

The British and European Supplement  
to

# The Good News

November/December 2000

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The Biblical Verdict

## Does History Repeat Itself?

*At a time when frightening trends in world conditions require awareness, alertness and the soberest contemplation, millions are dozing not only in the British Isles, but in Europe and around the world. The masses also slept serenely at the time of Noah's flood – apparently totally unaware of an impending calamity. Will history repeat itself in this modern age?*

A sleepy student did not know the answer to a simple question in a history class on a lazy summer afternoon in 1956. The patient lecturer calmly waited. Finally an answer came forth. 'I think you'll find, sir,' he blurted out, 'that history repeats itself'. The whole class erupted in laughter.

You've probably heard the phrase all your life. Like a proverb or truism, people usually use it to sum up a strange turn of present events which also occurred in bygone days. Or the question itself is merely debated as an academic exercise.

But does history, indeed, repeat itself? The question bears some deep thinking and sober analysis. It forces us to consider the past and to consult reliable sources. And most importantly to ask, what does the Bible say about this question?

Clearly order and repetition are indigenous to the creation. The first chapter of Genesis shows God bringing order out of chaos. Although He is not the author of confusion, God did make human creatures with independent minds who could and did think for themselves. They were even able to take

decisions contrary to their Creator's will and against their own best interests.

### Understanding repetitive patterns

We should take careful note of how the nations of central Europe are behaving – and how patterns in the rise and fall of empires have occurred again and again. The Bible itself sets great store on comprehending the repetitive character of human behaviour. Jesus Christ understood it very well. He soberly reflected on trends and conditions before the time of Noah's flood and plainly stated: 'As it was in the days of Noah, so will it be when the Son of Man comes' (Matthew 24:37, Revised English Bible).

As the British New Testament scholar William Barclay expresses it in his translation: 'What happened at the time of Noah will happen all over again when the Son of Man comes.' But exactly how will history repeat itself when Jesus Christ returns to this earth? Are we to experience another disastrous flood that will wipe out humanity?

No, we have a solemn legal promise from God that no flood

will ever again occur on such a gigantic scale (see Genesis 9:8-17).

So what then did Jesus Christ mean? Continue the story: 'In the days before the flood they ate and drank and married, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away. That is how it will be when the Son of Man comes' (Matthew 24:38-39).

Christ was talking about rather easily discernible patterns in human nature just before a tragic disaster occurs. It cocoons! It goes into hibernation. It sticks its head into the ground like an ostrich. It blinds itself to telltale trends and events. It says: 'This is not happening'.

Human beings behaved in this manner prior to the time of Noah's flood. Today we are following the same regrettable patterns. When watching television it is all too easy to witness a tragic emergency while sitting down in comfort and ease. Many observe crisis after crisis without much real concern.

The Bible clearly warns that at the very time that the second coming of Jesus Christ would be imminent, just like the proverbial

couch potatoes, vast numbers of mankind would be drifting into lethargy and apathy, sleepily going about their own day-to-day affairs – trying to shove the alarming present trends into the back of their minds – trends we have been warning the people of Britain, Europe and the USA about in the pages of this magazine.

Attitudes really don't change much even with the passing of millenniums. Centuries went by between the time of Noah and the days of Lot. Yet human behaviour in the face of impending tragedy was substantially the same. The people of Noah's day ignored his warnings. Later Sodom paid little or no attention to Lot (Luke 17:26-30; 2 Peter 2:7). And most will apparently choose to ignore the stern biblical warnings facing this modern age.

People are often unconcerned and unaware in the face of upcoming disaster. That's the paradox in human nature. People simply get on with their lives and hope these appalling trends and conditions will go away.

But it's like carelessly walking through a minefield or flying serenely through a menacing thunderstorm. Such behaviour really doesn't make good sense.

### Christ will come again!

The biblical book of Hebrews says that 'Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many. [But] to those who eagerly wait for him he will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation' (Hebrews 9:28). Scripture says that history will repeat itself. Jesus Christ will come again!

Most readers of the Bible have little trouble believing that He appeared on earth the first time as the humble carpenter of Nazareth. But do they really believe He will return just as the Bible plainly predicts in many, many passages?

Notice that Hebrews refers to 'those who eagerly wait for him'. Christ's second coming will not be a big surprise to His true followers. They are always looking for His return. They are obedient to Jesus Christ, continually watching and praying for His reappearance on earth (Luke 21:36). But to those who continue to behave like the men and women in the days of Noah, 'the Son of Man will come in an hour when you think not'.

