



PROPHECY *Today* UK

Bringing the unchanging word of God to a changing world

The End of Christian Civilisation?

No – the fields will soon be ripe for harvest.

It is never too late to declare the truth to an unbelieving world!

There are some that say that our Judeo-Christian heritage has already been lost, and that it is too late to do anything to shore up either the Church or the world; we have just got to sit and wait for the second coming of Jesus.

I just want to say that this kind of fatalistic attitude is quite foreign to the gospel, and it is a betrayal of the Great Commission!

Certainly, we live in challenging times, but the gospel has not lost its power! God did not give up on the world when they crucified his Son! Instead, he entrusted the gospel of salvation – the good news of God's good purposes for the human beings whom he created in his own image – to a small group of ordinary people:

fishermen like Peter and John; women like Mary and Martha. And they not only stood firm against the appalling cruelty of Rome, but they conquered the greatest empire the world had yet known.

If ever we cease declaring a gospel of hope for a cruel and debauched world, we have ceased to preach the gospel of Jesus. But ever since God

first revealed his word to Abraham, there has been a cost involved in holding firm to the faith. As the list in Hebrews 11 shows, men and women of faith overcame all the obstacles an unbelieving world could throw at them – and that kind of faith is still available to us today.

It is never too late to declare the truth to an unbelieving world! Jeremiah was still calling for repentance in Jerusalem when the Babylonian army was outside the walls laying siege to the city – because he knew that if there were repentance among the people, even at that late hour, God could intervene and work a miracle of salvation. That is the kind of faith that we need today, one ready to proclaim repentance and salvation to our world.

Haggai 2:6-7 says, *"This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory'."*

It is more than forty years ago since I began hearing God's promise to shake all nations, and the prophecies of Haggai 2 and Hebrews 12 came alive for me as a promise that I would see in my lifetime. Forty years ago, in our Ministry team, we were told that the shaking would reach such an intensity that people would start crying out, "O God, what has gone wrong?" At that point there would be a new openness to truth. The scales would begin falling away

from blind eyes and the opportunity would be there for believers to declare the word of the Lord; and as a result, many would be saved.

I do not believe we have yet reached that point. The shaking of the nations is likely to get much more intense and believers need to hold fast to their faith.

I believe the day will come when God will empower the faithful remnant to reap a harvest among those who are open to the truth before the second coming of Jesus. We all need to be watching and praying – looking for the signs when the fields will be ripe for harvest.

■ The Rev Dr Clifford Hil



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, under the leadership of original founder Dr Clifford Hill, taking a new format but keeping the same vision. Our small but dedicated team is now led by Charles Gardner, a long-time contributor to Prophecy Today, 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.

These 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.

CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS

Christmas is going to look quite different this year. But it doesn't change the wonderful news of Jesus, the Son of God, being born into our world.



The prologue of John's Gospel says, *"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us"* (John 1:14). This is a statement of incredible significance which summarises the message of the whole Gospel of John. It states very simply the central mystery of the coming of Jesus, which the Apostle unfolds: the light of the world, come to dwell among humanity, where men prefer darkness to light.

The Greek word that John uses for 'dwelling' is ἐσκήνωσεν ('eskanosen'). It is no coincidence that the consonants of the Greek word ἐσκήνωσεν give us the Hebrew word 'Shekinah', which denotes the glory of the presence of the Lord. The Tabernacle, or 'tent of meeting', was the place where God dwelt with his people and his glory was to be seen among them throughout the years when the children of Israel were wandering in the wilderness. It was the Shekinah that went ahead of them, preparing the way and offering protection and direction as well as provision.

