miracle through the power of Satan. Jesus responded by affirming that he was empowered by the Holy Spirit and that his

miracles demonstrated that he was the Messiah who was ushering in the kingdom of God (Matt. 12:22-28).

Jesus speaks to these hardened hearers who were denying the evidence that pointed to his messianic claims, and says to them:

“And so I tell you [the Pharisees] every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.”  
(12:31-32)

These verses need to be understood within this specific setting. They were addressed to those who had irrefutable witness as to Jesus' true identity, but which they then deliberately rejected, even after repeated demonstrations of the Spirit's power through Jesus.

This interpretation is further reinforced by what immediately follows. After witnessing Jesus' miracles, the Pharisees yet again demand further signs from Jesus to establish his identity (Matt. 12:38). In response Jesus said that they would not be given any subsequent miraculous signs

except that of his upcoming death, burial and resurrection, typified by the experience of Jonah. Here again Jesus indicated that he was the Messiah by claiming that he was greater than Jonah and even Solomon (Matt. 12:38-42).

The context suggests then that the unpardonable sin is related to deliberate, repeated, ultimate rejection of Jesus the Messiah in the face of irrefutable miraculous proof.

This view is reinforced as we consider these verses not only within the larger setting of the chapter, but also within the context of the book of Matthew as a whole. Throughout the Gospel of Matthew we see a repeated theme emerge. Again and again Matthew is portraying Jesus as one who presents himself to Israel as their long-awaited Messiah, but sadly to no avail. But no matter what he says or what miracles he performs, they keep rejecting the truth and deny the clear evidence in the signs that he performs.

In many respects Matthew 12 is like a turning point in the Gospel of Matthew. From this point on Jesus begins to include Gentiles as well as Jews in his ministry (read Matthew chapters 13-15). Up till this juncture Jesus had presented himself exclusively to Israel as their Messiah. But after being repeatedly and wilfully





rejected by the Jewish religious leaders, Jesus refocused his mission toward being the Saviour of the whole world. Matthew 12 in general, and the key verses under consideration, function as the transition point.

It is only after the Pharisees claim that Jesus is performing miracles by the power of Satan that Jesus calls them an 'evil generation' that deserves condemnation for rejecting him, their Messiah (see Matthew 12:24, 39-42). It is only after this that Jesus makes several predictions about how God will turn to a people who will not reject him, and how Jerusalem and the Temple will be destroyed (cf. Matt 13:41-43; 16:1-4; 21:18-19, 42-46; 22:1-14; 24:1-2). This does not mean that Israel will be totally rejected and replaced exclusively by the Gentiles. For Matthew there will be an amalgamation of Jew and Gentile as the one people of God (See Matthew 8:10-12).

All this suggests that the sin against the Holy Spirit—the unpardonable sin—is connected to the repeated and deliberate rejection of who Jesus is in the face of irrefutable and repeated evidence.

The supreme ministry of the Spirit is to lead people away from unbelief and to faith in Jesus (John 16:8-10). Without faith in Christ no one can ever be saved, and this is the chief purpose of the work of the Spirit. To reject this work is to reject the offer and gift of salvation. The sin of rejection is unforgivable only because the people involved have made a final decision against who Jesus is.

We also need to remember that Jesus does not actually say that the religious leaders have committed the unpardonable sin, but rather were on the path to committing it. If they had already committed it, why would Jesus warn them about it? Though the Pharisees had repeatedly and wilfully made accusations against Jesus, he is simply warning them that if they continue on that path, they may likely commit the unpardonable sin. They had not committed it yet, but Jesus was telling them that if they persisted in denying all the evidence that was before them, they might come to a place where they were beyond the reach of God's grace and forgiveness. There was no further or greater evidence that Jesus was the Messiah than they had been given.

So the short answer to any devoted follower of Jesus, who may be afraid that they have committed this sin, is that they have not! If, after reading about Jesus' miraculous powers, and his resurrection from the dead, and then you deliberately and continually rejected him as your Saviour, you might have good cause to be concerned.

However, anyone who has committed this sin has also totally hardened their heart to Jesus and wouldn't even be bothered asking this question. The fact that you ask this question is evidence that you have not committed the unpardonable sin. ❄

# The Watchful Servants

RITCHIE WAY

**Our parable for this month is the story of the watchful servants in Luke 12:35-40. Jesus said:**

Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night.... The Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

This is another parable in the 'being ready for the return of Jesus' series. The fact that Jesus addresses this issue in several different ways underlines its importance to our salvation.