You can't afford just to get on with your life.

You can't risk being apathetic in a time that demands awareness, alertness and commitment. You need to be cognizant of the direction of world affairs and their connection to biblical history.

Jesus soberly warned us to Remember Lot's wife'. She longed to return to Sodom's hedonistic lifestyle and the results were fatal. Unfortunately that way of life is now being massively repeated in the British Isles, in Europe, and other nations. Unless there is genuine national repentance, the horrendous consequences are certain!

Yet God often delays his judgments in the hope of true repentance.

The apostle Peter wrote: 'It is not that the Lord is slow in keeping his promise, as some suppose, but that he is patient with you. It is not his will that any should be lost, but that all should come to repentance' (2 Peter 3:9).

You need to know more! For starters you might request the free booklets *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*, *The Gospel of the Kingdom* and *What Is Your Destiny?* Taken together these three incisive publications will explain the real purpose of human life and what God is ultimately planning for humankind on beyond the future troubles that are clearly prophesied to occur. This is true knowledge you can't afford to be without.

John Ross Schroeder

### Vignettes about History and Life

- History showed how it was those who were born at the depths of one great crisis who would be able to cope with the next.  
*Margaret Thatcher, former British Prime Minister*
- We ache to place the present moment in its proper perspective so that we may know where we stand in relation to the entire sweep of time.  
*Marina Benjamin, British author*
- One of the deepest desires is to find a unitary pattern in which the whole of human experience, past, present and future, actual, possible and unfulfilled, is symmetrically ordered.  
*Sir Isaiah Berlin, scholar*
- There is no significant example in history, before our time, of a society successfully maintaining moral life without the aid of religion.  
*Will & Ariel Durant, popular historians*
- How few, again, have ever learnt that Amos and Hosea played as memorable a part in the religious development of humanity, as Copernicus and Galileo in that of modern science.  
*W. G. de Burgh, British philosopher*

# Is Listening a Lost Art?

*Improving our listening skills can improve our relationships as well.*

ONE of the biggest single reasons for relationship problems, researchers have found, is that people don't really listen to each other. We seem by nature to be impatient with one another. Listening to and taking on board another's point of view takes time, energy and effort.

Failure to listen marks our society. This is true within the family, at work and even in highly public situations – as is evident in many television and radio talk shows where people express strong opinions on almost every subject under the sun, yet rarely appear to be actually listening to anyone else.

Even when people are convinced they are listening to others, often they are not. Many have experienced a situation where in seeking help and solace, they are trying to share a confidence with another person, and yet they sense they do not have the listener's full attention.

## The perils of not listening

Frequently, unwanted or even unrelated advice will follow, proving a lack of genuine interest. This can result in a build-up of resentment and a reluctance to share further confidences or information. It may even lead to an outburst of anger, or perhaps even violence. It is easy to see how such a scenario could lead to problems within a marriage, family or at the workplace. Yet having no one to share a problem with can result in feelings of loneliness and frustration, a loss

of self-esteem and sometimes depression. We all need to be able to express our feelings at times, but finding a willing ear may be difficult.

## Why we don't listen

Listening is a skill that can be learned, but first we need to realise why we are not listening. People don't listen to each other for many reasons. Often poor listening habits are due to impatience, selfish inattention or a lack of concentration.

### Tune in to *The World Tomorrow* on radio

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- MANX RADIO 1368KHz AM, and 89.2, 97.2, 103.7 FM  
Tuesdays at 9.44 pm, repeated Thursday night (late) 1.02am

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Also on our web site at [www.worldtomorrow.org](http://www.worldtomorrow.org)

We probably all need to become more self-aware and take greater responsibility for our actions and reactions. Writing down your thoughts and observations can help you to become even more aware.

It is impossible to solve any problem unless it is recognised. If you would like to become a better listener, try to become aware of your listening habits over a period of time, and analyse the reason for these habits. In addition, there are basic techniques that can be employed to improve your listening skills. The following methods communicate much-needed empathy.

## Communicating Empathy

To communicate understanding one needs to put into words what has been said in the conversation. There are a number of techniques that can be used:

**Paraphrasing:** Here you put what you have heard into your own words with your understanding of the main point of the problem. For example, a paraphrased response may start:

*So you're saying that....*

*It sounds like you....*

*You feel ... and it's because....*

Paraphrasing gives an opportunity for clarification if you haven't fully understood. This can happen either because you have missed something, or because the other party hasn't yet revealed all the necessary information. Verbalising the other's point of view also puts it into your mind, so it

becomes part of your understanding even though you may not agree with it.

