



PROPHECY *Today* UK

Bringing the unchanging word of God to a changing world

NOT LAW, BUT LIFE

SABBATH REST

Bishop J. C. Ryle, one of the great evangelical figures of the 19th century, is credited with having said that if we lose the Lord's Day, we will end up losing Christianity in the nation. Could his prophetic statement about the Sabbath now be coming to pass?

It's a complete mystery to me why we Gentiles ever thought that keeping the Sabbath was the one commandment we could dispense with. In Isaiah 56 the importance of keeping the Sabbath seems to apply equally to foreigners who have bound themselves to the Lord (v6).

It has often been said: *"More than Israel has kept Shabbat; Shabbat has kept Israel."* The streets are quiet, the shops are shut and there is a pervading sense of peace in the atmosphere. The rush is over; the rest has begun. Israel thrives on its six-day-a-week working cycle. Just 73 years after its re-birth, it is among the world leaders in hi-tech, agricultural expertise and military prowess.

In Britain, however, we are struggling. We have lost our cutting edge and prestige in engineering and manufacturing. Business is now focused on feeding our need for 24-hour shopping as we frenetically work around the clock.

We are familiar with the 'Tiredness Kills' signs on approaches to motorway services in the UK. But lack of rest certainly does kill – and not just due to weariness behind the wheel. Author Robert Morris, in his book *Take the Day Off*, writes: *"In*

a sense, a lifestyle of ignoring the principle of the Sabbath (a capital crime in ancient Israel) still carries the death penalty! It's slow suicide."

Many of us are literally working ourselves to death from what we might well call a Sabbath Deficiency Syndrome. It's become an increasingly common phenomenon, particularly in the Far East, where they've had to invent a new word for the otherwise inexplicable deaths among relatively young people who work ridiculously long hours.

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Keeping Sabbath is a key command of God, so that makes it important enough. But it's also essentially practical. We are in dire need of physical, emotional, mental and spiritual rest and recovery to re-charge our batteries, and also to enable us to hear the still, small voice



Photo by Ise on Unsplash

of our heavenly Father above all the other demanding voices clamouring for our attention.

David Hoffbrand compares it to Elijah's experience on the mountain. The place was rocked by a great earthquake, a terrifying wind and a furious fire, but the Lord was not in any of these. He could only be heard in the still, small voice – a gentle whisper (1 Kings 19:12). *"When we hear the voice of God, everything else seems trivial and unimportant by comparison. God's whisper in your heart is louder than every wind, earthquake or fire that may be raging in your life."*

People seem to have ants in their pants these days, forever fiddling with their phones or juggling their

hectic schedules. We are bombarded from all sides with information, noise and endless appointments. Basically, we become over-stimulated and unable to think clearly as our fragile human switchboard gets jammed. What chance have we got when we never stop?

Consigning the Sabbath to the dustbin of Christian theology was a gross misunderstanding of Jesus' teaching on the subject. Our Lord was simply correcting abuse, hypocrisy and heartless ritual, concluding that *"the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath"* (Mark 2:27). It's for our benefit, and we discard it at our peril. Without regular rest, our physical, mental and spiritual health will be seriously compromised.

If someone is sick, or in need, then of course we should help, because it is God's will that we should do good on the Sabbath (Matt 12:12).

But the idea of working 24/7 suggests that it all depends on us. Taking a day off to honour God is, rather, a step of faith – as is all of the Christian life – and demonstrates our trust in the supernatural provision promised to those who walk in obedience to him.

Jesus said: *"Come to me, all who labour and are heavily-laden, and I will give you rest"* (Matt 11:28). He is the ultimate Sabbath rest (Hebr 4:9), in whom you will find true shalom for your souls.

■ 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.

WOLVES IN SHEEPS CLOTHING

ABUSE AND DECEPTION IN SOCIETY AND CHURCH

“May they rot in hell,” was my gut response on reading of the cruel, cold-blooded abuse and murders meted out by Emma Tustin and Savannah Brockhill. Both were a personification of the wicked stepmothers in fairy tales – but there was no happy ending for Star Hobson and Arthur Labinjo-Hughes.