Jesus left Earth to attend the wedding banquet—the union of himself with his bride, through the work of his Spirit. When his bride is fully ready, that is, when every last person who can be saved is saved, he will return to his house (kingdom) on Earth.

The Jews divided the night into three watches. Jesus said his return would take place at an hour when people would not expect him. He could even turn up in the second or third watch of the night, which is the hour that burglars often choose to break into homes, knowing that everyone should be asleep.

On the individual level, Jesus' coming will take a great many people by surprise. The tens of thousands who are killed every year in traffic accidents will awake suddenly in the resurrection to witness the coming of Jesus.

Those who die suddenly from heart attacks, the mountaineers who are killed in climbing accidents, those killed in workplace accidents and those who are killed in battle or in terrorist attacks will, likewise, be surprised by the unexpectedness of his coming. Not one of these people knew the hour or the day of his return.

On the international level Jesus' coming will take the world by surprise. The ruling nations, living in denial of a divine Jesus who will come and judge them for every word and deed, will be humbled when he suddenly and unexpectedly appears.

The believers, however, who will be awake and earnestly watching for his coming, will be exalted when he comes. Jesus says he will become their servant and treat them as though they were the Master.

That astounding exchange will, at that time, consummate what happened on the Cross. He's that kind of God. ❄



# Christianity 101 Part 12:

# Our Mission

RITCHIE WAY

**B**EFORE JESUS returned to heaven he commissioned his followers to take the good news of salvation to everyone in the world, starting with those who were nearest. The commissioning event happened like this:

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven" (John 20:19-23).

This passage is brimful with spiritual truth. Jesus appears to his frightened disciples after his resurrection and offers them a peace that is not available anywhere else. The first thing Jesus said to them was, 'Peace be with you'. And the next thing Jesus did was to show them the marks of the crucifixion in his hands and side. These two things—the words of Jesus and his actions—are vitally connected. The only people who have peace with God are those who behold the crucified Jesus and know he died for them. The peace that comes from knowing that God has forgiven us through the sacrifice of Christ for us on the Cross, is the most marvellous peace that can come into a person's life. To know that you are right with God makes every other burden bearable.

It seems at first that this peace is the only peace we will ever need. Jesus, however, knows that this peace is only just the beginning. We will need another peace to complement this first one, which is why Jesus said again, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you'. There is no peace like the peace that comes from knowing that we shall be saved from death to live eternally in Christ's kingdom. But even such a marvellous peace as this loses its edge when we realise that we may stand alone in Paradise because our friends and relatives will not be there



with us. While our first peace comes from knowing that we are saved, our second peace comes from knowing that our friends and relatives will be saved too, and that we will enjoy eternity together and not apart. Jesus tells us that if we are to enjoy this second peace, we must share the gospel with them.

Jesus' words, 'I am sending you', is *your* commission. This is the work he has given you. This is the work he has given his Church. Whatever plans you have, you must always ask yourself, 'How will this help me to win souls for Jesus?' Do you feel overwhelmed by this responsibility? Do you feel insufficient for the task? Do not worry—Jesus does not expect you to do the work in your own strength. After commissioning his disciples, 'he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit"'. The Holy Spirit is given to empower us in our mission for Jesus. He said, 'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth' (Acts 1:8). Before you take up your mission, pray that God will empower you, and keep on praying until he does. He willingly gives

his Spirit to all who have a hunger for the lost and who are eager to share the gospel with them.

Our first duty, as disciples of Jesus, is to *know* our message and mission, and our second duty is to receive the baptism of the Spirit to *empower* our message and mission.

## The Message

When Jesus first appeared to his assembled disciples after his resurrection, he gave them two layers of peace and the gift of the Holy Spirit. He next gave them their message. He said, 'If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven' (John 20:23). In other words, if we take the gospel of forgiveness to others, they will be saved if they receive it. But if we do not take the gospel of forgiveness to them, they will be lost. People out there need to know that God has already made provision—through the death of Jesus—for their sins to be forgiven. And it is our privilege to share this message with them.

The message of salvation has very little to do with whether we understand all about exegesis and hermeneutics, or whether we can read Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. It does, however, have everything to do with what Jesus has done for you personally. You can only share what you have. And if you have received the gift of eternal life from Jesus, you can share it with others.