It can also help the one confiding in you by focusing their attention on the implications of what they are saying – especially if their thinking seems illogical, irrational or unreasonable.

**Reflecting:** Here you repeat a word back, for example:

*I'm so angry that he died.*

*Angry?*

You might also reflect a feeling you are picking up that the person has not expressed. This may take more practice and insight:

*You sounded angry when you said that.*

**Summarising/Clarifying:** Similar to paraphrasing, but here you sum up your understanding of the whole problem.

*Let me make sure I've understood correctly. Do you mean that...?*

**Questions:** There is a fine line between being interested and intruding. If you feel the need to ask a question, ask yourself why and for whom you are asking. Is it out of genuine concern and the need to clarify some point, or is it out of mere curiosity?

Avoid asking questions that can be answered simply yes or no. Ask open questions – how, what, why, when.

*What are you feeling?*

*Why do you think that happened?*

By using these techniques you

are actually forced to listen more carefully to what the other person says. You cannot paraphrase, for instance, unless you have been paying attention.

Since you have listened and hopefully understood the points correctly, the other person probably will be more inclined to reveal a little more of his or her problem or feelings.

The above techniques can also be used when trying to resolve an argument between two parties, or to establish middle ground before negotiations or discussions.

Try to remember that you are there to listen, not necessarily to give advice or solve the problem immediately.

### **The necessity for empathy**

The apostle Paul encourages us to 'rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who

weep' (Romans 12:15). Sharing another's feelings is called empathy – not to be confused with sympathy, which is simply feeling pity or sorrow for another.

Empathy includes communicating that you have understood another's point of view.

It doesn't necessarily mean you agree with it or condone it. It has been described as 'seeing the world through another's eyes, as if it were your own, but without losing the "as if" factor.'

Thanks to God's gift of imagination, we can actually put ourselves into another person's position and relate to his or her feelings. Focusing on another's feelings or viewpoint can help clarify problem situations.

Even if it needs to be challenged, the starting point must be the other's point of view.

*Barbara Fenney*

## **GOOD NEWS** in the British Isles

**I**N the past 28 months we have seen our *Good News* mailing list multiplied five times over. We are now sending the printed message in magazines and booklets to 25 countries of Europe, Scandinavia and the Middle East.

So far this year we have seen nearly 1100 subscribers added. Just this past month we have aired the 70<sup>th</sup> programme of *The World Tomorrow* broadcast – written, produced and recorded right here in the British Isles. An advertisement for *The Good News* appeared on the front page of *The Sunday Telegraph* in July resulting in over 350 responses. A further ad is planned for late January or early February.

Our special British and European Supplement to *The Good News* is a regular feature of the magazine. We began this supplement in the July/August 1999 issue with just four pages. At times we hope to be able to produce eight-page editions like this one with more articles and columns in addition to the regular Q&A and *Letters from*

*our readers*. The main magazine based in the United States is distributed all around the world. The British and European Supplement basically covers the British Isles, English-speaking Europe and Scandinavia.

In two Granada motorway service areas from September until December we are distributing 10,000 brochures offering *The Good News*. We also have an offer in the Information Service brochure currently being distributed to 1.6 million homes nationwide, in which the magazine is offered absolutely free to all who request it. As we go to print 431 responses have been received.

All of us are very encouraged by the growth of the preaching of the gospel here in the British Isles and Europe. We will keep you informed of further progress.

*John A Jewell, CEO,  
United Church of God – British Isles*

## **MINI-STUDY: Major Biblical themes**

# **The knowledge of God and Jesus Christ**

MOST of the books of the Bible have several important themes. 2 Peter is certainly no exception. The theme that concerns us in this particular mini-study is *the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ*. We will adhere to the standard question-and-answer format. (All biblical quotations immediately following each question refer to 2 Peter.)

1. What particular quality of mind did Peter mention in the general greeting to his readers?

*Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ (1:41).*

The Hebrew prophet Hosea indicated that God's physical peoples would be spiritually destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6). He certainly did not mean secular, technical knowledge because as predicted the western world abounds with that (Daniel 12:4). What he really meant was the true knowledge of God (Hosea 4:2).

2. Among other spiritual qualities, would knowledge need to be reflected in the lives of true Christians?

*Add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control (1:5-6).*

If there is anything distinctive about salvation in this particular New Testament book, it is Peter's continual stress on the subject of knowledge. Earlier he also mentioned 'the knowledge of Him

[the Father] that called us by glory and virtue' (2 Peter 1:3).

