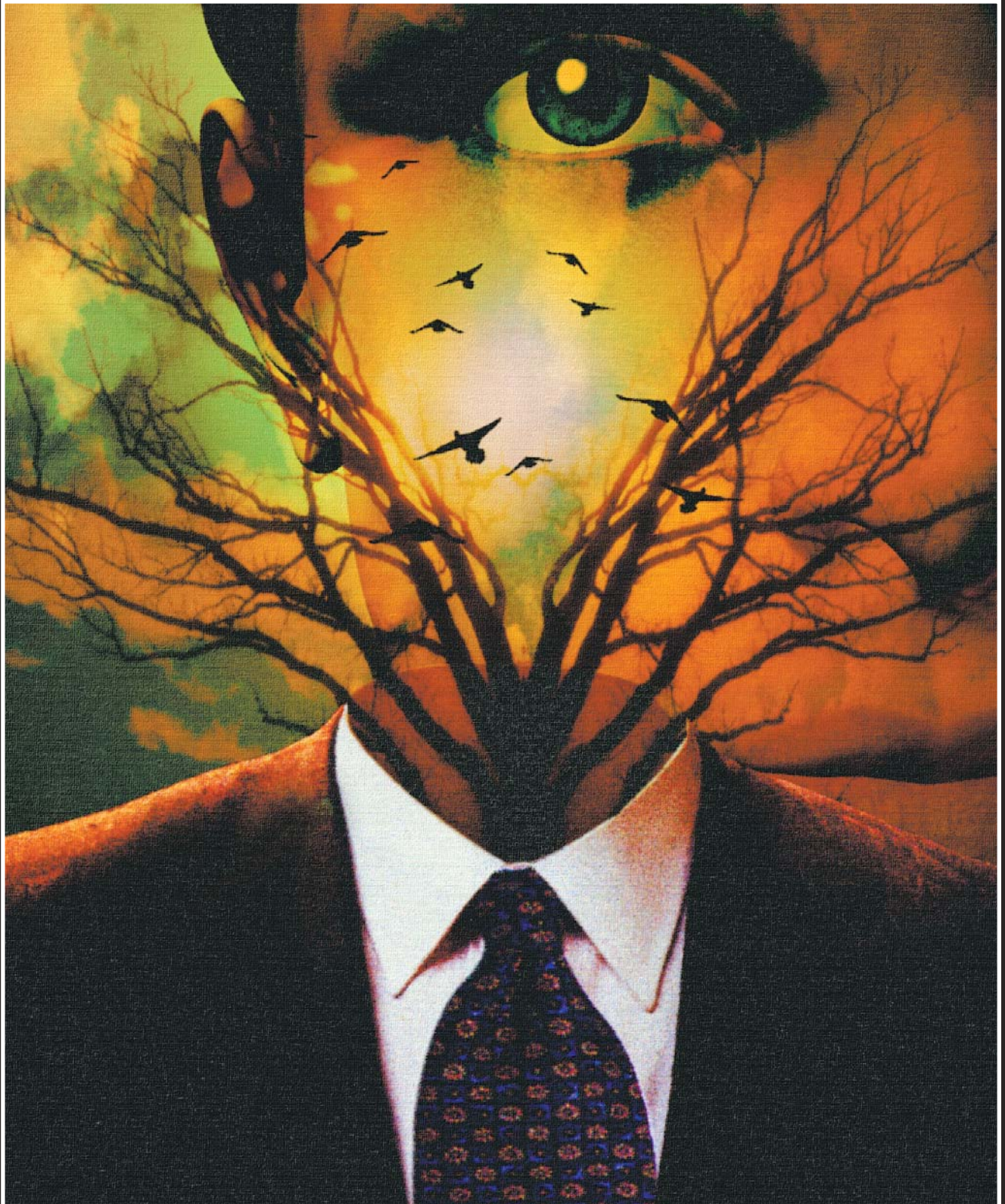


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CHRIST ALONE • GRACE ALONE • FAITH ALONE • SCRIPTURE ALONE



The 'Mystery of Mysteries' Unsolved

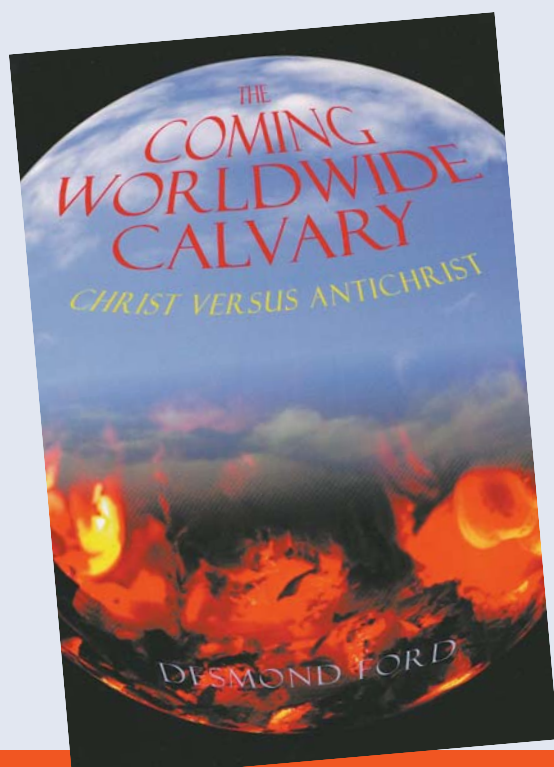
Is Anything Too Hard for the Lord?

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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Editorial

CYRIL LUKAR was born in Crete just a generation after the start of the Protestant Reformation. Being highly intelligent he studied at Venice and Padua in Italy and was attracted to ministry in the Church. He was, however, repulsed by the factional struggles within the Church and the deplorable spiritual condition of the Orthodox priests and church members. In Alexandria and Constantinople he was upset to find that the pulpits used for the reading of the Scriptures had been removed from some churches.

In 1602 Lukar went to Alexandria where he became their bishop. It was then that he began corresponding with reform-minded theologians in Europe, stressing that he wanted to return the Church to evangelical simplicity and to a dependence on the authority of the Bible alone. 'I can no longer endure to hear men say that the comments of human tradition are of equal weight with the Scriptures', he wrote.

In 1620 Lukar was elected Patriarch of Constantinople, but the Jesuits and the all powerful and fearsome papal *Congregation de Propaganda Fide* (Congregation for the Propagation of

the Faith) unmercifully persecuted him. Eventually they succeeded in getting him banished to the island of Rhodes. But when his successor resigned suddenly, Lukar was restored to his former position as Patriarch.

Lukar was determined to use his authority to educate the Orthodox clergy and church members by publishing the Bible and some evangelical tracts in their language. To accomplish this, he arranged through the English ambassador for a printing press to be brought to Constantinople. When the press arrived in June 1627, Lukar's enemies accused him of using it against the Church and had it destroyed. After this setback Lukar asked the Reformers in Geneva to print his literature for him.

The first book that Lukar commissioned was a translation of the Scriptures into modern Greek. A learned monk, Maximus Callipolites, began work on the translation in March 1629. Because the Church believed that the original language of the Bible was sacred, Lukar arranged for the original text and its modern translation to be printed in parallel columns.

In spite of Lukar's precautions, his translation roused a storm of disapproval from many bishops. A statement Lukar made in the preface—that the divine and sacred gospel was the only true source for learning about the Christian faith—particularly upset them.

In 1629 Lukar published his own Confession of Faith, consisting of 18 articles. In that confession he denounced

the veneration of icons and prayers to deceased saints as a form of idolatry. He also claimed that purgatory did not exist in reality, and that Jesus Christ is the sole mediator between God and man.

In 1638 Jesuits and their Orthodox collaborators went to the state and accused Lukar of high treason against the Ottoman Empire, just as the Jews went to the state to accuse Jesus of high treason against the Roman Empire. The Sultan had Lukar arrested on 27th July and taken aboard a boat, as if he were to be banished once again. But once at sea Lukar was strangled and thrown overboard. His body was found a short time later by fishermen, and was buried by his friends.

For the Church to stay alive it must continually experience a series of deaths to everything contrary to the gospel, and resurrections to God's truth as revealed in Jesus. Some Churches, however, refuse to return to their first love, because giving full authority and glory to Jesus would rob the religious leaders of their own authority and glory. When that happens it is time to move on.