Listen to what Jesus said to a man who had known him for no more than a few hours, but whose life had been dramatically changed by his encounter with the Master: 'Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you' (Mark 5:19). That is the greatest witness you can give. Sharing your own testimony carries more weight than giving someone a Bible study, because facts always outweigh theory. And everyone can tell his or her own story. After all, they are the authority in that matter.

## More on the Commission

Matthew gives us some additional details on the commission that Jesus gave us:

Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:18-20)

Jesus has commissioned each citizen of his kingdom to preach to everyone the good news that his shed blood has paid the full price so that anyone may have citizenship in his kingdom (Matt. 24:14). It is our duty to persuade people to leave Satan's kingdom and become citizens in that of Christ (Col. 1:13). People who become citizens of the kingdom of Christ are to be baptised as a sign of the fact that they have died to Satan's kingdom and are being raised up to a new life in Jesus' kingdom (Rom. 6:4).

Soon after they have been baptised these new citizens are to be taught to obey 'everything' Jesus has commanded so that they will become disciples, i.e. obedient followers of Jesus. We will be learning and growing in grace as long as life continues.

Finally, Jesus says, 'And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.' That is a very precious promise. There never will be a time when Jesus will forsake you as you carry the message of salvation to others.

And because he is with you, you have nothing to fear. He will ensure that you will have all the resources you require for his mission. 'Therefore go and make disciples.' ❄

# The Indispensable Jesus

'I am writing to thank you most sincerely for the copy of your book, *The Indispensable Jesus*, you kindly sent me.

From time to time people do send me copies of books they have written, but as you correctly pointed out, I don't always have time to read them. However, with yours, I couldn't help sitting down and skim reading various sections of the book. Having done so, I have decided that I will make the time to read it as I am already hooked.

May God richly bless you in all your endeavours and may He use your book to lift up His Son Jesus Christ and bring glory to Himself.'

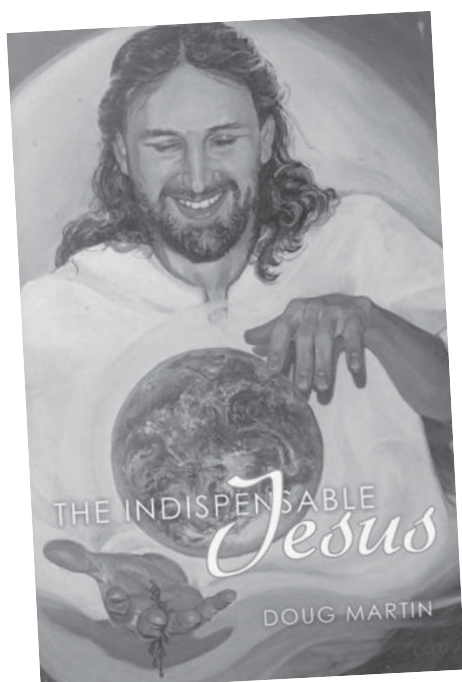
**Grahame Smith**

Chief Executive Officer

Bible League International (Australia)

'*The Indispensable Jesus* is a scholarly work, and I am sure that you were blessed as you did the research and work of writing it. The topic is certainly worth the time, and Jesus is real treasure waiting discovery by so many in our age. But more, I would think that Bible departments in colleges around the world would do well to have a copy.'

**Roy Dubyna** (B.A. Theology)



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# The Indispensable Jesus

by Pastor Doug Martin

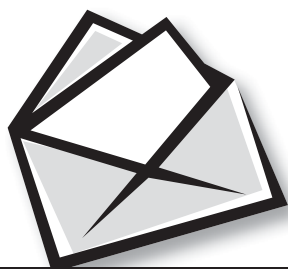
In his book, **The Indispensable Jesus**, Doug Martin reveals a lifetime of love and devotion to Jesus Christ. Drawing on decades of rich experience teaching and preaching and personal study, he upholds Jesus as the central theme on which all that matters hangs. Although containing many theological insights, **The Indispensable Jesus** is written in non-technical language with practical life applications. This book is an attractive and thorough guide to why Jesus is so important, and such good news for every person.

**Gary Krause** BA Teaching & Editorial Studies

(Director of the Office of Adventist Mission at the Adventist World Headquarters.)

This book is available from the GNU Office in Tweed Heads South. For postage and packaging charges, ring Carolyn Wagemaker +61 (0)7 5524 5040.





# 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.



## GRIEVING

**Dear Ritchie,**

My neighbour, a committed Christian, has just lost her as yet unmarried son in a work accident. The boy was one of the nicest young men I have ever met, a real courteous Christian gentleman who loved the Lord. It's such a terrible loss. People, naturally, are asking, 'Why?'

