



PROPHECY *Today* UK

Bringing the unchanging word of God to a changing world

FAITH ON THE TITANIC

Rescuing the lost
from a sea of despair
and hopelessness



Engraving by Willy Stöwer

If you had been on the deck of the sinking Titanic and someone had offered you a lifejacket, I'm sure you would have snatched it off him. Yet unnumbered souls are in daily peril for want of hearing about Jesus, whose death offers a lifeboat to eternal salvation.

John Harper was a Scottish preacher who gave away his lifejacket as the Titanic went down. He considered it would be wasted on him as his eternal soul was already secure in Jesus. Even as he thrashed about in the freezing waters, he continued to urge men and women to put their trust in Christ.

A young man later described how Harper had repeatedly urged him: *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"* – apparently the preacher's last words. The young man was rescued and later testified: *"There, two miles above the ocean floor, I did believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for my salvation. I was John Harper's last convert!"*

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Harper had been a hugely popular preacher both in Glasgow and London. Ironically, he was on the Titanic due to the success of earlier meetings at the great Moody Church in Chicago, and had been invited back for a second visit.

Before the 'unsinkable' ship struck the iceberg that mid-April evening in 1912, Harper was seen leaning against the deck rail sharing Christ with a passenger. Harper's unshakable confidence in God shows that he had found something so profound that it was worth not just living for, but dying for. Yet millions across this land struggle to understand their purpose in life. I was intrigued to read of pop icon Sir Mick Jagger's confession to Radio 6 Music listeners that he had found looking back on his life *"inordinately dull and upsetting"*. He had been attempting to use lockdown to write

his autobiography, but had given up the struggle and returned the £1 million advance to the publishers.

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With all the fame, fortune and adoring fans his success had ensured, his admission will no doubt surprise many. But didn't Jesus ask the pointed question: *"What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world, but loses his soul?"* (Mark 8:36).

Many, like Jagger, will have been forced by the pandemic to reflect on

their life. In the words of one of his songs, written over 50 years ago, he has still been unable to find lasting satisfaction. But Jesus says: *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come that they might have life – life in all its fullness"* (John 10:10).

Even at 77, it's not too late. Jesus can supply his – and our – greatest need ... a life rich in meaning and purpose. As the Bible says: *"No eye has seen, nor ear has heard, nor mind has conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him"* (1 Cor 2:9).

Life and death are set before us... Now choose life! (Deut 30:19f). Turn from your wrongdoing, selfishness or pride, and ask for forgiveness – and invite Jesus to live in your heart as Lord.

■ Charles Gardner



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.

READING REVELATION

Apocalyptic scripture as Impressionist art

Revelation is arguably the most difficult book in the Bible to interpret. Some Christians read it once then leave it alone; others immerse themselves in every detail, finding ever more fantastic interpretations of a work which might well be described as the first century equivalent of science fiction. How then should we approach it? Many scholars suggest that we should view Revelation not as a series of sequential events, but rather as successive groups of visions replaying the same themes in different ways, like a collection of photos of the same object taken from different angles. That seems a helpful place to start.

The book of Revelation is part of a literary genre known as 'apocalyptic'. Apocalyptic literature was a popular Jewish genre in the first century, probably reaching its peak when the Apostle John was writing. While Jesus' disciples often struggled to understand his parables (Mark 4:10-13), which were a new genre for them, it seems they were more comfortable with the conventions of apocalyptic language, which appear foreign to us (Matt 24:3). John's (mainly) Jewish readers would probably have known how to interpret Revelation, but as soon as the Church became increasingly dominated by Gentiles in culture and composition, they had as much trouble in understanding the genre as we do today.

As apocalyptic writing, the book relies heavily on symbolism and metaphor, yet the metaphors seem to shift and change all the time. Beasts can change into prophets, then be ridden by prostitutes. Jesus can variously become a lamb on a throne, a male child, one like the son of man, or a rider on a white horse. All of this means it is unwise to take any one verse or metaphor in isolation.

There are two main sources of imagery in Revelation. Apart from concepts taken from Greco-Roman culture and mythology, the bulk of

John's imagery derives from the Hebrew Scriptures. One study has found over 670 allusions to the Hebrew Scriptures. Since there are 405 verses in the book, that means an average of between one and two Old Testament allusions per verse! The main sources are Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Exodus and Psalms, but there are many others. Clearly any interpretation of a particular metaphor should pay close attention to the relevant Old Testament sources.

Revelation is written primarily to encourage (and disciple) believers, yet John also had in mind Jews who were not believers, but who would

understand the imagery taken from the Hebrew Scriptures.