Ritchie Way

RITCHIE WAY

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Mission Statement

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



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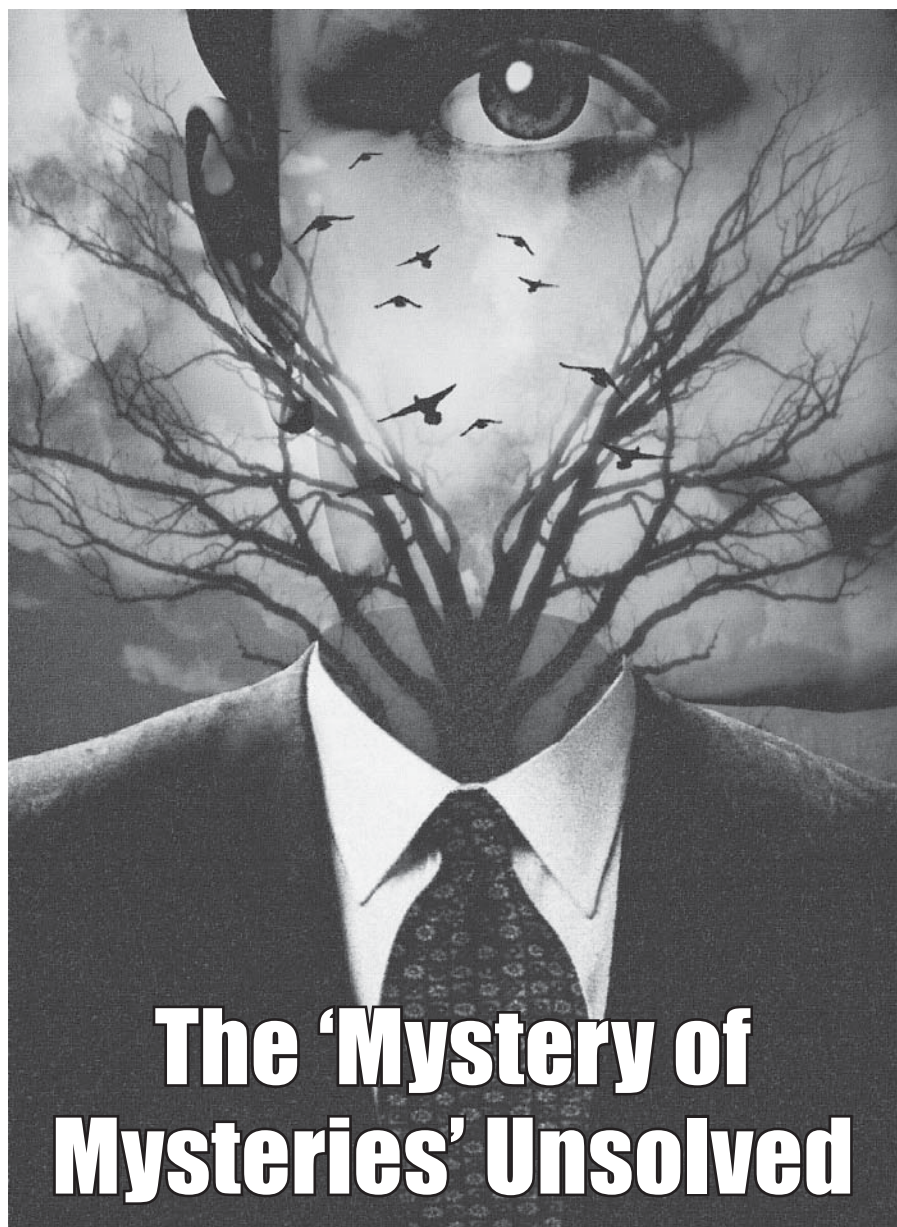
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DESMOND FORD

hominids. It is odd indeed, as Tattersall notes, 'that the most recent major event in human evolution—the emergence of our own species—is perhaps the most obscure of all'. Nobody can ever quite agree where truly modern human first appear in the fossil record.
p.404

Modern human beings show remarkably little genetic variability—'there's more diversity in one social group of fifty-five chimps than in the entire human population', ... we are recently descended from a small founding population.
p.410

Before me is Ian Tattersall's *The Monkey in the Mirror*. I have marked about twenty statements in the book, which would surprise most evolutionary scientists. By the way, Tattersall is no neophyte, but the curator of human evolution at the American Museum of Natural History. He recently won the W.W. Howells prize of the American Anthropological Association. Tattersall, of course, believes in evolution. But it is this fact that makes his concessions so remarkable. For example:

If the transformational notion were accurate, histories of continuity should clearly show up in the structure of the paleontological record. Yet, if the truth be told, the fossils themselves had never really borne out this expectation. Indeed, Darwin himself had been well aware that the record was rife with discontinuities. He had, however, explained away this awkward fact with the now-familiar claim that the expected intermediates had simply not yet been discovered. In Darwin's day, with a much more limited record than we have now, this was at least a tenable proposition. But well over a hundred years and many millions of fossils later, the essential picture has not changed at all. The more we learn of the fossil record, the sharper the image becomes of species as real, bounded units, with births, histories, and deaths. They tend to appear quite suddenly in the record, to persist for varying but often remarkably long periods of time, and then to disappear as abruptly as they had shown up. ... What we don't often see, however, is compelling evidence of the gradual transition of one species into another.
pp.37-38

MOST OF US know that TV documentaries are rarely favourable to Christian belief. Which makes the following words from Richard Leakey, the world's premier paleoanthropologist, the more striking. Read this quotation at least two or three times, remembering that it stands in contrast to earlier dictums from Leakey and most scientists.

If pressed about man's ancestry, I would have to unequivocally say that all we have is a huge question mark. To date, there has been nothing found to truthfully purport as a transitional species to man, including Lucy ... If further pressed, I would have to state that there is more evidence to suggest an abrupt arrival of man rather than a gradual process of evolving.
PBS Documentary, 1990, www.wasdarwinright.com/earlyman-fhtm.

His words, especially about Lucy, are shocking for many. But it is now acknowledged that a good deal less is known about Lucy than usually believed. Even its gender is uncertain. Many who read this are familiar with Bill Bryson's *A Short History of Nearly Everything*. His several statements about human origins are almost as impressive as the one above from Leakey. Here are a few:

Until very recently it was assumed that we were descended from Lucy and the Laetoli creatures, but now many authorities aren't so sure. ... not only was Lucy not our ancestor, she wasn't even much of a walker.
pp.393-394

The first modern humans are surprisingly shadowy. We know less about ourselves, curiously enough, than about almost any other line of

On page 45, Tattersall points out that other prominent paleoanthropologists have commented at length on the fact that the hoped for 'infinite number' (per Darwin) of intermediate species have just not turned up. It is this fact that led to the theory of punctuated equilibrium from Gould and Eldredge.

In my copy of *The Origin of Species*, chapter six, page 351ff., Darwin speaks of the 'countless numbers', the 'innumerable' intermediate links that should exist. Elsewhere he calls that number 'enormous' or 'infinite'. But a century and a half of further research have failed to substantiate his hopes.

On the dust jacket of the first copy of Tattersall's book that I read were the following words:

Evolutionary theory isn't a finite set of conclusions based on overwhelming evidence. It is our evolving effort to make sense out of a handful of incomplete fossil remains.

Precisely!

Distinguished physicist, Gerald L. Schroeder, in his *The Science of God* says:

We may never know the full truth of our origins. No less an authority on evolution than Ernst Mayr, professor emeritus of zoology at Harvard University, former curator of the American Museum of Natural History, and avowed lifelong advocate of Darwinian evolution, has finally come to admit that the origin of our species is a "puzzle" (to use his word) that may never be solved.
p. 127

Mayr has a lot of scientific company. Many have used terms similar to 'puzzle' when discussing the origin of mankind. Consider these lines from Michael Denton, a man I greatly respect, having shared a lecture platform with him a few years ago:

The "mystery of mysteries"—the origin of new beings on earth—is still largely as enigmatic as when Darwin set sail on the Beagle.

Evolution: a Theory in Crisis, p. 359

The same writer continually warns against our natural hubris and reminds us of our ignorance. For example, on page 201 of the same book, he writes:

Even known organisms, despite all we have learned of their physiology, biochemistry, embryology and ecology are still very much black boxes and only a fraction of their total adaptive complexity is understood. We still do not have anything approaching

a complete description of even the simplest bacterial cell.