Social services have, understandably, faced much criticism, having had multiple opportunities to act on both counts. But this is not entirely fair. They have been under enormous pressure, in a role that is thankless even at the best of times, and which intensified during lockdown.

Society as a whole is to blame for the de-prioritising of children on so many counts, as their needs have been side-lined while adults get caught up in the latest ideology.

Arthur Labinjo-Hughes was effectively sacrificed on the altar of Covid-lockdown dogma. His desperately concerned uncle reported his worries about the child's safety to the police, only to be told that if he tried to visit him again, he would be arrested for breaking lockdown laws.

Star seems to have suffered her fate as social services believed that the extended family were making up the claims of abuse because of their disapproval of the same-sex relationship of her mother and partner. Whether this was due to fear of potential accusations of 'homophobia', or genuinely believing the allegations were due to prejudice, it is clear that the claims were not investigated properly because Star's mother and her partner were in a lesbian relationship.



Emma Tustin

It's not the only time that either prejudice, or fears of looking prejudiced, have led to failures in child protection. In towns and cities such as Bradford, Newcastle and Telford, for years, Pakistani Muslim men were able to get away with grooming and abusing young vulnerable white girls because of the authorities' fear of racism and Islamophobia accusations.

The Church, unfortunately, is just as guilty of these failures. How many times were children simply not believed because the abusers were seen as good, upstanding Christians, people to be trusted? Or leaders didn't want the reputation of the Church, or Christianity, to be damaged? Sadly, the cover-ups have led to much worse reputational



Savannah Brockhill

damage, and have put many people off Christianity altogether, particularly in Ireland.

One of the huge challenges in safeguarding is deception. Star's mother and her partner appear to have done as much as they could to deceive social services, including weaponising their lesbian relationship to make themselves appear as victims.

Deception is a factor in many of the missed cases. And prioritising one idea to the detriment of another important issue is a recipe for blindness, which allows us to be deceived. Jesus told his disciples to be as shrewd as snakes, but as innocent as doves (Matt 10:16). Many Christians are fairly good at living 'innocent' lives but forget that we need to be shrewd too. We need to watch that we keep our eyes open in so many ways, and not get so caught up in one idea that we can't see what else is going on.

Jesus warned us of “*wolves in sheep's clothing*” (Matt 7:15), and though he was speaking of false prophets, it is a good description of many abusers – whether parents, teachers, or church leaders. People who make themselves look good, all the while devouring those under their care. And where do these “*wolves*” and this deception come from? Satan is described as the “*father of lies*” (John 8:44). He is out to deceive – even by influencing some of these abusers directly.

Social services do not get everything right. But they are up against the work of the Devil, on the frontline of battle, facing evil itself at times. Especially under huge pressure, they will inadvertently make some wrong decisions. Let us pray for social services – and for society and ourselves too – for wisdom and clear-sightedness, and an ability to see beyond dogma and deception, in whatever form it takes.

■ Kathryn Price



THE TIPPING POINT

We have clearly reached a point where human beings are no longer in control of events. But few are asking, “Where is God in all this?” Is there any divine wisdom to show us what is happening in the world today?

Throughout the record of God’s dealings with his people recorded in the Bible he either spoke directly with those who were listening to him or sent signs that were seen and interpreted by men or women of spiritual insight. For the people of Israel who were in a covenant relationship with God, very clear warnings were given of the consequences of breaking that divinely established relationship.

In Deuteronomy 28 Moses spelled out the disasters that would come upon the people if they turned to other gods and rejected the teaching that had been given by God through him. He spelled out

Although they fast, I will not listen to their cry; though they offer burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Instead, I will destroy them with the sword, famine and plague.”