ἐσκήνωσεν comes from the word σκηνή which means a tent or tabernacle. Hence, the phrase *"made his dwelling among us"* literally means he *"pitched his tent among us"* or *"tabernacled among us"*; as God had dwelt among his people in the Tabernacle of the Lord when the people of Israel lived in tents. This adds strength and relevance to the belief that Jesus was actually born at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles. The Prophet Zechariah foresaw the coming of Messiah. He said *"Shout and be glad, O daughter of Zion. For I am coming, and I will live among you," declares the Lord*" (Zech 2:10). It is probably these words that John had in mind when he made

his declaration. Zechariah went on to make another statement that came true in the early days of the Church, which Peter acknowledged. Zechariah prophesied, *"Many nations will be joined with the Lord in that day and will become my people"* (Zech 2:11). Peter saw this fulfilled when Jew and Gentile from different nations came together as believers in Jesus: *"Once you were not a*

people, but now you are the people of God" (1 Peter 2:10).

Ordinary Made Extraordinary

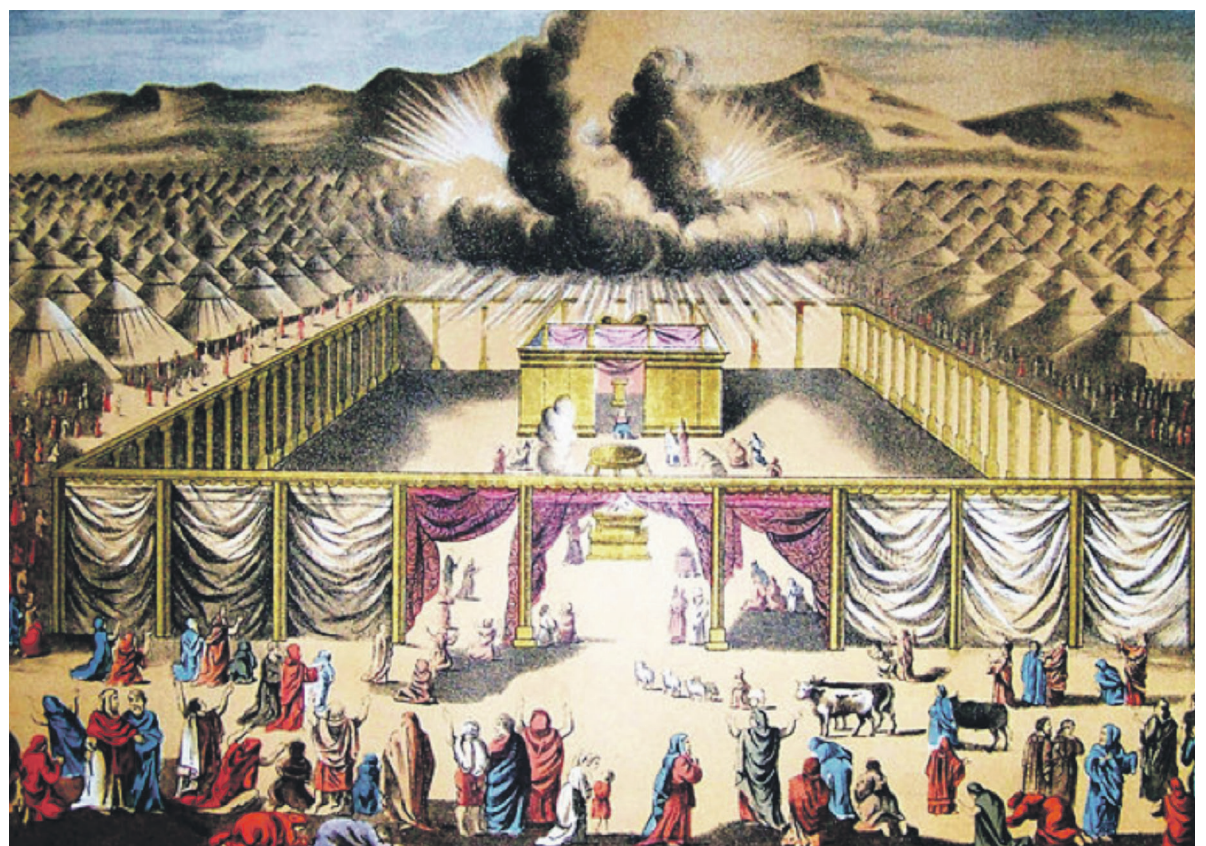
Just as Christmas changes ordinary people into extraordinary people – the mean become generous, the self-centred become unselfish, the morose become joyful – so the coming of Jesus into the lives of a

little group of fishermen in Galilee changed them into extraordinary men of God. But Christmas only changes ordinary people for a day or two; when Jesus came into the lives of his disciples it changed them for ever.