3. What will happen if we add true knowledge and other important spiritual traits to our lives?

*For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (1:8).*

4. How do we escape the defilements of the world?

*For, if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world [how?] through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ...(2:20) .*

The wicked are not only evil, they are in error, lacking knowledge (2 Peter 3:17).

5. What particular kind of knowledge are we instructed to grow in?

*But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (3:18).*

Clearly the precious knowledge of God the Father and His Son are essential for both Christians and prospective Christians. Remember Christ's prayer to His Father just before the crucifixion. 'And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent' (John 17:3).

*Editor's Note:* In basic style and structure, this mini-study is patterned after our much more complete 12-lesson *Bible Study Course*. If you would like to participate in this specially structured study of major biblical themes, please request to be enrolled in our free study course. The spiritual knowledge needed to become a true Christian is contained within these lessons.

## **Does the Bible Really Say That?**

Readers of *The Good News* are often surprised, maybe even shocked, to discover some of the things the Bible really teaches. In addition free booklets are available that discuss many of these fundamental topics in much greater detail.

The Bible is the foundation for Christianity. But is it really the inspired Word of God? Can you know for sure? How can you understand the Bible? Be sure to request *Is the Bible True?* and *How to Understand the*

*Bible*, which address these vital questions.

For more information about the awesome purpose of human life – request your copies of the booklets *What Is Your Destiny?* and *The Road to Eternal Life*.

The foundation of right human behaviour is the Ten Commandments. But why are they so important? What makes them any different? Do they have deeper meaning? Be sure to write for your free copy of *The Ten Commandments*.



# Questions and Answers

**Q** *Concerning the coming Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ here on earth, how do we reconcile the Arabs' claim to Jerusalem and its status as recorded in Psalm 48?*

*G P U, Surrey*

**A** As your question suggests, this is a Psalm about the Kingdom of God ruling on earth in future. During Jesus Christ's 1000-year reign of peace and plenty from the capital city of Jerusalem, He will administer judgment and justice among all nations.

The Hebrew prophet Isaiah tells us that 'He will judge between the nations and *will settle disputes for many peoples*. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks' (Isaiah 2:4). The present difficulties between ethnic groups in Palestine will be but a memory.

Further knowledge about the coming rule of Christ may be obtained by requesting our free booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom*.

**Q** *Will you please explain Isaiah 9:7?* *Mr & Mrs B I, Essex*

**A** Isaiah says, 'Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.'

This particular passage contrasts God's Kingdom with man's deficient rule in this present age. His future kingdom will be just, beneficial to all and everlasting. His rule will usher in real peace, unlike this age of man which is often characterised by strife and war. The Kingdom of God will supersede all the kingdoms of this present world (Revelation 11:15).

Jesus Christ will be the undisputed King of this coming Kingdom throughout the thousand-year rule shown in Revelation 20:1-6 and many prophetic passages in the Old Testament. Indeed His rulership will carry on forever (Isaiah 9:6-7). During the millennium Christ will rule on David's throne (Luke 1:32). Only the Father in heaven will have greater authority (Matthew 11:25).

Isaiah 9:7 needs to be understood in the context of God's overall plan for mankind. Salvation is or will be offered to all human beings, but on a specific timescale (1 Corinthians 15:23). The Bible talks about the 'firstfruits' (all true Christians) pictured by the annual Day of Pentecost – symbolising that salvation is not offered to everyone today, but only to 'as many as the Lord our God will call' (Acts 2:39; compare John 6:44, 65).

The autumn annual festivals, the Feast of Tabernacles followed immediately by the Last Great Day, picture the fact that the vast majority of mankind will have their opportunity for salvation in a future age. To understand further, please request our free booklet *God's Holy Day Plan: the Promise of Hope for All Mankind*.

**Q** *Referring to time and chance (Bible Study Course, Lesson 4), does anything ever happen by chance? It has been suggested that Solomon was in a depressed state when he wrote some of Ecclesiastes. Comments, please.*

*G H D, Guernsey*

**A** Both Jewish and Christian scholars have fully accepted the book of Ecclesiastes as part of the Hebrew Canon. It is in fact part of the divinely-inspired Word of God (2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Peter

1:20-21; Matthew 4:4). The book itself is a summation of Solomon's inspired feelings, thoughts, experiences and observations (Ecclesiastes 1:4). Whatever his particular state of mind when he wrote the book, it is still part of the Bible.

