



PROPHECY *Today* UK

Bringing the unchanging word of God to a changing world

Preparing the Way of the Lord

The nation is hungry for truth, but are churches capable of declaring it?



Rev Dr Clifford Hill

Coronavirus has caused people to be more open to the Gospel than at any time in the past 50 years. This is unsurprising, for it is in times of crisis that people turn to prayer and seek spiritual consolation, asking deep questions about our existence and being open to hearing from God, our Maker and Creator.

Millions of people are open to hearing biblical truth today, but on the great questions facing humanity, church leaders are mostly silent. The reports I have been hearing

suggest that during lockdown, preachers have simply found new ways of 'doing church' – business as usual – rather than addressing the questions that are in millions of minds. Many preachers seemingly find it difficult to answer questions such as, 'Has God sent the plague? And if so, why?'

I believe a major reason why preachers do not tackle these fundamental questions is that they do not know the God of the Bible. Many Christian preachers

concentrate on the New Testament (particularly the gospels and the epistles) and do not feel comfortable with the Old Testament or the Hebrew roots of the faith.

Evangelicals, especially, tend to concentrate upon the first three chapters of Genesis (i.e. the Creation and the Fall of humanity) and then jump all the way to the gospels and God's answer to human sin by sending Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. The danger of this is that they miss out not only the five books of Moses, which set out the basic teaching of our Judeo-Christian heritage, but also the message of the prophets and the history of God's dealings with his covenant people.

Without these vital components of Scripture, which God uses to reveal his nature and purposes, we

cannot possibly know the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we end up with a partial Gospel. I believe this to be a major reason

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why preachers are finding it so difficult to declare the word of God for today.

Let me illustrate what I mean. There are a handful of great themes that run right through the Bible, that have their origin and foundations in the Old Testament, without which

the Gospel does not make sense. They include creation, sovereignty, covenant, judgment and justice, love and compassion.

The prophets reveal the awesome majesty of the God of Creation (just read Isaiah 40!). You will never be able to answer the basic questions that millions are asking today about Covid-19 if you have never embraced the truth about God who says, “I am the Lord and there is no other. I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster, I, the Lord, do all these things!” (Isaiah 45:7).

The prophets point to the holiness of God and lament the awfulness of sin which separates us from his presence and requires his judgment, unless atonement is made.

If we miss this vital preparation for Messiah, we will never know that the one true God is also a faithful, loving, covenant-keeping God who never breaks his promises, as evidenced by the covenant relationship he formed with Abraham and his descendants. Missing this detail has fanned the anti-Semitic flames of 'Replacement Theology', which distorts people's understanding of God and leaves them with only half a Gospel.

Only the prophetic declaration of the whole word of God can meet the needs of people in times of crisis such as we have today. Of course, God is a God of love and compassion and mercy – but he is

also a God of justice. Surely people today deserve to hear the whole word of God!

■ **The Rev Dr Clifford Hill is Prophecy Today UK's Editor-in-Chief. Read his weekly editorials at www.prophecytoday.uk**

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OUR STORY

From 1985 to 2006, Prophecy Today was published in print and grew to become one of the most widely read Christian magazines in the UK. It was an iconic publication renowned for declaring the word of God for our times

In 2015, Prophecy Today was reborn online as Prophecy Today UK, taking a new format but keeping the same vision. Our small but dedicated team is led by Prophecy Today's original founder, the Rev Dr Clifford Hill, and operates under the umbrella of Issachar Ministries, publishing fresh editions each Friday. You can sign up on our website to receive these straight to your inbox, for free!

At Prophecy Today UK, we believe that God is as involved in the world today as he was in biblical times. We also believe that he longs to give Christians understanding about the world and how he is working out his purposes in it.

The next four pages contain excerpts from the contemporary ministry of Prophecy Today UK, which includes commentary on public affairs, teaching articles and book reviews.



Covers of the original Prophecy Today magazine, in print 1985-2006

Every one of our articles published since 2015 is available on our website – find us at www.prophecytoday.uk.

Locked Down But Not Out

Has Covid-19 been good for the Church?

As many have observed, Covid-19 did what no previous pandemic or war managed to do, namely, lock us out of our church buildings. However, electronic communications have enabled churches and ministries to carry on (more or less) with 'business as usual'. Banned from meeting together physically, we have found a new home in cyberspace.