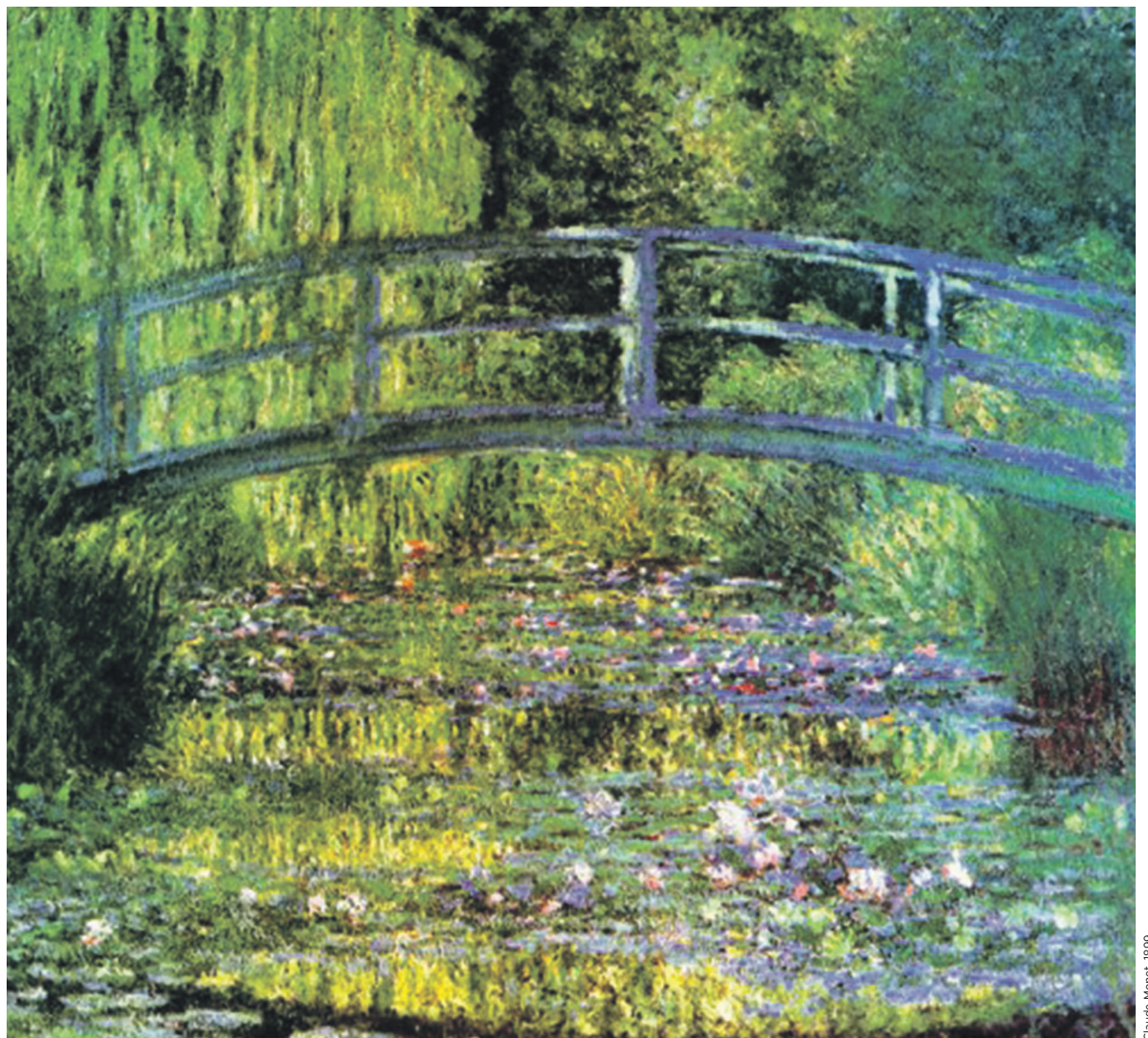
The book was written during a period of persecution from the Roman rulers, towards the end of the first century AD. John himself was imprisoned on Patmos, a small island run as a Roman penal centre. He consciously writes in a way that will not cause an adverse reaction from the Roman authorities. There must be no sniff of a subversive political agenda. His use of the apocalyptic genre, which was accessible to those who knew the Hebrew Scriptures, but mystical and mystifying to the Romans, was ideal. A spiritual 'code' to fool the authorities, but readily

understood by Jewish readers and the (then) predominately Jewish-culture churches.

Modern minds expect apocalyptic writing to be strictly allegorical, meaning that we look for each image to have a particular interpretation. The apocalyptic genre does not work like that. It is less about individual detail, more about overall impressions. Reading Revelation should be like looking at an Impressionist painting, such as this garden bridge by Claude Monet. Stand too close and all you can see is a jumbled series of dots. We need to stand well back to gain the overall impression of the beautiful scene we are meant to see.