God Himself gave Solomon his marvellous wisdom. 'And God gave wisdom and understanding beyond measure and largeness of mind like the sand on the seashore, so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt' (1 Kings 4:29-30).

The passage referred to says: 'Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to men of skill, *but time and chance happen to them all*' (Ecclesiastes 9:11).

Summing up this passage, sometimes there appears to be no justice, the good guys don't always win. Teachers are often woefully underpaid while someone who can kick a football very well becomes a multimillionaire, (not that there's anything intrinsically wrong with rewarding a sports performer). Great scholars sometimes struggle to exist economically while drug dealers drive around in a Mercedes.

Remember the Tower of Siloam (Luke 13:4). This was a classic case of time and chance. Anyone can find himself or herself in the wrong place at the wrong time. Towers fall, bridges collapse, fires happen. The Russian sailors who recently perished in the *Kursk* were unlikely to have been worse sinners than any of their fellow countrymen. Jesus said that the knowledge that such things do happen should occasion repentance in us all (verse 5).

Sometimes accidents are purely happenstance in the sense that the victims have done nothing specifically wrong to merit death or injury. Yet accidents do have causes such as poor engineering, shoddy workmanship, etc. This is the principle of cause and effect in action. One of Solomon's proverbs says: 'The curse causeless shall not come.'

Of course, this does not mean

that God will not intervene in any specific situation, especially if the person or persons involved are obedient servants and praying Christians.

The Bible is a record of God's interventions on behalf of men and women of faith. Yet it says in the faith chapter, Hebrews 11, that 'some were tortured, not accepting deliverance'. These courageous in-

dividuals looked for a 'better resurrection'.

At the end of the day God will rectify everything. With Him nothing slips through the cracks. There will be a perfect accounting in the world to come.

In the meantime we recommend that our readers request the free booklets *You Can Have Living Faith* and *What Happens After Death?*



## Letters from our readers...

### **World Tomorrow broadcast**

I am a United member here in the USA, and have been listening to your *World Tomorrow* broadcast for the past few months on the Internet. I enjoy all your programs, especially those on Europe and prophecy. It is nice to hear reports from a British vantage point.

*C R, Indianapolis, Indiana*

- Please see the radio log on page 3.

### **Suggestions for *The Good News***

Thank you kindly for sending me your publications. I would like to suggest more social subjects in *The Good News*. Like the negative effects of smoking and overeating as well as gambling. Also the benefits of exercising and of having a hobby.

*A P, Thessaloniki, Greece*

- We will be covering this type of material from time to time in future issues of *The Good News*. In the meantime may we suggest you request our free booklet *Making Life Work?* It deals in principle with some of these subjects you mention.

### **Evolution in education**

I am very concerned for my son as he is being taught evolution at

school. They have the facts wrong. I want my son to learn the truth. I believe the Bible is truth. Denominations are not the issue. What we need is what you are doing: proclaiming biblical facts and following the Ten Commandments. I pray God will clear a pathway for you to proclaim God's truth to his people and the unsaved, but we cannot force people to accept Jesus.

*Mrs D N, Sussex*

I struggle each day with the way the world and its inhabitants have turned away from God. I fear for my grandchildren and the rubbish the media pushes at them. Thank goodness for your booklets.

*P B, Rugby*

- *Children throughout the Western world are in the same boat. You may find the following free booklets helpful: Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?, Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe? and Is the Bible True?*

### **Reader from Australia**

I am writing to tell you how much I have enjoyed your *Bible Study Course*. I have found it so easy to understand and my knowledge of the Bible has increased greatly. I

also enjoy reading *The Good News*. The articles give me a clearer understanding and certainly help to build up my faith. It is wonderful to have something you can rely on in troubled times.

*Reader from Victoria*

### **How financed?**

My husband was very impressed with some articles in your last edition. We had never seen or heard of your magazine until we visited a cousin in Carmarthen. We would like you to include us on your mailing list. We are a little confused regarding payment. It does say free, but also to subscribe. Please enlighten us.

*Mrs R D, Hornchurch, Essex*

- *Our financial policy is stated on page 2 of the main magazine just under the staff box. 'Your subscription is provided by the voluntary contributions of members of the United Church of God, an international association, and others. Donations are gratefully accepted.... Those who choose to voluntarily support this worldwide work are welcomed as coworkers in this effort to proclaim the gospel to all nations.' Free does mean free, and we do not put a price on *The Good News* or any of our booklets.*