Denton speaks of 'the universal experience of paleontology' and points out that the most continuous and exhaustive researches 'have never yielded' 'any of Darwin's myriads of transitional forms'. Note that word 'any', for desperate evolutionists insist that there are a few. The few compared with the myriads missing are also not true intermediates. Says Denton on the same page:

'The intermediates have remained as elusive as ever and their absence remains, a century later, one of the most striking characteristics of the fossil record'.
p. 162

Further on he gives evidence for his conclusion that 'the possibility of life arising suddenly on earth by chance—is infinitely small' (p. 323). And again:

'It is surely a little premature to claim that random processes could have assembled mosquitoes and elephants when we still have to determine the actual probability of the discovery by chance of one single functional protein molecule!'.
p. 324



In 1954 George Wald, Nobel Laureate and Harvard University biology professor wrote an article for *Scientific American* claiming that time alone could do what seems impossible—create life.¹ In 1979 the same journal republished the article with a retraction. I quote:

Although stimulating, this article probably represents one of the very few times in his professional life when Wald has been wrong. Examine his main thesis and see. Can we really form a biological cell by waiting for chance combinations of organic compounds? Harold Morowitz, in his book *Energy Flow and Biology* computed that merely to create a bacterium would require more time than the Universe might ever see if chance combinations of its molecules were the only driving force. Schroeder, *Ibid.*, pp. 83-85

This article had its birth when I encountered a book entitled *The Atlas of Past Times* by John Haywood. It is beautifully printed and has much helpful information. But the assumptions about human beginnings in the early pages made me flinch—they are so contrary to paleoanthropological truth as now known. I wish the author had read Thomas Kuhn's book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*—a greatly respected modern classic.

Kuhn points out that science, of necessity, employs a type of shorthand. It comes up with theories, which appear to resolve known facts calling for a resolution. But with the passage of time the current theories proves unsuitable for coping with new information and new insights. The need to change is recognised, but only very slowly fulfilled.

The Bible is not an 'Enquire Within Upon Everything'. It is a book describing the lost estate of humanity, its causes and its cure. Its purpose is not to include what we call science or even history. The science of salvation is its burden, and all its history is tailored to that end. About sixteen centuries ago Augustine warned his fellow Christians not to dogmatise on how God created the world. He believed that, when God created, he miraculously embedded in the first life all its potential for full development in the future. Augustine was not always right, but his warning remains appropriate.

We have much to learn about the beginning of things. Spurgeon and others believed or believe that the Fall of man cast its shadows backwards just as surely as the Cross casts its shadow both backwards and forwards. This is how Spurgeon explained the fossil world. Other thoughtful men including top scientists consider that the fact of a pre-adamic rebel in heaven, the existence of 'the prince of the power of the air', who wrought terrible chaos before the coming of our first parents, explains many otherwise insoluble mysteries. Romans 8:22 may give some support to this view. 'And we know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the presents time' (NIV).

Let us confess that we are but ignorant little children with only a few years here and in desperate need of that which only the gospel can give. And this is the testimony: 'God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life, he who does not have the Son of God does not have life' (1 John 5:11).



ENDNOTES

1. G. Wald, "The Origin of Life," *Scientific American*, August, 1964.

Is Anything Too Hard for the Lord?

'Is anything too hard for the Lord?'

(Gen. 18:14)

RON J. ALLEN

SARAH had laughed when she heard the Lord's messenger say that she would become pregnant and have a son.

The Angel of the Lord was astounded at her response and that is what prompted the question: *'Is anything too hard for the Lord?'* It was the precise negation of Sarah's scepticism. Despite God's original promise to Abram, Sarah had formed a view that she would never know the joy of motherhood, and never be able to raise a son to become her husband's heir. She knew that the time for childbearing had come and gone for her. She must fortify herself with realism now, not far-fetched dreams.

The world has many people who laugh along with Sarah. But if God exists, their so-called realism is tragic. They have shut themselves up to iron fate and cut themselves off from endless possibilities.

Hein Phan was a Vietnamese man who worked as an interpreter for the US army during the war. When the war ended, the communists put him in prison.

Hein was a Christian. Through many years of imprisonment he struggled to maintain his faith in God.

His jailers did their best to indoctrinate him against Christianity. He was not allowed to read anything in English. The only literature he was permitted was Communist propaganda written in French and Vietnamese. This began to take a toll on his mind. His faith began to buckle. 'Maybe I have believed lies', he said to himself. 'Maybe God does not exist. Perhaps I really have been brainwashed by Western propaganda'. He decided that he would no longer think Christian thoughts



when he lay down at night to sleep.

The next day he was assigned to clean the latrines. It was a job that all the prisoners loathed. Filled with revulsion, he began the stinking task. As he was working on a can filled with effluent and paper, he caught sight of a few words of English written on a piece of paper. Carefully he retrieved the

paper from the can and tried his best to wash it clean so he could put it in his pocket. That night when everyone was asleep, he pulled it out and read these words:

And we know in all things God works for the good of those who love him... What then shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but delivered him up for us all, he will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ... who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? No in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (Rom. 8:28-39)

Hein cried. He had not seen a Bible for so long. He gave up his determination to forget God. Next day, he asked his jailers if he could clean the latrines again.

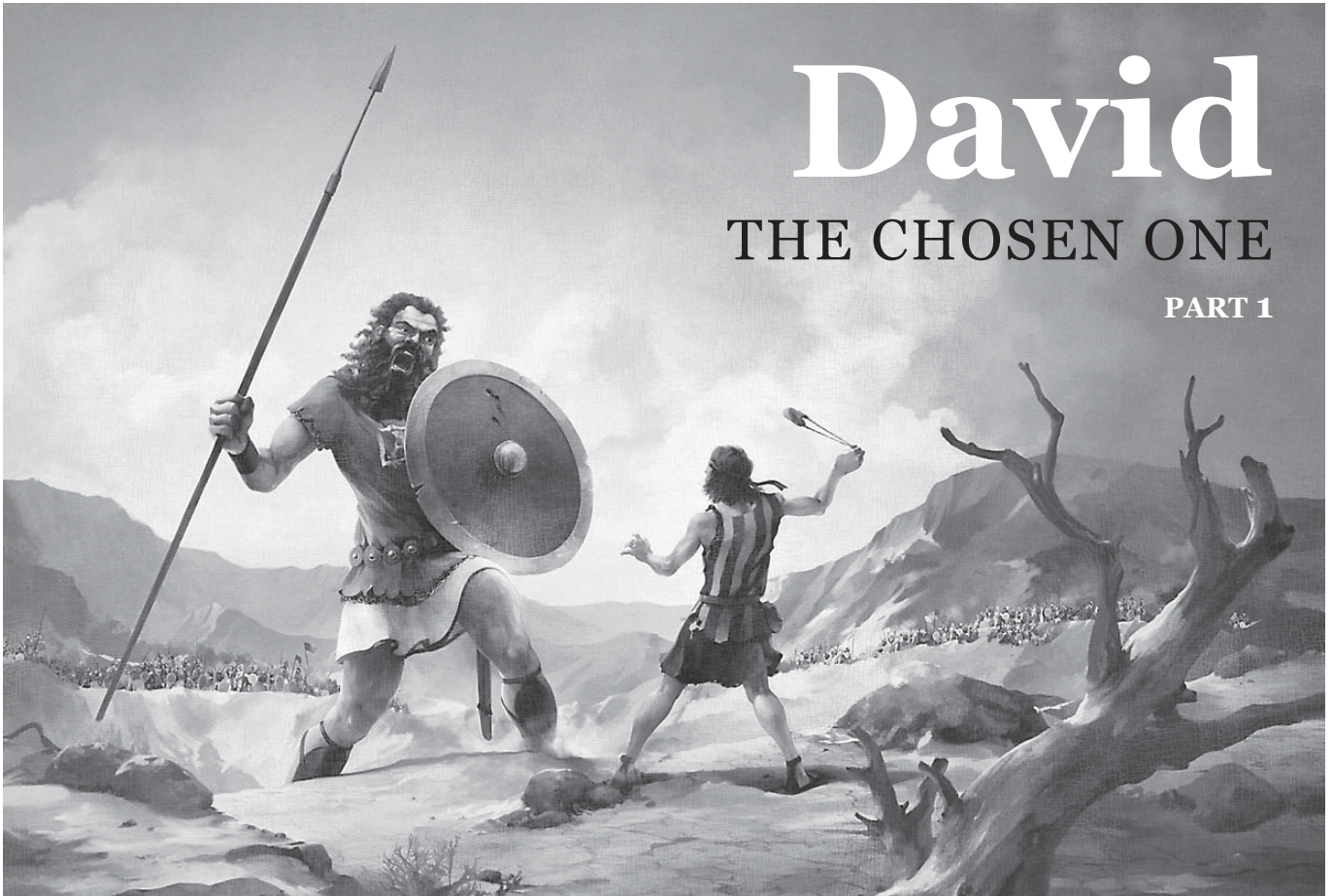
They were a not a little surprised. He searched the cans again and found more pieces of the Bible. One of the officers was using a Bible for toilet paper. Eventually, Hein was released and he escaped to America where he remains a Christian to this day.