What causes God to release judgement upon the nations? The two major charges that God brought against the people of Israel were that they worshipped other gods and they shed innocent blood. At the Valley of Ben Hinnom, Jeremiah proclaimed the disaster that was going to come upon the nation. He told the elders that God was saying, *“For they have forsaken me and made this a place of foreign*

These same terrible sins, which included perverted sexual activities and the sacrifice of infants as part of their idolatrous practices, were practised by the Amorites. There is a significant statement in Genesis 15:16 indicating that full judgement was being delayed but would come later, *“For the sins of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure”*.

Yet we do all these things today as an acceptable part of our Western culture. It may be that our ‘sins of the Amorites’ have now reached the tipping point that God can no longer tolerate. He is now removing his cover of protection, allowing judgement to be released upon the nations, and we see the four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (Rev 6:1-8) beginning to gallop across the nations.

Is there anything we human beings can do to end the plague? The only answer is to stop the sins that are directly offensive to God – idolatry and the shedding of innocent blood. But it is only the gospel that gives to each of us the power to do this; to embrace the truth and enjoy the loving forgiveness of God.

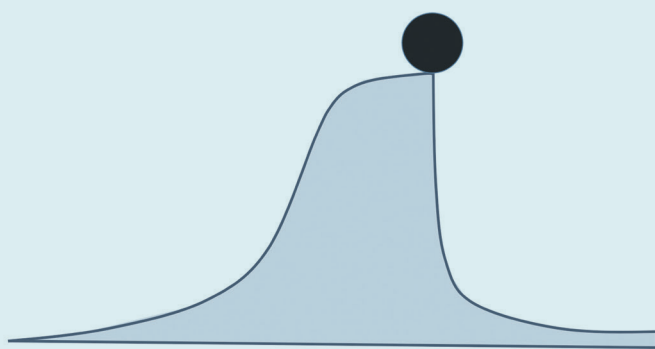
■ Clifford Hill

gods; they have burned sacrifices in it to gods that neither they nor their fathers nor the kings of Judah ever knew, and they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent” (Jer 19:4).

These two sins – idolatry and shedding innocent blood – the things that God hates – are major features of life in Britain and all the Western nations that have known the word of God for centuries. Idolatry is practised as part of everyday life whereby we worship the things our human hands have made; and we discard as worthless the word of God. In Europe the land is soaked with the blood of the innocent (including millions of young lives wasted in the great wars), and we continue to pollute the land every day through abortion and the shedding of blood of millions of unborn babies.

the social and economic effects of the disasters that would come upon them and would engulf the nation, such as confusion among leaders, failure of harvests, trade disruption and plagues with unknown diseases. These show us the primary weapons God uses in exercising judgement: ‘the sword, famine, and plague’ which can also be understood as ‘human conflict, climate crisis and disease’ – all of which we are seeing in the news today!

Three times during Jeremiah’s ministry he was told by God to stop praying for the well-being of the nation because they had reached the point of no return where their behaviour brought the inevitability of judgement. One such occasion is recorded in Jeremiah 14:11-12, *“Then the Lord said to me, do not pray for the well-being of this people.*



‘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, Bedford Heights, Brickhill Drive, Bedford, MK41 7PH



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Choose good – choose life

“And God saw that it was good.”

The Hebrew word for good – ‘tov’ – appears often through the Bible, particularly in the creation account. It’s not just good as we understand it, however, but a description of the very best possible outcome. It is a rich, meaningful word. After Day 3 of Creation, plants containing seeds were created – and this picture brings out the richness of ‘tov’. God created these ‘tov’ plants with the ability to produce more life. ‘Tov’

contains within it the full potential and capability of life.

What we are seeing in this tiny word is that what God sees as good is something, anything, that produces life and carries the potential for further life within itself. This understanding gives us a whole new perspective on Jesus’ words in John 10:10: *“The thief comes only in order to steal, kill and destroy; I have come so that they may have life, life in its fullest measure.”* ‘Tov’ is whatever brings life in its fullness.