There are many ratbags that plague our streets that the community would be better off without, so why did the Lord allow such an upstanding future leader like this young man to die at such a young age? It's a mystery to all of us.

J.P.

## Ritchie's Reply

**Dear J.,**

We should thank God that this lad had his name written in the book of life. That is very comforting. Had some waster died instead, that would have been tragic, for to die outside of Christ is so final and unalterable.

King Saul's son, Jonathan, also had a similar nature to the young man you describe. He was heir to the throne, but when he heard that God had appointed David to be the next king he gave David his full support. He never expressed any jealousy of David but always encouraged him in his calling. Shortly after this Prince Jonathan was slain in a battle with the Philistines.

God's ways are often inscrutable, but always wise and always for the best. One day we shall understand why he permitted such things to happen, but in the meantime we just have to trust that he knows best. The dead in Christ are safe in his hands; it's we who remain that need to be on our guard continually.

Grace and peace to you.



## MUSLIM BELIEVERS?

**Dear Editor,**

The Bible says if we believe in the Lord Jesus we will be saved (Acts 16:31). You, however, have stated in your writings, that many Muslims, who know nothing about Jesus as Saviour, will be among the redeemed.

What I would like to know is this: On what basis can you claim that certain Muslims,

who have not put their faith in the Lord Jesus, will go to heaven?

P.C.

## Ritchie's Reply

**Dear P.,**

There are two kinds of knowledge about Jesus: head knowledge and heart knowledge. Christians who have the first but not the second will miss out on eternal life. Muslims who have the second but not the first will be welcomed at the pearly gates.

Blessed are those who have both a head knowledge and a heart knowledge of the Lord and Saviour. Remember, however, that the first never became fully available to mankind until after the death and resurrection of Jesus. People in Old Testament times, who had just a shadow of Jesus, were only saved by the Spirit of Jesus in their hearts. And it's the same with many non-Christians today who have never been privileged to hear the gospel truth about Jesus. The presence of the Spirit of Jesus in their hearts is revealed in their lives. Their lips may not testify of Jesus, but their lives do.

Grace and peace to all whose hearts become dwelling places for the Spirit of Jesus.



## ETERNAL LIFE AND THE JUDGEMENT

**Dear Editor,**

I understand from the writings of John that we may receive eternal life right now, in this life. The moment I accept Jesus as my Lord and Saviour I receive eternal life. Two texts that confirm this for me are 1 John 5:11-12, 'God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life,' and John 6:47, 'He who believes has everlasting life.' The question that exercises me is this, How can any of us claim we are saved before the judgement that separates the sheep from the goats?

R.P.

## Ritchie's Reply

**Dear R.,**

The answer to your question is that the Judgement that decides your destiny has already taken place in Jesus. When Jesus

went to the Cross the Father judged and condemned him in your place. He paid the full penalty for your rebellion. He died for all (2 Cor. 5:14). He was the atoning sacrifice 'for the sins of the whole world' (1 John 2:2).

The very moment you accepted Jesus as your Saviour you crossed over from death to life (John 5:24), and your name was written in his Book of Life. Your acceptance of Christ's judgement in your place was the moment of your individual judgement. You paid the penalty for your rebellion in him when he died on the Cross.

The Final Judgement that separates the sheep from the goats is not a Judgement that will determine your destiny. Rather it is a Judgement that will disclose it. The verdict of that Final Judgement—eternal life—was yours the moment you accepted Jesus' death in the place of yours. Hallelujah!



## TWO TESTAMENTS

**Dear Ritchie,**

Can you please explain to me why the Bible is divided into two testaments, and why are they called the Old Testament and the New Testament? I have heard that they should have been called the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

S.G.

## Ritchie's Reply

**Dear S.,**

The Bible uses the names covenant and testament interchangeably. The ark of the covenant (Rev. 11:19), for example, was also called the ark of the testimony (Rev. 15:5).

The central theme of the whole Bible is the covenant that God wishes to make with you and me. The essence of God's covenant with us is expressed throughout Scripture in these words: 'You shall be my people, and I will be your God' (Jer. 7:33; 11:4; 30:22; Eze. 11:20; 36:28; 2 Cor. 6:16; Heb. 8:10; Rev. 21:3).