Is anything too hard for the Lord? May the faith that this question implies be yours, to your joy. ❄

David

THE CHOSEN ONE

PART 1



The escalating conflicts between the Israelites and the Philistines began about 200 years after Joshua led the Hebrews into Canaan. At that time the Philistines arrived in a great fleet of boats from across the Mediterranean. These people—a mixture of ethnic groups, including tall, fair-skinned, fair-haired, blue-eyed Sea People, and many from Caphtor, i.e., Crete (Jer. 47:4; Amos 9:7)—intended originally to conquer the already developed country of Egypt and live along the Nile River, but the Egyptians, led by Rameses III, repulsed them in a major land and sea battle.

RITCHIE WAY

FOLLOWING their defeat, these Sea Peoples moved north-east and drove the Canaanites out of the area now known as the Gaza Strip and settled there, giving their name—Palestine—to their new country. On land formerly occupied by Canaanite towns they built their five main cities: Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron and Gath. Recent excavations at Ashkelon, Ekron and Gath reveal that the Philistines started building on these sites shortly after 1200 BC.

In the following two centuries both the Hebrew and the Philistine populations increased to the point where there was not enough land for them both. The disputes over a common border resulted in mounting friction between the two peoples. Finally, the Philistines, with their superior iron weapons, invaded the territory of southern Israel and established garrisons of soldiers throughout the

country. They even captured the most sacred object belonging to the Israelites—the ark of the covenant.

The Israelites realised that they would never have much success against the invading Philistines while they were just a loose coalition of twelve tribes. They needed someone like Joshua to unite them and train a proper Israelite army that would match the might of the Philistines.

The man chosen to be the first king of Israel, Saul the son of Kish, was a humble man who stood head and shoulders above other men. Saul was a great leader and won many battles, but the more success he had the more he came to believe in himself, and the less he took notice of God. Saul finally turned his back on the Lord completely, so the Lord commissioned the prophet Samuel to fill his horn with oil and go to Bethlehem to anoint a man who would replace Saul as king of Israel.

Now Samuel lived in Ramah. To get to Bethlehem, just a few hours walk away, he had to pass through Gibeah where Saul lived. Samuel was afraid that Saul would guess what his mission was and would kill him. So the Lord told Samuel to take a heifer with him to offer as a fellowship sacrifice in Bethlehem, and to invite Jesse and his sons to the sacrifice. At that time the Lord would show Samuel which of Jesse's sons would be the new King of Israel.

When Samuel arrived in Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled. Samuel's recent confrontations with Saul had created a great deal of unrest in Israel, and they didn't want to be involved in the fallout. But Samuel told them not to fear because he had come to offer a sacrifice and they were all invited. Samuel also invited Jesse and his sons. After the young cow had been slaughtered, parts of it, including its fat and kidneys, were burned on the altar fire. The rest of the animal was cut up. Some was cooked for a communal meal on site, and the rest was given to the attendees to take home to their families.

While the meat was cooking Samuel asked Jesse to have his sons come and stand before him. The firstborn, Eliab, was a fine-looking man. Samuel thought, 'Surely this is the man the Lord has chosen to be king'.

But the Lord said to Samuel, 'He is not the one. I do 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).

So Jesse called upon his second son, Abinadab, to step forward, but Samuel said he was not the one chosen by the Lord. Then the third son, Shammah, stepped up, but Samuel said he was not the one chosen by the Lord either. And four other sons of Jesse stepped forward, and all four were told the same.

Samuel scratched his head and turned to Jesse. 'Are these *all* the sons you have?' he asked.

'There is one more, the youngest,' replied Jesse. 'His name is David. He is out on the hills caring for the sheep'.

'Bring him to me,' said Samuel. 'We won't sit down to eat until he arrives'.

When David arrived the Lord said to Samuel, 'Rise and anoint him; he is the one'. So Samuel took his horn of oil and poured it on David's head. The Scripture says, 'From that day on the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power'.

Had Samuel told the assembled group that he was anointing David to be Israel's next king, Saul would have had both him and David executed. Samuel therefore held his peace on this matter. He would let David know the significance of his anointing when it was appropriate to do so.



First Samuel 16:7 is a text we hear quoted a lot: 'Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart'.

This was a lesson Jesus emphasised after his baptism in his first sermon. The people who would become citizens of his kingdom would be people who had a heart relationship with the Lord. He said, in effect, 'You people think you are God's chosen ones because you are Jews. Let me remind you that there were lots of Jews who were starving due to the three-and-a-half-year drought in the days of Elijah, but the only ones God sustained belonged to the household of a Canaanite woman who lived in Phoenicia. And there were lots of Jews with leprosy in the days of Elisha the prophet, but the only person God cured of the disease was the military commander, Naaman, who was a Syrian'.

The Jews in the synagogue were so angry with Jesus for pointing out that God favoured Gentiles over them—God's 'chosen people'—they tried to kill Jesus.



David

THE CHOSEN ONE

Which only proved that Jesus was correct, for those who were truly God's people would not murder someone who told them the truth.

But did God favour Gentiles over Jews? Of course not! God favoured those who had a heart for him over those who just assumed the outward appearance of being God's people, believing that by attending religious services they were God's people.

Think, for a moment, about your own relationship with the Lord. Do you read God's Word when you are by yourself? Do you talk to the Lord in prayer every day? If you don't it could be that you are deceiving yourself about your relationship with the Lord. The Lord doesn't judge you by the fact that you belong to a Christian denomination, or that you go to church every week (your outward appearances), but by your heart.

We, too, must not judge anyone by his outward appearance. People we think are not fit for the kingdom of heaven, or do not have the necessary prerequisites for serving God, are often the very ones he chooses. The late Sir Edmund Hilary and Dr. Fred Hollows are the kind of people Jesus praised and welcomed into his kingdom (Matt. 25:31-40). Hilary was a great but humble man. He once said, 'For me, the most rewarding moments have not always been the great moments, for what can surpass a tear on your departure, joy on your return and a trusting hand in yours?' These men were not professing Christians, possibly because they were repulsed by the paedophilia rife in some Churches, the irrelevance of many churches and the moral corruption of

some big-time television evangelists.

Here's a question for you: What outward advantage did Jesus have? He had none at all. If you passed Jesus on the street you wouldn't have looked twice at him. His own brothers saw nothing special in his outward appearance; they did not believe he was the Messiah until he rose from the dead. Only those who got close enough to Jesus to discover the kind of person he was on the inside, realised what an extraordinary individual he was.

You may think you are a nobody in the Lord's sight, but the Lord sees your heart. If your heart is for him, he has plans for you—great plans.

David & Goliath

Scripture says, 'Now the Philistines gathered their forces for war and assembled at Sokoh in Judah' (1 Sam. 17:1), a short distance from Bethlehem. King Saul took his army out and drew up his battleline facing the Philistines, who were gathered on the opposite slope. There was a small valley between the two armies.

The Philistines had a giant of a man in their army, a seasoned warrior called Goliath, who was about three metres tall. He wore armour, head to foot, and carried a spear with a blade that weighed several kilograms. Every day Goliath and his shield bearer would come down into the valley and insult the God of Israel. Goliath would challenge Israel to send out a warrior to fight him. If the Israelite won, the Philistines would be their slaves. But if Goliath won, the Hebrews would be their slaves.

Now Jesse's three oldest boys were soldiers in Saul's army, so Jesse said to David, 'Take 20 litres of roasted grain, and three loaves of bread for your brothers. And here are ten cheeses for the commander of their unit. See how your brothers are getting on and bring back news of what's happening there'.

Early next morning David loaded up and set out as his father had directed. He reached the camp as the army was going out to form a line facing the Philistines. David left his provisions with the quartermaster and ran forward to greet his brothers. As he was talking with them, Goliath from Gath and his shield bearer strode down to the battleline where Goliath shouted his usual insulting and blasphemous defiance at Saul's army.

When David saw and heard this tirade from the Philistine warrior, he asked, 'Who is this uncircumcised Philistine who is defying the armies of Israel? What will be done for the man who kills him and removes this disgrace from Israel?'

They told him that the king would reward him with riches, give him one of his daughters in marriage, and exempt his family from taxes. When David's oldest

brother Eliab heard what David was asking he exploded in a jealous rage.

'What have I done?' protested David. 'Can't I even speak?'