For Christians, this is the 'big story' of the Covid-19 era. We might have been locked down, but we have not been locked out! Now, it is time to "consider our ways" (Haggai 1:1-12). Has 'cyber-church' been God's providential provision, or a distraction, or even a deception?

Cyber-church seems to have been a huge success in terms of church attendance and mission. But it has a darker side. The internet gives a great deal, but it also takes away.

For instance, like many, I saw lockdown as a God-given opportunity to "come aside to a desolate place and rest awhile" (Mark 6:31); an enforced sabbath when we would rest from our own works (Hebrews 4:10); a call to the 'wilderness' as a place of intimacy with the Lord, testing and preparation.¹

Yet, many churches are busier than ever, with an outburst of online activity. We are in danger, it seems, of avoiding the wilderness fast by turning 'stones into bread' (silicon is, after all, the main constituent of stones and essential to digital technology).

Occupied with immediate, digitally facilitated business-as-usual, are we in danger of missing the point? Are we 'arranging the deckchairs on the Titanic' or 'fiddling while Rome burns'? There are some very stormy waters ahead, and it would not do to be so concerned to maintain the status quo that they catch us unawares.

There is also a risk that cyber-church will perpetuate the culture of passivity and dependence that plagues much of the Church in Britain. Of course, pastors must care for their flocks with diligence and sacrificial love. But their calling is to "equip the saints for the work



of ministry" so that "we should no longer be children", but "grow up in all things into him who is the head – Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-16). And this may mean releasing them into the care of the Great Shepherd, without their earthly pastors in between.

On 18 March this year, before full lockdown, London pastor Phil Moore urged church leaders to conduct a 'coronavirus experiment'.² He drew inspiration from the missionary in China, James Fraser, who, faced with the inability to visit his recent

converts in the mountains due to a very hard winter, determined to pray for them instead. In the spring, when he was able to visit them, he discovered that they had grown spiritually far more than his converts in the accessible lowlands.

Moore challenged his fellow Christian leaders to follow Fraser's example: to back off Skype and Zoom (etc) and instead pray for their people. He concludes that he believes that God is "inviting Christian leaders all across the Western world right now

to rethink the whole of their ministry and trust in that their inability to gather people to them for a season is an opportunity for them to gather themselves to God on behalf of the people."

Sadly, I think Phil Moore's was a voice in the wilderness that few heard or heeded!

References

¹ Village Hope blog, www.villagehope.uk, 27 March 2020

² Think Theology, www.thinktheology.co.uk, 18 March 2020

■ Dr Peter Carruthers

STREAMS OF LIVING WATER

Psalm 1 and its natural setting

Psalm 1 describes the lifestyle of a godly person and its wellspring in the soul, illustrating this with a word-picture: "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water" (v3, NKJV).

For most of us in the temperate climes of the English-speaking world, these words probably call to mind trees on a riverbank. Such an image, however, is not what the psalmist had in mind.

Israel's general climate is characterised by winter rainfall and summer drought, with no meaningful rain from April to October (on average). The desert floor of the Jordan valley is bleak indeed. Hot, dry winds scour the parched surface and moisture is very limited.



The English phrases 'rivers of water' (KJV, NKJV) and 'streams of water' (NIV, RSV, ESV) used in Psalm 1 are poor translations of the Hebrew, *palgay mayim*, which literally means 'divisions of water'. Our streams and rivers are normally confluent, with tributaries flowing together. The Psalmist's picture is thus one of irrigation channels, distributing life-giving water in a thirsty land.

The trees beside these 'divisions of water' are 'planted': deliberately established and positioned. The Hebrew word here means 'transplanted': transferred from one place to another. By the mercy of God, we are taken from the wasteland of self and sin and "translated into the Kingdom of his dear Son" (Colossians 1:13, KJV).

Here we abide, supplied by the streams of living water promised by Jesus (John 7:37-38) and bringing forth our fruit in season (Psalm 1:3), whatever the hot, arid conditions may dictate!

Read the full version of this study at www.prophecytoday.uk. Search 'Streams of Living Water'

■ David Longworth



A TIME FOR BLESSING?