How do we enter into that covenant relationship?—only through the shedding of the blood of atonement. It was the blood of the Passover Lamb that set Israel free from slavery to become citizens of God's kingdom. And it was

the blood of Jesus, our Passover (1 Cor. 5:7) that set us free from slavery to Satan to serve the living God. The Old Testament (Covenant) pointed forward to that divine sacrifice, and it is the New Testament (Covenant) that points back to the sacrifice that Jesus made for us on the Cross. The Old Testament gave us the shadow of the Cross; the New Testament gives us its substance. The titles, Old Testament and New Testament, therefore, are very good descriptions of their contents.



#### THANK YOU

Hi Ritchie,

Thank you for your ministry through your articles in both GNU magazines. They are really thought provoking and we really appreciate them. We have been listening to and reading Dr. Ford for more than 30 years now. It was Des who saved us from legalism all those years ago.

Christian regards,  
T. & N. B.

#### Ritchie's Reply

Hi T. & N.,

Thank you for your words of affirmation. We rejoice that you rejoice in the Lord. Hold fast to him for he alone is the way, the truth, and the life.

Grace and peace to you.

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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 [jlawsen@sidekick.com.au](mailto:jlawsen@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  
1 and 15 June**

**2 and 16 March  
6 and 20 July**

**6 April**

### 2013 CITY SEMINARS

#### Melbourne

16 March 2013, 9:00 am – 3:30 pm

#### Venue:

Carey Baptist Grammar School  
Kew Campus  
349 Barkers Road, Kew, VIC 3101

#### Speakers:

**Desmond Ford and another speaker to be announced**

#### Topic:

***The Final Antichrist: His Mark and Number—The Gospel in Eschatology.***

#### Brisbane

20 April 2013, 9:00 am – 4:30 pm

#### Venue:

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

*(Opposite the Milton Railway station—  
use pedestrian tunnel under Milton Road then  
walk up towards XXX Brewery.  
Venue is last building on left before brewery.)*

Parking nearby \$4 for the day is available  
for a limited number – book with GNU

#### Speakers:

**Pastor Ron Allen and Desmond Ford**

#### Title:

***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 Streets

#### Speakers:

**Drs Milton Hook and Desmond Ford**

#### Ballina

13 July 2013, 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

#### Venue:

Ballina Island Motor Inn  
Pacific Highway, Ballina NSW 2478

#### Speakers:

**Pastor Doug Martin and Ron Allen**

#### Brisbane

17 Aug 2013, 1:00 pm – 4:30 pm

#### Venue:

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

**Speaker: Desmond Ford**

#### Ballina

2 Nov 2013, 10:00 am – 4:30 pm

#### Venue:

Ballina Island Motor Inn  
Pacific Highway, Ballina NSW 2478

#### Speakers:

**Pastor Doug Martin and Ron Allen**



**Attention all  
members  
and non-members!**

## 2013 is a Board Election Year

**... and with 2 Board  
members not standing  
for re-election, we are  
calling for members to  
step up and get involved  
in GNU's Christian  
ministry!**

We are looking for board members who are preferably located in South East Queensland/Northern New South Wales (to facilitate Board meetings) and who are able to donate one day per week to GNU work.

Assistance is required in all areas of the organisation; marketing and promotions, organisational operations, management, governance and even speaking at seminars.

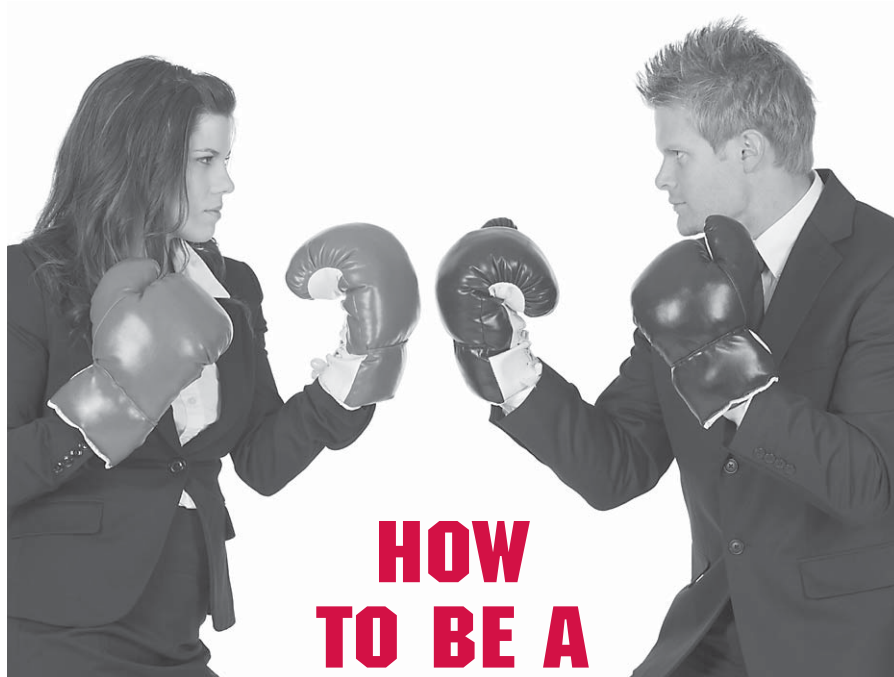
Please contact Karen Moores to find out more on 07 5524 5040 or [karen@goodnewsunlimited.org.au](mailto:karen@goodnewsunlimited.org.au)