A soldier who overheard David took him to king Saul, who looked David up and down and said, 'But you're only a boy of about 15 or 16 years! This fellow, Goliath is a battle-hardened warrior. You'll be no match for him in fighting skills.'

'Look,' said David, 'when a lion and a bear attacked the sheep I drove them both off. When they turned on me I struck them both down and killed them. This uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them.'

Saul was impressed by David's absolute self-confidence. There was not a doubt in the boy's mind that he could vanquish Goliath just as he had vanquished the would-be predators of his flock.

In the long days of looking after his father's sheep David trained himself to be an expert marksman with the sling. He got to the place where he could set up a pile of rocks, one on another, and then, from a distance, knock them off one at a time. His eye was good and the muscles on his sling arm were well developed.

Saul, the Israelite giant, stroked his beard and sucked in a long breath. He then decided to dress David in his own armour.¹

But David, who wasn't used to the restrictions of movement imposed by the armour, said it would hinder rather than help him, so he took it off.

David then picked up his staff, chose five smooth stones from the brook, each about the size of a hen's egg, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag, and with his sling rolled up in one hand and his staff in the other he strode down into the valley

towards the Philistine.

When Goliath saw him coming, he lifted his visor and snorted, 'Am I a dog that you come to me with a stick? Come here,' he roared, 'and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field.' The Philistine soldiers smiled condescendingly at the Israelite soldiers who looked exceedingly nervous.

David called back to Goliath, 'You come to me with a sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. Today the Lord is going to hand you over to me.'

As the Philistine strode forward to attack him, David ran quickly towards the battleline to meet him. Taking a stone from his bag as he ran, he fitted it into his sling and slung it at the Philistine with all his might. It hit the Philistine between the eyes and penetrated his skull. Goliath staggered and fell face forward onto the ground. His shield bearer threw away his shield and fled as David yanked Goliath's sword from its scabbard and used it to decapitate the giant.

When the Philistines saw their giant was dead, and his shield bearer racing towards them, they turned and fled. Israel surged after them, and slaughtered them all the way back to the gates of Gath and Ekron.



Jesus was a true son of David. Like David he never lost a battle. He, who did not have a formal education, came up against the doctors of law from the Sanhedrin. Jesus had come to claim back the territory that this corrupt religious institution had stolen from God, and he was having a lot of success in his mission. Because the people were forsaking the temple and flocking to Jesus, the Jewish leaders decided to assemble their best theologians to deal with the upstart Nazarene once and for all.

Dragging a woman, they approached Jesus who was teaching in the temple courtyard. Shoving her into Jesus' presence they declared that they had caught her in the act of committing adultery, and, according to the law, Moses commanded that such women should be stoned to death. 'Now what do you say about that?' they demanded of him.

Jesus smelt a rat. Moses not only commanded that the adulterous woman be executed, but also the adulterous man (Lev. 20:10). So where was the man? It was obviously a setup. Jesus knew that if he said, 'Let her be stoned to death,' the common people would forsake him. On the other hand, if he contradicted Moses and said she should be given another chance, he would be exposed as someone who went against the sacred Scriptures.



Jesus was a David facing the Goliath of the Sanhedrin. They were determined to crush him once and for all. Just as David bent down to pick up some sling stones so Jesus bent down for his ammunition. He wrote in the dust of the temple courtyard. The nearest Pharisee to him was Simon ben Zadok, so Jesus wrote the man's name, and after the name he wrote a place and time. He was about to write more when ben Zadok nervously gathered his robes about himself and said, with a cough as he departed, that he had another appointment he needed to attend to.

Jesus then smoothed the dust with a sweep of his hand and wrote the name of the next man who was looking over his shoulder, Joses of Emmaus. After the name he wrote a place and time. Joses, on seeing this, blushed deeply and asked to be excused, for he had just remembered that he was listed to go on duty in the temple. Jesus then stood and said, 'If any of you is without sin, let him be the first to stone this woman.' One by one Jesus let these men know—in a way that didn't expose their sin to others—that they were no better than the woman they were condemning, and, one by one, they departed until only Jesus and the accused woman remained.

Jesus straightened up and asked the woman, "Where are your accusers? Is there no-one left to condemn you?" "No-one sir," she replied.

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin" (John 8:10,11)

The Pharisees lived by law, but the law can only condemn. Jesus came with forgiving grace. He did not come to condemn the world, but to save the world. He is our David who brought down the giant of condemnation that threatened us all.

What about you?

Do you feel that God has called you to do something special for him? Then you must be like David and spend some time every day developing your skills. When you are ready God will anoint you for service. Be like the young Abe Lincoln who wrote, 'I will study; I will prepare myself so that when my time comes I will be ready'. And he was.

Only one person in a million is able to go forth and slay a Goliath, but there is no reason why that person can't be you, if you make yourself ready. ❄️

ENDNOTES

1. David would need to have been either 15 or 16 to be able to wear Saul's armour.

How does God treat Sinners?



SANTO CALARCO

WAS GOD punishing Adam and Eve when he evicted them from the Garden of Eden? Many think this is exactly what God was doing.

I would like to challenge this assumption, because there is a better way of understanding this story. You see, many read this story through lenses that present God in a harsh light. If you believe God is punitive then this will determine what you will see in this story. But let's take another look at the Fall. First of all we read that God came down into the Garden in the cool of the evening as he normally did.

There is nothing in the text that says that God was angry. Nothing! God never said to Adam, 'The day you eat from that tree I will kill you!' God simply stated consequences: 'The day you eat from the tree you will die.' And that is what happened. By rejecting God's Spirit, Adam died spiritually that day—he lost his immortality.

We read that Adam became scared and hid himself from God. Note that it was Adam who changed, not God! Specifically, it was Adam's idea about God that had changed. He thought God was now angry. Why else did he hide himself from the Lord? Why else was he scared? Sin, in separating Adam from God, had left him marred and scarred. He tried to deal with his spiritual nakedness by covering it with his own efforts, but they were just inadequate fig leaves. He was now acting independent of God. He hid and sought to cover his shame, but God came seeking his lost son.

Adam presented God with a cover up, but God came with a costly gift. God provided Adam with a spiritual covering

made of an animal skin—a skin that cost the life of the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world (Gen. 3:21; Rev. 13:8). A garment obtained only by the shedding of blood now covered man's sinfulness.

But why did God have to remove Adam from the Tree of Life? Wasn't that a punishment? Your assumptions about God will determine your conclusions. Let us look at the story again.

God in his love warned his children not to eat from the tree of good and evil. He knew that serious consequences would follow, and God did not want them to hurt themselves. We need to remember that God, in essence and in nature, is pure love (1 John 4:8). Love does not coerce. Love not only allows, but also protects the right of human choice. To impose your will upon another person is to violate that person. Using love, God acted in harmony with his nature and provided his children with human will and choice. As an act of love, God provided the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, in order to give his children the loving right to not choose him.

When we love we take huge risks. This is the nature of love. If this tree were not there, they would never have had a choice—and that would have been contrary to the nature and heart of God, who is love. As the story goes, Adam chose independence from God, and began immediately to experience its consequences. Fear, guilt and shame replaced his former loving relationship with the Lord. Sin resulted in him having a marred view of God's nature. And that view has been passed on to all his offspring.

The only solution to man's perverted understanding of God was in God himself.

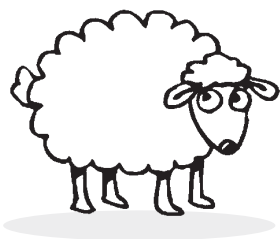
God promised to deal with this crisis in a permanent way. He would send his Seed to reveal the heart of the Father, and to permanently deal with Satan and sin (Col. 2:15; Heb. 9:26, 28).

So, if God was a loving God, why did he remove Adam from the Garden? He did it out of kindness, because if they retained access to the tree of life, they would have lived forever (Gen. 3:22).

Imagine living in a morally and physically sick world forever? Imagine being trapped in an unhealthy relationship forever. Imagine being ruled over by a corrupt and heartless dictator forever. Imagine what it would be like if Adolf Hitler had unrestricted access to the Tree of Life? God gives us sufficient time to choose whether we want to stay in this world, as did the felon crucified on Jesus' left—or to get back into Paradise, as did the felon who was crucified on Jesus' right. That's the choice that presents itself to all of us—this world with its guilt and shame, or paradise and the peace that is beyond comprehension.

The grace that existed in Jesus Christ before the beginning of time (2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 1:19-20) has been revealed to us in Jesus. Jesus came to undo sin and its consequences. Through the doing and dying of Jesus, the believing family of Adam has been restored and placed back within the circle of God's love.