Viral Christian video spreads the wrong message

Most Christians with internet access will by now have come across at least one of the many versions in circulation of a video that begins something like this: "Churches around the UK...Have come together at this time...To sing a blessing over the nation..."

What then follows is a beautiful-sounding song, based on Numbers 6:24-26, which declares: "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace."

These glorious and uplifting words, that we all want for ourselves and

our nation, are sung by individuals who have videoed themselves separately and been skilfully edited together to create a beautiful choir, coming together in unity and solidarity to bless the nation during the coronavirus crisis.

Many have embraced this gesture as a wonderful example of the Church uniting to express God's love to a world gripped by fear and uncertainty. I certainly don't question the motives of the people involved. However, their actions raise an important question: Does God want the Church to sing a blessing over the nation at this time?

I have to conclude that, as well-

intentioned as I'm sure the participants are, what they are doing cannot be justified from Scripture and does not express the message that God wants to communicate at this time, to either Church or nation.

The UK has been blessed by the Gospel as much as (if not more than) any other nation on earth - but has squandered and rejected this heritage. A Church that sings blessing over such a nation is behaving like the false prophets of Jeremiah's day, lulling people into a false sense of security instead of warning them of coming judgment (e.g. Jeremiah 14:13-14, 23:16-17).

God IS speaking, but few are listening. The small but faithful remnant who are listening are grieving over the state of this country.

The Lord is returning soon, but before he does, he wants to purify his Church and equip it to declare his love to this nation, before it is too late. God's true love for this nation is the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; the saving power of his death and resurrection, available to everyone through repentance and submission to him.

I, for one, am not singing a blessing over the nation. I weep over it, and for the state of the Church, as I believe God does. The Church needs to repent before the nation can.

■ James Smith



The World Without God

Can humanity create heaven on earth?

The evocative symbolism of the death of George Floyd was always destined to become politically iconic. It kindled protests in all 50 American states and more than 50 countries around the globe, the prevailing theme of which has been that white Western civilisation is so corrupt that a wholesale revolution is necessary.

Nobody is disputing that many black communities in the US are gripped by poverty and deprivation. But there are problems with reacting to this deplorable situation by rushing to demonise all white people, and Western civilisation as a whole, as

uniformly, endemically evil.

One is that it victimises black people, reinforcing a communal sense of inferiority and stoking racial hatred. Another is that it encourages the nodding through of a general breakdown in the rule of law as regrettable, but understandable.

Totalising claims about race also bolster radical left-wing groups who use identity politics to argue that democracy is futile in the face of what they perceive to be systemic injustice. Such activists usually favour some kind of neo-Marxist revolution and reject the Judeo-Christian values which have

historically underpinned Western culture as part of the problem, not the solution.

Unsurprisingly, then, Black Lives Matter protests have taken a distinctly anti-civilisational turn. In Britain, we have seen the desecration of war memorials, Government buildings and statues of Winston Churchill and Queen Victoria, and the attempted burning of a Union Jack. The trend, it seems, is to efface from the public square any trace of cultural memory which at all transgresses today's politically correct standards.

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'OUTSIDE IN' - SEEKING TO SERVE 'OUT OF CHURCH' BELIEVERS



In recent years, a growing number of faithful Christians in the UK have become disillusioned with current expressions of Sunday church available to them, or have left altogether.

They are not falling away from the faith, but rather acting in line with their consciences. Unable to find or attend a congregation that affirms the authority of the Bible, they are searching for fellowship in other ways, as they go through a 'wilderness' season with the Lord.

For Christians in this position, **Prophecy Today UK** is pleased to commend 'Outside In', a new area of ministry supporting and connecting believers who are on the 'outside' of current 'church' life but still very much 'in' the Body of Christ.

If you would like more information about this initiative, please e-mail outsidein@issacharministries.co.uk or write to 'Outside In' at Issachar Ministries, Office 5, Shannon Court, High Street, Sandy, BEDS, SG19 1AG.



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Now, of course Western civilisation is weighed down by all kinds of sin. It also still bears the good fruit of centuries of Judeo-Christian influence and Gospel faithfulness. It is not easily packageable into one grand narrative, with a solution that is just as simple (tear it all down and start again). Doing so is highly dangerous. History bears witness: any attempt to redesign the world without God will not only fail but lead to despotism and unthinkable violence.