So it is with Revelation. We are not meant to take individual verses in isolation and make them mean strange things. Rather we should let the recurring themes overlay and interact, each repetition of a theme adding new colouring to the whole picture. We should let the 'kaleidoscope of visions' (to quote Moffat) speak to us of God's great themes of judgment and salvation, without getting hung up on details which were never meant to be interpreted as isolated features.

■ Frank Booth



Claude Monet, 1899



SOCIETY'S FOUNDATION FOR FAIRNESS, JUSTICE AND PROSPERITY

There is regularly a lot of emphasis about 'the economy' in the news. It's not just abstract figures, either: economies contribute to people's well-being, health, and even life. But it is interesting to consider just how much of a good, functioning economy is based, not so much on 'greed' as Boris Johnson said (and then retracted), but on the teachings of the Bible.

For example, property rights, in whatever form, are essential to prosperity. If an entrepreneur is going to risk everything and work hard to start a business, he (or she) wants to know that, if successful, he will be able to keep a fair and just proportion of the profits, not losing it to criminals or an unjust government. The Bible recognises ownership of land and wealth as important. "Do not steal" is one of the Ten Commandments. Ezekiel 46:18 states that, "The prince must not take any of the inheritance of the people, driving them off their property."

Biblical laws play a significant part in a good functioning economy and society in other ways too. Essential laws include "Do not defraud your neighbour or rob him" (Lev 19:13); "Do not pervert justice, do not show partiality to the poor or favouritism to the great, but judge your neighbour fairly" (Lev 19:15); "Do not do anything that endangers your neighbour's life" (Lev 19:16); and "Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length,

weight or quantity. Use honest scales." (Lev 19:35).

These things all seem obvious to us – living in a culture which is still essentially based upon Christian principles, and where many laws are based on the Bible. But they are not automatic. Humanists would have you believe that these are principles common to all people. But that is not the case.

Vishal Mangalwadi, an Indian Christian philosopher, writes of his eyes being opened to how trust and honesty meant that Western Europe was able to prosper before other countries. He describes being in Holland, where he was staying with a Dutchman who took him to a farm, where his friend filled a jug, put money into a bowl of cash, collecting the change needed before leaving. Vishal was astounded, saying "Man, if you were an Indian, you would take the milk and the money!"

He realised the importance of trust. If this were in India, he explains, the

owner would need to hire a cashier to prevent theft, raising the price of the milk. "But, if the consumer were corrupt, why should the dairy owner be honest? He would add water to the milk to make more money." So inspectors would be needed. But dishonest inspectors could extract bribes from the farmer. All these things would put up the price of the milk. People remain in poverty, struggling to afford basics, all for lack of honesty.

Essentially, the more that a society follows the laws of God, then the more trust there is in each other, and the more everyone is able to flourish, especially when coupled with the generosity and care for those in difficulties emphasised in the Bible.

The risks of moving away from the biblical principle of honesty have been starkly highlighted in the Grenfell Tower inquiry. It transpires that the companies supplying the cladding knew full well about the fire risk. Dishonest techniques, including bribery, appear to have been used to hide the danger. Corruption, greed and dishonesty led to a terrible and utterly avoidable disaster.

True prosperity for all is only possible in a world that follows God's laws. This country was built upon them. But we have been turning our backs on them, to devastating effects. We still cling to the principles of fairness and justice, yet without any understanding of where they come from. If we continue to reject God's laws, at what point do we forfeit the blessings that naturally and intrinsically come with them?

■ Kathryn Price

The indelible marks of the Almighty in his creation

Friends and colleagues often ask me, "how can I know that God is in the world?" – an entirely reasonable question. The answer can involve many aspects. But both the Bible and God's creation contain many remarkable instances where God's sovereignty over his creation is displayed. I'd like to share just a few with you that I marvel over.

The ancient book of Job contains some fascinating texts where God describes to Job how he alone has the power to control the uncontrollable and (in the time of Job) the unknowable aspects of creation.

In Job 38:31- 33, God says to Job:

"Can you direct the movement of the stars, binding the cluster of the Pleiades or loosening the cords of Orion?"

Can you direct the constellations through the seasons or guide the Bear with her cubs across the heavens?"

Do you know the laws of the universe?"

Can you use them to regulate the earth?"

Pleiades is an open star cluster consisting of hundreds of stars within a single cosmic cloud. A gravitational attraction holds them together, like a flock of birds, as they move in a south-easterly direction



(as we know it). Quite remarkably these stars travel together at the same speed and they stay together, defying scientific expectations. Only God can bind together the cluster of Pleiades.