Sin entered the world through a tree, but so did sin's solution. The first Adam ate from one tree and the last Adam was nailed to another. The fruit of the latter tree gives eternal life to us who partake of it. The life of those who eat of the tree of life is not only unending, it is also very good. ❄

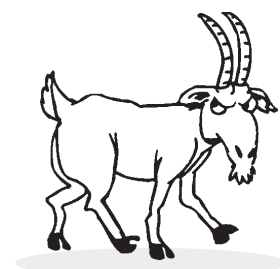


Parables 21

Sheep

• AND •

Goats



OUR PARABLE for this month is the story of the Sheep and Goats recorded in Matthew 25:31-46. Jesus says, 'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.'

Up until the age of 16, I lived and worked on a farm. Often the animals were put into the yards and sent down a narrow race with a gate at the far end, where they were separated into one pen or the other. The best were kept for breeding stock, while the rest would be sent to the freezing-works.

When Jesus comes back he will separate 'all the nations' as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. What will be the basis of this separation? Why will he keep some but reject the others?

Will he divide people by their beliefs? Will he say, 'If you understand the prophecy of the 2300 evenings and mornings you

go to the right; if you don't you go to the left?' If you believe the truth about the age of the Earth, join those on the right; if you don't then it's the left turn for you?' I don't read of any of these categories in this parable.

Will he divide people by the denomination they belong to? If you are a Catholic then you go this way; if you are a Protestant then it's that way. Or if you are an evangelical this is your exit, but if you are a charismatic you go out that way. I don't read any those categories either.

What about ethnicity, gender, status or fame? None of these things determine

whether a person is in or out of favour with the Lord.

Actually, there is only *one* thing that separates the sheep from the goats. Jesus separates those who came to his aid when he was in need, from those who turned their backs on him. 'But when did we see you in need?', they will ask. 'I tell you the truth', he replied, 'whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me' (Matt. 25:40).

Who then are Jesus' brothers? Read Matthew 10:40; Mark 3:35 and John 13:20 for some categories. Who are *the least* of Jesus' brothers? They are those at the bottom—the most vulnerable and despised. They are the children (Matt. 18:5), his struggling witnesses, the prisoners, the strangers, the sick, the naked and the starving (Matt. 25:35-37).

Therefore, do unto others as if you were serving Jesus himself. This kind of witness reveals your relationship with the Lord. Those who do this will be welcomed into the kingdom and given an inheritance that will never fade away.



JOHN C. LENNOX

Seven Days That Divide the World

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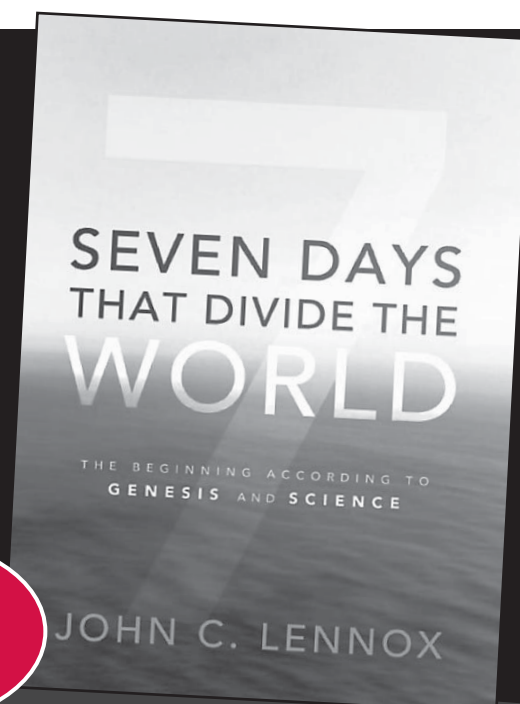
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Christianity 101 Part 10: **Baptism**

RITCHIE WAY

THE WORD 'BAPTISM' isn't an English word at all; it's a Greek word. All the other Greek words in the New Testament were translated into English, so why wasn't this one? A long time ago, when the New Testament was being translated into English, the religious authorities of the time did not want people to know what baptism meant, so they didn't translate the word 'baptism', in order to keep people ignorant of its true meaning.

'Why would they want to do that?' you ask. It was because the church at that time was 'baptising' babies by sprinkling water on their heads. If the word baptism were translated into English the people would know that such a practice was wrong.

So what is the English translation of the word 'baptism'? Baptism means 'immersion'. It was a commonly used word in Jesus' day. If a woman was dyeing a piece of cloth she would 'baptise' it, that is, she would immerse it in the dye.

In Acts 8:26-40 there is the story about the man who was the Treasurer for Queen Candace of ancient Nubia. He was reading Isaiah 53 as he was travelling home from Jerusalem in his chariot. On the road he met Philip who 'began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus' (Acts 8:35). The Bible says:

As they travelled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptised [immersed]?" And he ordered the chariot to stop. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptised [immersed] him. (Acts 8:36-38)

John the Baptist baptised people in the Jordan river near Aenon, 'because there was plenty of water' there (John 3:23). A lot of water is required for immersion.

The meaning of baptism

In baptism a person is lowered beneath the surface of the water, and then raised back up again. This signifies death (being buried under water where breathing is not possible), and resurrection (being raised up from death). No person gets into the water and baptises himself, because no person can bury himself after death, nor raise himself up to life again. That is why a new believer is always baptised by someone else.

Your baptism shows, first of all, that your



assurance of eternal life is totally in Jesus who died for your sins, was buried, and rose again from the dead. This is the pure gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-4). You have 'been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead' (Col. 2:12).

Second, you show, when you are baptised, that you are dying to Satan's kingdom and are being raised up to a new life in Jesus' kingdom. Your old nature is being buried, and your new nature rises up to eternal life.

All of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death. We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. (Rom. 6:3-4)

Third, you show when you are baptised, that if you die physically in Jesus, he will raise you up from the dead on the Last Day (John 6:40) and give you a body like his own (Php. 3:20-21).

Baptism thus covers the whole spectrum of our Christian experience from beginning to end. First, it points to your being made right with God through what Jesus did for you in his own death and resurrection in the past. Second, it points to the work of the Holy Spirit in you at the present

time—putting to death your old nature and resurrecting a new one. Third, it points to the future, when Jesus comes again, at which time your dying body will be replaced with a new one that is fit for the kingdom of heaven (1 Cor. 15:50-54).

Are we baptised into Jesus or into the Church?

Are we baptised into Jesus, or into the Church? The Bible says we are 'baptised into Christ Jesus' (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27), and into the body of Christ, which is the church (1 Cor. 12:13, 27). This means that baptism seals our relationship with both Jesus and his family—the Church. Just as marriage seals the relationship and commitment of two people to each other, so baptism signifies that we are making a lifelong commitment to Christ and his worldwide family.

Who should be baptised?

Jesus commissioned his disciples with these words:

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. (Matt. 28:19-20)

According to this passage, a person who is to be baptised must be capable of learning and obeying everything Jesus commanded. This would suggest that the person being baptised should be old enough to understand what is taught. Furthermore, baptism should not be administered to people who have not personally repented of their sins and made a commitment to Jesus (Acts 2:38). This would naturally exclude small children. It is significant that Jesus himself was not baptised until he was about thirty years of age (Luke 3:21-23).

The Gentile jailer in Philippi and his family, who were baptised after accepting Jesus as Lord, were each old enough to believe in Jesus (Acts 16:25-34). And they were also baptised within a few hours of accepting Jesus as Lord.

Some Christians like to teach baptismal candidates 'everything' before baptism. While this is not wrong, there is a tendency with this method to understand that the candidate is being baptised into a doctrinal system rather than into Christ.

Care should be taken to ensure that the candidate's first allegiance must always be to Jesus.

Who does the baptising?

Jesus left the baptising to his disciples (John 4:2), and, where possible, Paul chose to let his co-workers do all the baptising (1 Cor. 1:14-16). The Ethiopian official was baptised by Philip, a deacon in the early church. So, who does the baptising? Anyone who has the support and approval of their church may baptise.

It would be good for the church to follow the example set in Acts 8:35-38, where the person who brings someone to the Lord, is the person who either baptises them or assists in their baptism. This, however, is not a prescription for all baptisms, just a description of what happened on that occasion.

There is no set law on this matter; each church must decide for itself, and each member must be obedient to his church's rules regarding baptism.

After baptism

Just as Jesus lay down his carpenter's tools and took up his ministry for the Lord after his baptism, so each person baptised is expected to become a full-time witness for the Lord Jesus wherever they are and whatever work they are engaged in.