For those of you that are not members and would like to be able to vote in (if not stand for) the 2013 elections, please contact Carolyn Wagemaker on 07 5524 5040 or email [carolyn@goodnewsunlimited.org.au](mailto:carolyn@goodnewsunlimited.org.au)

Membership subscriptions are a one-off fee of \$20.

Please get in touch as soon as possible to allow time for the applications to be approved so that you are able to vote.

We look forward to receiving your membership applications. ❄



# HOW TO BE A PEACEMAKER

RITCHIE WAY

**A** FEW YEARS ago the Norwegian Nobel Committee decided to award the Nobel Peace Prize to Martti Ahtisaari. The reason—he made bold moves over three decades to promote peace in areas where there have been longstanding conflicts.

While you and I may never be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, we will have opportunities to play the role of peacemaker from time to time. When conflict occurs in your office or home, here's what the Bible says to do:

### Plan a peace conference

Take the initiative. Don't wait for either the offended or the offender to make the first move. Conflict is always unpleasant, and so we naturally avoid facing it. Peacemakers break the deadlock. They know that conflict never resolves itself.

It must be intentionally dealt with. 'If... you remember your brother has something against you... *go at once* to make peace...' (Matt 5:23-24).

### Empathise with their feelings

Listen before you talk. Try to look at the situation from their viewpoint. Feelings are not right or wrong—they are just feelings. But they are important! 'None of you should look only of his own affairs, but consider other people's interests also' (Php. 2:4 Philaps).

### Attack the problem, not the person

Insults, accusations, and placing blame only make people defensive.

You never get your point across by being cross. 'A gentle answer quiets anger but a harsh one stirs it up' (Prov.15:1).

### Cooperate as much as possible

Look for common areas you can agree on. Be willing to admit your mistakes. Be gracious with other's faults. 'Do everything possible, on your part, to live at peace with all men' (Rom. 12:18).

### Emphasise reconciliation, not resolution

Some differences will never be resolved. But there can be honest disagreements without two parties being *disagreeable*. Resolution deals with issues.

Reconciliation deals with relationships. 'God has reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation' (2 Cor. 5:18).



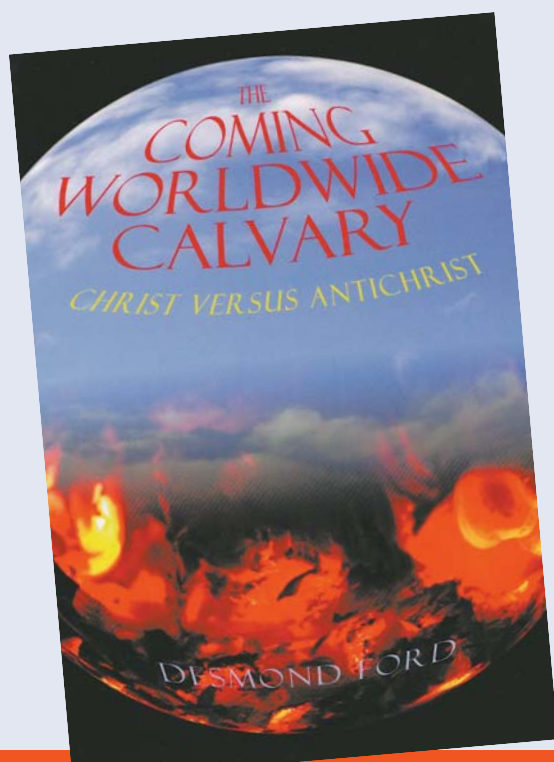


# The Coming Worldwide Calvary

## 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 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).