Solomon asks for wisdom to discern between good and evil – and the scene in 1 Kings 3 is of Solomon judging between two women who both claim a baby as their own. The test Solomon sets is designed to discern which one of the women will choose ‘tov’. The woman who prefers that the child lives, regardless of the outcome for her personally, is the one who chooses ‘tov’. She chose life – ‘tov’ is life-giving.

Continued over



In Genesis 50:20 Joseph explains to his brothers that they intended to do evil or harm to him, but God made it good in order that Joseph might save many lives. In Psalm 23:6 David declares that God's goodness actively pursues him every day of his life. In the New Testament we are instructed to judge whether a tree is good or bad by the fruit it bears rather than its leaf cover or height (Matt 7:15-20).

'Tov' is a concept that is far reaching and encompasses literally everything. God spoke seeds of life into creation and breathed seeds of life into us. In turn we are called to bring forth those seeds of life from

within ourselves to encourage, teach, intercede, heal, create, procreate and nurture. To help us do this, we have God's word and Spirit to give us wisdom. God's Sabbath provides us with the opportunity to lay aside our creating and allow our creator to do his work within us, which in turn equips us to bring abundant life into the situations we encounter. And of course, the gospel, the good news about Jesus, is the one that brings eternal life – good news that we need to share with all around us.

In what ways can you bring life, the good that God created us to do?

■ 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, Bedford Heights, Brickhill Drive, Bedford, MK41 7PH.

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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

Out of Our Minds: The Power of Being Creative

Sir Ken Robinson

Capstone, 2021 (3rd edition), 275pp

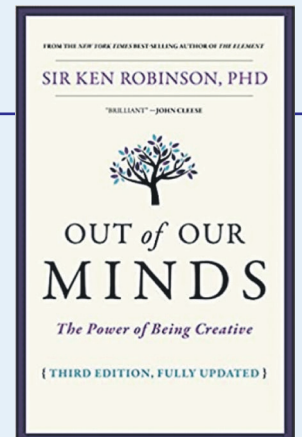
The author was an internationally recognised leader in the development of creativity, innovation and human resources. His TED talks have received huge acclaim.

The purpose of this expertly written book is to explain *"why creativity matters so much, why people think they are not creative, how we arrived at this point and what we can do about it"*. The author's aim is to help individuals understand the depth of their creative abilities. He also wants to encourage organisations to create the conditions which will allow innovation and creativity to flourish.

This is not a Christian book. However, I was struck by just how much his ideas apply to churches. Robinson's starting point is that everyone has huge creative capacities simply as a result of being human. The challenge is to develop them. A believer also has enormous potential as a new creation in Christ. Do our churches see this and seek to provide ways for every individual to flourish in their gifting?

The final two chapters, *'Being a Creative Leader'* and *'Learning to be Creative'* are in themselves sufficient to make the book worthwhile. This is a real find.

■ Paul Luckraft



The China Chronicles: Inside the Greatest Christian Revival in History

Paul Hattaway

SPCK and Piquant (2019-2021)

This ongoing series is a fascinating and lively chronicling of the life of the Chinese Church, by a longstanding missionary and expert.

Paul engages in painstaking research to document the advance of the Christian faith province by province, from the time the gospel was first introduced, right up to the present day.

It is a project of immense ambition, which, when completed, will cover all 31 provinces. Five titles are currently published, *'Henan'* being the most recent. The spectacular growth of the Church in Henan is without equal – at the same time, that growth has attracted severe persecution. The author shares how God created a purified, bold and uncompromising body of believers who have been at the forefront of efforts to evangelise other parts of their country.

Fast-paced and full of drama, the books are an exciting record of the acts of the Holy Spirit, showing how God enabled his kingdom to take root and flourish in China, resulting in phenomenal growth, but all fashioned in the furnace of intense state persecution. But there is no air of triumphalism – every story is rooted in the gritty hardships of day-to-day Chinese life.

A truly fascinating and inspiring series.

■ Tom Lennie