These newly baptised Christians should also join a Home Group so that they will become 'strengthened in the faith' (Col. 2:6-7) and become equipped to share their faith with others (1 Pet. 3:15-16).

To assist them in their witness and spiritual growth, the elders should place their hands on each person who is baptised, and pray for them to be filled with God's Spirit (e.g. Acts 8:16-17; 19:5-6). ❄

Good News Unlimited magazines in 2013

AS YOU will have noted, the *Good News Unlimited* magazines now have a fresher format and appeal. Next year we will be making the magazines available on-line, for which there will be a small subscription fee. We will let you know when this facility becomes available.

The Board of *Good News Unlimited* has also decided to produce just twelve magazines each year instead of the usual sixteen. There will be eight *Good News Unlimited* magazines and four *Good News for Adventists* magazines.

We are doing this to keep our costs down and to reduce handling. Readers, however, will not be deprived, as we shall increase the size of each magazine to compensate. We shall also look at the possibility of making all the GNU magazines available to Apple ibooks, Apple Newsstand, and Kindle, etc.

Your suggestions about what we else we should do to keep up with rapidly changing technology and your prayers for the success of these ventures would be appreciated.

You will be pleased to hear that there will be regular articles by Dr. Desmond Ford, Pastor Ron Allen, Smuts Van Rooyen and Dr. Milton Hook. Other articles of interest and significance, sourced (with permission) from other publications, will appear from time to time.

Readers will be asked to pay an annual subscription charge of \$A36.00, which will make our magazine one of the cheapest on the market today—just \$3.00 per issue, including handling and postage. You will receive annual reminders when your subscription is due.

If you have other suggestions that would improve the contents and availability of our magazine please email them to: editor@goodnewsunlimited.org.au

2012 Seminars Remaining!

BALLINA SEMINAR

3 November 2012, from 10:00am to 4:00pm

Venue: Ballina Island Motor Inn
Pacific Highway, Ballina NSW 2478

Speakers: **Pastor Ron Allen:**
Stern of Face and Unrelenting of Heart—Lessons from Stephen versus the Sanhedrin.

Pastor Doug Martin:
The Living, Creative Word—Logos.

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 to 4:30pm, led by **Dr Desmond Ford.**

RON ALLEN FELLOWSHIP

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

Dates for the remainder of 2012 are as follows:

17 November

1 and 15 December

Succeeding at Work

PASTOR IAN

WORK dominates our lives. If you are a typical Aussie or Kiwi, you'll spend about 106,000 hours, or about 30 percent of the waking hours of your life, at work.

You'll spend more time *working*, *thinking* about work and *commuting* to work than you do eating, relaxing and holidaying *combined*.

Since work comprises such a major component of your life, God wants you to succeed in it. In fact, he's ready to help you out. In the Bible God offers this guarantee:

'Commit your work to the Lord, then it will succeed' (Prov. 16:3 LB).

What does it mean to 'commit your work to the Lord'? How do you do it?

There are four specific steps:

1 SEEK GOD'S DIRECTION

Ask Him to guide you everyday—in your planning, your organising, your decision making, your implementing and in relating to everyone with whom you come in contact. 'The Lord is pleased when good people pray' (Prov. 15:8 GN).

2 SHARPEN YOUR SKILLS

Be the best you can be for God's glory. Never stop learning. Look for ways to cultivate the talents He has given you. 'If your axe is dull, and its edge unsharpened, more strength is needed, but skill will bring success' (Eccl. 10:10).

3 STAY POSITIVE IN YOUR ATTITUDE

Refuse to be infected by the worrying, the complaining or the laziness of others. Remember, enthusiasm comes from the Greek words '*en theos*', which means 'in God'. 'In all the work you are doing, work the best you can.

Work as if you were doing it for the Lord, not for people' (Col. 3:23 NCV).

4 SHARE YOUR PROFITS

If you are serious about committing your work to God so that He can bless it, then God expects you to demonstrate your commitment by tithing your income. 'Honor the Lord by giving him the first part of all your income, and he will fill your barns ...to overflow' (Prov. 3:9-10 LB).

These are the conditions that provide God's blessing on your work. ❄

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DID YOU KNOW #36

Giants

THERE ARE several references in the Bible to men who by today's standards were exceptionally tall, large-framed and powerful.

Prior to the Hebrew invasion of Canaan, spies were sent through the land to check it out. On their return they reported seeing Nephilim there who were so big the Hebrews felt like grasshoppers beside them (Num. 13:33).

The giants the Israelites confronted when they tried to enter Canaan through Moab were called Rephaim or Rephaites (Deut. 2:20-21). These Rephaites are mentioned in Genesis 14:5; 15:20, and the valley where they lived was named after them (2 Sam. 5:18; 1 Chron. 14:9 and Isa. 17:5). The last of this race was Og, King of Bashan, whose iron bedstead was four metres long and 1.8 metres wide (Deut. 3:11; Jos. 13:12).

The most famous of all giants was the three-metre-tall Goliath of Gath, who was slain by David in a one-on-one combat (1 Sam. 17:40-51). A few years later Goliath's brother, Lahmi, was slain by one of David's men (1 Chron. 20:5).

The descendants of the Philistine giant, Rapha, one of whom had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, were slain by David's army in battle (2 Sam. 21:15-22), thus bringing to an end the era of these giants. ❄

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Ritchie Way

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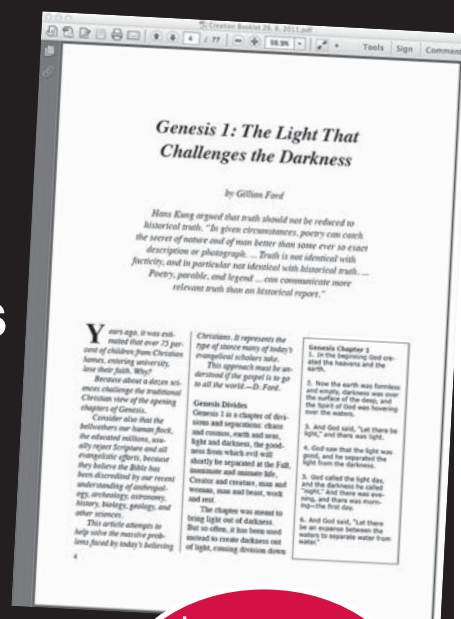
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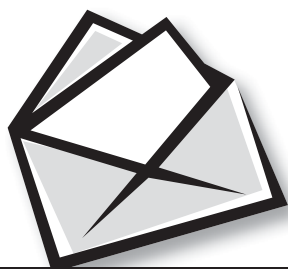
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Letters from Readers

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.



MOSES' DEATH

Dear Editor,

I have always understood that Deuteronomy was a book that was written by Moses. But if it were, who wrote chapter 34, which records the death and burial of Moses in the valley of Moab? Surely not Moses! And if not Moses, is chapter 34 a legitimate part of Scripture?

C. C.

Ritchie's Reply

Dear C.,

Some say Moses could have written it himself had God revealed the end to him, but this is very unlikely because the Scripture says, 'to this day no-one knows where his grave is' (Deut. 34:6). The phrase, 'to this day' indicates this final chapter was written some time after Moses' death.

The fact that Moses didn't write chapter 34 does not disqualify this chapter from being a legitimate part of Scripture, because we have no idea who wrote Judges, Ruth, Kings, Chronicles, Esther, Job, Jonah, or the book of Hebrews, yet they all qualify as Scripture.



WHO ARE THE CAPTIVES?

Dear Ritchie,

When Paul wrote of Jesus' ascension to the Father he said, 'When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive...' (Eph. 4:8). Who are the captives mentioned in this verse?

G. D.

Ritchie's Reply

Dear G.,

Paul was quoting from Psalm 68:8: 'When you ascended on high, you led captives in your train...'. While there are as many different interpretations of this verse as there are commentators, my intuition tells me that the 'captivity' spoken of here in Ephesians is the captivity of death that held everyone captive until Jesus burst the bonds

of death by rising from the grave. So instead of being a captive of death, Jesus took death as his captive in his triumphal return to the Father. It is possible that he took with him some saints who were raised from the captivity of death at the time of his death and resurrection (Matt. 27:50-53), as tokens of his victory over death.



ADDICTIONS

Dear Pastor,

I know you have addressed the issue of addictions before, but it's such a terrible tragedy I don't think we will ever plumb the depths of this seemingly bottomless pit.