In contrast Orion's belt consists of three elements: two stars – Alnilame and Mintaka – together with a triple star cluster – Alnithi. Again, remarkably, the two stars are closing together, but the star cluster is stretching apart. So, slowly but steadily, Orion's belt is being loosened.

Arcturus, which means 'bear guardian', is a super bright sight

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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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that in 1971 was identified as actually comprising an additional 52 stars, the cubs. In his challenge to Job, God is demonstrating that he alone has the power to control the stars.

In Job 28:25, God speaks to Job about the "pathways of the deep". These tidal pathways were only discovered in the 1850s by Matthew Maury, an American naval captain, also a Christian, who came to be known as the 'Pathfinder of the Seas', a term taken from Psalm 8:8.

The aquatic theme continues in Job 38:16, with God asking, "Have you explored the springs from which the seas come? Have you explored their depths?" It wasn't until 2003 that Professor Andrew Fisher discovered springs at the bottom of the deep ocean, and it took much further study to discover where these springs came from and how they worked. Yet here is God in ancient times laying out to Job these deep-sea marvels.

Also in the ocean is an intriguing phenomenon that may indicate God's presence in his creation. Every 26 seconds, the earth shakes. The movement is barely noticeable, but seismologists on every continent register a measurable blip on their sensors every 26 seconds. This

pulse, or micro-seism as geologists call it, was first detected in the early 1960s by a young researcher called Jack Oliver, from Columbia University. Years later, the source of the pulse was tracked down to the Gulf of Guinea, just off Africa's west coast.

Scientists are speculating on the cause, but it is the 26 seconds that grabbed my attention. Hebrew is a language where letters represent numbers. So, when you write a Hebrew word you automatically create a numerical value for the word. YHWH, or Yud, Heh, Vav, Heh, the name that God gave to Moses at the burning bush, comprises letters with the following numerical values: Yud = 10; Heh = 5; Vav = 6; Heh = 5.

The numerical value of YHWH is 26. A pulse that slightly, subtly, shakes the earth every 26 seconds might just be a small reminder of God's name to his creation. An echo of God's heartbeat, maybe, or a reminder that Almighty God controls all the natural functions of our planet? Or God's signature that he added to his creation, just like an artist signs their painting. What other signs of God might we be missing in our world?

■ Nick Thompson

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

'Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers'

Dane Ortlund

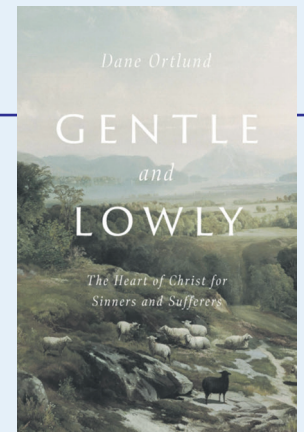
Crossway Books, 2020, 224pp

The purpose of this highly acclaimed book is to discover the true heart of Jesus. The author provides strong evidence that it is gentleness. "I am gentle and humble in heart" (Matt 11:29). 23 short chapters draw the reader deeper into the heart of Christ, with biblical evidence used to show that, for those who come to him, Jesus is literally gushing in forgiveness, tenderness and compassion.

Ortlund also shows that the wrath and mercy of Christ are not at odds with one another: "his heart is his heart; we are asking who he most deeply is; what pours out of him most naturally" (p.29). God's anger requires provocation, whereas his mercy is always bubbling at the surface. Ortlund's writing is erudite and his logic sharp, with compelling arguments. However, despite his desire for biblical balance, little emphasis is placed on the holiness of God or the need for ongoing repentance from sin.

Overall, this is a thoughtful, well-crafted and thoroughly inspirational study, which will prove pure spiritual balm to many, especially to those who doubt God's love for them.

■ Tom Lennie



'Twice Rescued Child: The boy who fled the Nazis ... and found his life's purpose'

Thomas Graumann, with Tricia Goyer

SPCK, 2019, 184pp

An inspiring testament to triumph over adversity of a Holocaust survivor.

Born to a Jewish family in Czechoslovakia, Thomas was rescued from the Nazis on a Kindertransport train from Prague aged just eight. The young boy merely saw it as a great adventure, not realising that he would never see his parents again. He was taken in by kind Christians in northern Scotland. While still a boy, having given his heart to Jesus, he felt called to be a missionary. Having trained as a nurse, he went to the Philippines, reaching remote tribes in the rainforest. He and his American-missionary wife moved to the U.S. to bring up their family, then returned to the Czech Republic, where Thomas taught English whilst sharing both his own story and the good news of Jesus.

Though it's possible to get lost in the detail at times, this is a wonderful record of a life that was doubly blessed – by being snatched from the deadly grasp of the Nazis and delivered into the loving arms of Jesus Christ. A most inspiring read.

■ Charles Gardner