The same is true today. When Jesus comes into our lives and dwells within us – tabernacling with us by his Holy Spirit – we are never the same again. May the Spirit of Jesus not only be seen in our lives within our families, but overflow into the community around us and thence into the nation. **Come, Lord Jesus!**

■ The Rev Dr Clifford Hill

Christmas only changes ordinary people for a day or two; when Jesus comes into the lives of his disciples he changes them for ever.



The glory of the Lord indwelling the Tabernacle in the wilderness



WAR and Peace

FURTHER SIGNS OF THE IMMINENT RETURN OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR

The peace deal signed in September by Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain is truly historic, and wonderfully welcome. There are of course pragmatic reasons for this new deal, such as the growing threat to Sunni-led Muslim countries by Iran and its proxies.

It demonstrates realism among Arab leaders who basically want to live in harmony with their neighbours – particularly one who is a major player in the high-tech, military, agricultural and other realms – though fully aware that the Palestinian narrative is something of a sacrifice in the process.

This kind of peace was prophesied by Isaiah (19:23-25) who wrote of a time when the nations to the north and south of Israel would join the Jews in forming a highway of reconciliation, though at a deeper level than mere political manoeuvring.

This has already been increasingly experienced in recent years as Arabs and Jews have seen barriers between them broken down when their hearts open up to Jesus, the Jewish Messiah. This is also a fulfilment of Paul's message to the Ephesians (2:14).

Political peace, meanwhile, may well be only temporary, as belligerent insults and threats from Iran and elsewhere suggest. In Lebanon, Iran's terrorist-proxy Hezbollah is widely held

responsible for the huge explosion in Beirut.

Besides, the darkening clouds have extended beyond Iran to Turkey, rapidly morphing from a secular Muslim state to a strident religious one, with President Erdogan threatening to reclaim Jerusalem's Temple Mount for a revived Ottoman Empire. An unpredictable Russia is also rearing its ugly head as we teeter on the brink of another Cold War.

These point to further signs of the soon return of Christ. Among these is the connection of the new peace deal to the Gog and Magog war of Ezekiel 38, where 'Sheba and Dedan' (the Arabian Peninsula region) appear to be on Israel's side in the end-time invasion that comes from the north (Russia), and

involving Iran, Turkey and other nations.

The Bible clearly indicates that the land of Israel will be a source of great controversy in the last days (Zechariah 12-14), leading to a conflict involving all nations. All of this points to the ultimate solution of the Middle East question, and indeed of the world itself – the promised return to Jerusalem, in power and great glory, of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose perfect peace will extend from there to all the earth.

Jesus told us his coming would be visible to all the world (Matt 24:27), and when the signs of its imminence proliferate, we are to lift up our heads, because it means our redemption is drawing near (Luke 21:28).

■ Charles Gardner.



The God who holds all history holds the future too

Proverbs 19:21 – “Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.”

The level of control the government has over our daily lives is unprecedented in this country, though pandemics certainly aren't.

Humans like to have control over their own lives. To a large extent, this is a good thing: self-control is one of the 'fruits of the Spirit' listed by Paul (Gal 5:22-23). God gave us choice, and it is up to us to use our choices wisely.

It's also good to have a government with a level of control. We're instructed to pray for our government (1 Tim 2:1-2), so that we may live peaceful lives.

The problem is, we are apt to take more control than we should. And throughout history, we have seen ways in which people have tried to control others.

The Covid 19 crisis has highlighted just how much, until now, those

living in Western societies have been under the illusion that we were in control.