We have a daughter who has been addicted to drugs of various kinds for over a decade and it grieves us to notice that, although she is a pleasant enough person to have in the home, her world is so limited. And she refuses to widen it in any way. She is addicted in almost every facet of her life, to those things that will give her the stimulation she craves. In fact, her world is so small she is almost a non-person. She lives on an unemployment benefit, which does not motivate her to find work for herself. We are at our wit's end to know what to do with her. If my husband or I died I would really fear for her future. The only way she can handle stress or pain is to take more drugs.

We pray for her every day, but are getting discouraged because nothing is happening—there is no change in her life. She is not a Christian, and won't read the Bible 'because it doesn't stimulate her'. What can we do?

H. C.

Ritchie's Reply

Dear H.,

My heart really goes out to you and your husband. Those who peddle or sell drugs that wreck the lives of millions will tremble in the Judgement to come. There will be many on that Day who will accuse them of having a part in destroying their lives, and who will demand recompense.

One of the main problems with many addicts is that their lives are so empty they seek artificial stimulants to give them a buzz. But these same stimulants make them very insecure, so insecure in fact that they cocoon themselves from the world's problems. They avoid stressful situations by refusing to make the hard decisions that are necessary if they are to break out of their tiny box into a wider world. And so their maturity is shackled and they cease growing. They are like the man who was given a single talent but who buried it.

I wish I could offer you some comfort, but sin is so awful that even the Lord Jesus was unable to help certain people. But as parents you must never give up praying for your daughter. You also need to be firm with her while she is living with you, and demand some accountability from her. This firmness, while challenging, will also ensure her of your love. She should do her share of the home duties, and should be reducing her intake of drugs every month.

God bless and support you.



TRUE INSPIRATION

Pastor Ritchie,

Your Christian magazine is a true inspiration. I found it one day at the shoe repair shop in the Horsham Plaza. I pass them on to my special friend, Sue, whom I have known for quite a while. (Please forgive my spelling as I am a Latvian, and my English is self-taught).

I hope and pray that this will lift your spirit, brother in Christ. You are doing a good job with the magazine.

I. G.

Ritchie's Reply

Dear I,

Thank you for your encouraging letter. It is really appreciated.

God bless you in your spiritual life, and may every day see you walking closer to the Lord Jesus.

Your friend in Jesus.



WHO IS MICHAEL?

Hi Ritchie,

I have a question regarding Michael. It is something I am looking into at the moment, and am interested to know your opinion. My relative still thinks that Michael is Jesus, but I am not so sure any more.

N.J.

Ritchie's Reply

Hi N.,

The original references to Michael are found in Daniel. Chapter 12:1 speaks of the great time of tribulation that would occur after the rising up of Michael. It is a tribulation that will divide people, but the saints would be delivered from it.

This passage applies to both the first and second advents, with its major emphasis on the second.

Verse 13 of chapter 12 refers to the time when Daniel would arise [from the grave] to receive his 'allotted inheritance'. The words that are used of Daniel arising from the grave are exactly the same words that are used of Michael rising up—the only clear reference in the Old Testament to the resurrection of Jesus. Michael [Jesus] inaugurated God's victory over death; the resurrection of the saints will consummate it.

Blessings.

(night) when little else was happening in their lives. This meant that they knew the night sky very well. So when a new star appeared in the sky it was a matter of great significance.

The fact that it appeared in the constellation that they believed signified Israel, and the fact that the Jews living in their country—Jews who remained behind after the captivity—said it indicated the birth of the Messiah/King (Num. 24:17-19), was enough for them to send a delegation to Jerusalem to establish good relationships with this King, who was so important his birth had been foretold in the sacred Scriptures. God led them to the Messiah by 'speaking' to them in terms of their own understanding.



HELPING THE NEEDY

Dear Pastor Ritchie,

Jesus said, in Luke 6:30, 'Give to everyone who asks you'. But if we did that we would be fair game for every conman and homeless alcoholic. Besides, Paul said, 'If a man will not work, he shall not eat' (2 Thes. 3:10). What are we supposed to do when confronted by such unworthy people who ask for money, because I certainly get my share of them?

S.R.

Ritchie's Reply

Dear S.,

I have been conned by such as you describe, more than once. Addicts will beg for money to buy food or a bottle



ASTROLOGY

Dear Ritchie,

Why does the Bible commend the Wise Men for following the star to Bethlehem when Isaiah 47:13-15 condemns astrology outright?

P.S.

Ritchie's Reply

Dear P.,

The people of the east were some of the world's best astronomers of that time. It is true that their beliefs about the nature of the stars was imperfect, and even erroneous, and that they attributed false powers to these heavenly bodies. They were, however, able to navigate by the stars, predict the seasons by the stars, and foretell eclipses, etc. Living in a land without light pollution, such as we have in our towns and cities today, and few clouds to obscure their view of the heavens, they had a mostly unrestricted view of the heavens at times of the day

of milk, but will spend it on smokes or alcohol, etc. If they genuinely look as though they need a feed buy food for them, but it's unwise to give them money. They get their pension or benefit just as you and I do.

When Jesus said, 'Give to everyone who asks you', he was expecting you to use your brains. Would you give a loaded gun to a child who asks you? Or your credit card PIN number to a stranger?

There are people out there who make a profession of conning people out of their money. They have very plausible stories, but if you don't know them personally, be very, very careful how you respond to their requests.

I know one retired man, here in my city, who mortgaged his home to help a 'desperate' person he had never met. There were promises that he would be repaid handsomely for his generosity. When he eventually came to the painful realisation that he had been conned out of his money he had to return to work in order to keep his home.

When genuine people in your neighbourhood or family are down on their luck and need help, be the first to respond. On those occasions let your generosity be evident. But, as Paul cautions, don't encourage layabouts with handouts.

Ritchie.



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Genesis

and the Age of the Earth Revisited

Drs Desmond Ford and Michael Denton



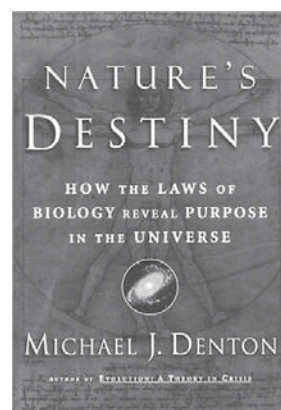
Dr Michael Denton is a Senior Research Fellow in Human Genetics in the Biochemistry Department at the University of Otago in New Zealand.

In 1985, as an evolutionist, he wrote the controversial book *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*. He stated, 'I think the current Darwinian picture is insufficient. I do not think it gives a credible and comprehensive explanation of how the pattern on life emerged'. His book exposed readers to the 'overwhelming scientific problems of Darwinian belief'.

Dr Denton studied medicine at Bristol University and developmental biology at King's College, London University, where he gained a PhD in 1974. He trained in Pathology at the Post-Graduate Medical School, London, and at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto. He has held university lectureships in Sydney and Melbourne.

For many years his main research focus has been on the genetics of human retinal disease. He has had a long interest in evolution, and in his book *Nature's Destiny* (Free Press, New York, 1985), he defended the position that the laws of nature are fine-tuned for life as it exists on earth. [Dr. Denton's books are available on www.amazon.com.]

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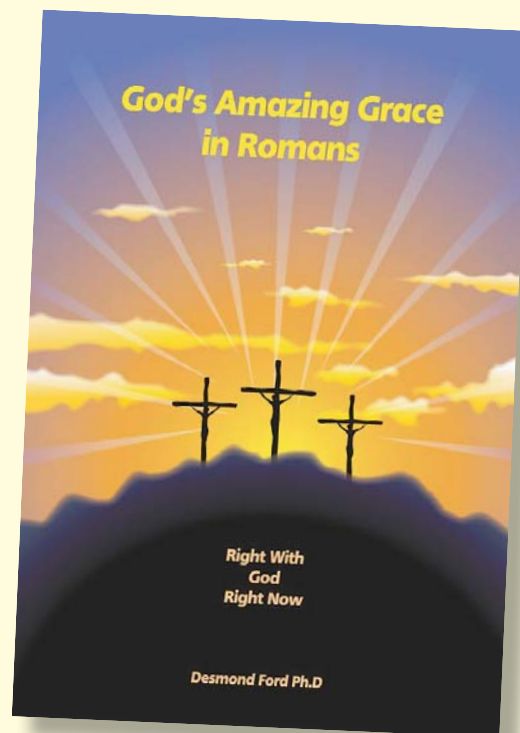
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The heart of the gospel is
forgiveness. Jesus' last
words to his disciples were:
'Repentance and forgiveness
of sins will be preached in
my name to all nations ...'

— (Luke 24:46).