Humans feel injustice keenly, because we are made in the image of the God of justice. But with the Bible no longer an authoritative influence in

the public square, no large-scale protest movement can reap a truly righteous harvest, no matter how good the intentions of those taking part.

We need a reality check, because sin (including racism) is present in every nation and will stain fallen humanity for as long as this world exists (2 Peter 3:13). Only the Gospel can transform the condition of the heart and resolve the genuine injustices in society. Only the Gospel holds out the hope of the return of the Lord, who alone will set all wrongs to right.

■ **Frances Rabbitts**



ISSACHAR MINISTRIES UK

Prophecy Today UK is a project of Issachar Ministries, a resourcing ministry which derives its name from the Tribe of Issachar (1 Chronicles 23:32).

Issachar Ministries seeks to provide biblical teaching on current issues by understanding the times, listening to the Lord and knowing what should be done.

Are you able to support Prophecy Today UK financially, or would you like to receive more information about the ministry?

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REVIEWS

Prophecy Today UK reviews books, DVDs and other resources, both old and new, which we hope will bless your walk with God. Read the full reviews of the books below in the 'Resources' section on www.prophecytoday.uk

Where is God in a Coronavirus world?

John C Lennox

The Good Book Company, 2020, 62pp

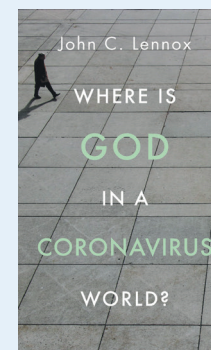
£2.54 (paperback). Purchase from the publisher's website. Also available as an audiobook and an e-book

In this short book, Oxford mathematics professor, philosopher of science and Christian apologist John Lennox presents to the wider public the value of the Christian worldview in relation to natural disasters that are not in the control of man.

Lennox does not pretend to answer fully the puzzling question of suffering (whether due to Covid-19 or any other disaster). He does, however, put the issue into biblical perspective in comparison with the atheist approach. His arguments are well balanced, and he draws from the Bible as well as his own personal experience of suffering. He also quotes CS Lewis, Solzhenitsyn and others to support his points.

Lennox posits that nature became flawed and fractured after the Fall, creating an inevitably mixed situation. For example, a beautiful flower opens in the sun at the same time as the coronavirus destroys a human respiratory system.

His booklet is not a theological treatise, but has been written to help thinking people consider (or reconsider) God's truth in a broken world. It is thus mainly an evangelistic tool for those seeking hope in a crisis, who are prepared to reflect on the meaning of life. It is very well written and a quick, simple read, challenging the dominant worldly perspective on the matter of suffering. ■



The Delusion of Evolution

Andrew Halloway (Editor)

New Life Publishing, 2019, 68pp

£3.95 (paperback). Purchase from the publisher's website. Also available as a digital download

Society's almost wholesale capitulation to evolutionary theory has proved an increasingly obvious barrier to the Gospel, giving people the perfect excuse to deny the existence of God.

But the theory of Intelligent Design, backed by many highly qualified scientists, has blown gaping holes in the Darwinian hypothesis.

Few know this, because the mainstream media and educational authorities have effectively banned its public discussion. However, this outstanding booklet (now in its seventh edition) has been produced to help puzzled ordinary folk to grasp the nettle about the Creation story.

Having already sold over 40,000 copies, 'The Delusion of Evolution' unveils the truth about the latest scientific evidence supporting Intelligent Design theory, building its case steadily with numerous articles from leading academics.

You can find out how an atheist professor became a believer in God purely by discovering the evidence for Intelligent Design, and how even the arch-enemy of faith, Richard Dawkins, admits he cannot prove evolution which, according to author and lecturer Joe Boot, is in "considerable scientific trouble".

But while activists try to get discussion of Intelligent Design banned from schools and even from social media, dismissing it as a 'faith vs science' battle, Intelligent Design theorist Dr Stephen Meyer says that it "has implications for faith, but it is not a religious-based idea. It is an evidence-based scientific theory about life's origins."

This accessible, magazine-style booklet is a fantastic educational tool and an excellent witnessing aid for Christians, who should no longer feel the need to apologise for dismissing the idea that we all evolved from lower species. ■