The government, with the backing of most of the population, has been seeking to 'control the virus'. Yet what has happened? The more that lockdowns and restrictions have served to limit the spread of the virus, the more control is lost over other areas of life, with massive increases in mental health problems, domestic violence, isolation and poverty across the world.

Many of the attempts to control the

Continued over

'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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virus have come from a laudable motive – to protect the vulnerable. But in their panic, governments have only deprived other vulnerable people of their livelihoods, of support, of a future. In the end, we have to recognise that we can't control everything.

The Bible warns us of relying too much on our own plans. James warns those who boast of their plans, *"Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow ... Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.'" (Jas 4:13-15)*

Ultimately, God is the only one in control. We can plan, and we can make wise decisions, but it is up to God to determine whether these plans can be accomplished.



Will we recognise that this world is a fallen and precarious place, one where we need to trust in God, to use our faith? To steal someone else's saying, it is a faith that is spelt R-I-S-K. A faith where there are no guarantees, except the one that says that God will be always with us, to the end of the age. That he will help us endure. That we will be resurrected for eternal life – a life where there will be no more tears and sickness.

It's a question of where we put our trust and our faith, relinquishing the idea that we can control our own lives. We need to metaphorically hand over the steering wheel of our lives to God, who loves and cares for us. We need to be ready to hear His voice, *"This is the way; walk in it."* (Isa 30:21) We don't know the future, but we know the God who does.

■ Kathryn Price

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?

Telephone 07759 042315 (mobile), or fill out the following form and post it to Issachar Ministries, Office 5, Shannon Court, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 1AG.

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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

A Fistful of Shells: West Africa from the Rise of the Slave Trade to the Age of Revolution

Toby Green

Penguin, 2019, 476 pages

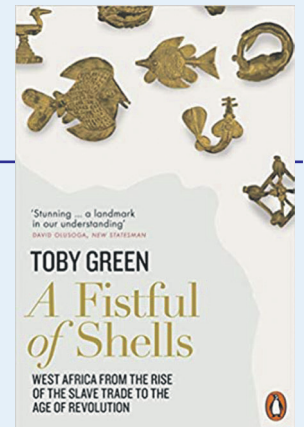
£10.99 (paperback). Available from Waterstones and Amazon

This is the best book by far that I have read on the history of West-Central Africa. My knowledge about the 'Medieval' West African empires and states, early diplomatic relations, the dynamics of trade, co-operation with the slave traders and why Islam expanded has increased exponentially as a result of reading this volume.

Part one focuses on Causes: Economic Divergence in West and West-Central Africa, with the second part studying Consequences: Politics, Belief and Revolutions from Below. This is indeed a scholarly piece of work.

As the author writes, *"Where older (African) history is taught in the west, it is almost always related to slavery, repeating the old trope of primitivism and oppression. Yet African history is much more complex than this allows, and the root cause of many of the problems of the present lie precisely in this more distant past"*.

Published in hardback last year and now available in paperback, *A Fistful of Shells* has been highly acclaimed by many. If you haven't yet, I urge you to read it. It is a stunning piece of work. ■



2084: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Humanity

John C Lennox

Zondervan Reflective, 2020, 240 pages

£11.99 (paperback). Available from Eden.co.uk

How will technology and Artificial Intelligence change our world? What impact will technological enhancement and bioengineering have on humanity? And what implications do these advances have for our worldview and our understanding of God? Alluding to the dystopian futurist book *1984* by George Orwell, these questions, and more, are tackled expertly by an author who is no stranger to writing on the big questions of science.

Lennox considers both the transhumanist project, with its quest to upgrade humans and solve 'the problem of death', and the issues raised by giving machines 'minds'. He also looks at the 'big brother' aspect of harvesting 'big data'. The author's examples from China, which is already using AI to achieve social control, are particularly chilling. He addresses all these in light of biblical considerations, also asking the inevitable and challenging question: How far will God permit humans to go before intervening?

2084 is an excellent study, which both informs and challenges us to think further about a topic that is already one of the key interfaces between science and Christianity, and which will become increasingly prominent long before we reach 2084. ■

