

***The Bible Lives for Ever—
So Could You!***



Alan Hayward

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A King Loses His Temper

He was not a good king, and his courtiers were not sure how he would react. They listened uneasily while one of their number began to read aloud, Government officials had just seized the manuscript of a book From the king's most outspoken critic, and he wanted to hear what it said.

After the first three or four pages he could stand no more. It was bad enough being called a wicked king. But to be told that his army would be defeated, his city captured, himself brutally killed, and his dead body thrown on the rubbish dump...! This was altogether too much. No self-respecting king could go on listening to such treason.

He took the offending document out of the reader's hands, and savagely slashed at it with his penknife. Then, despite the protests of his three advisers, he turned to the fireplace and hurled the mutilated manuscript into the flames.

If it had been an ordinary piece of political propaganda, this might have been the end of the story. But there was something special about this manuscript. It was a part of the Word of God (a portion of the Book of Jeremiah, in fact) and it was not to be disposed of as easily as that.

The God who inspired Jeremiah to write it could inspire him to rewrite it, and He did so. Within a short time Jeremiah had produced a copy of his original work. And not long afterwards Jehoiakim, the king who had tried in vain to destroy the Book, was himself destroyed exactly as the Book had prophesied.

A Book that Never Fails

This true story (you can read it in Jeremiah, chapter 36) is typical of the Bible's whole history. It tells men many truths they do not like to hear, and consequently it has often been under attack.

In earlier days determined efforts were made to wipe out the Bible. Copies were confiscated and destroyed by the hundred, and merely to be found in possession of a copy could sometimes mean torture and death.

But somehow the Bible, and the faith of those who believed it, outlived all its persecutors.

Nowadays the attack on the Bible takes a more subtle form. Men accuse it of being outmoded, inaccurate, unscientific. Yet the Bible still manages to triumph over its enemies. Those who read it thoughtfully find that there is surprisingly little weight in the things the critics say against the Bible.

Moreover, as bad King Jehoiakim found to his sorrow, the words of the Bible have an uncanny habit of coming true. As an example of this, consider the following remarkable facts.

A Tale of Three Nations

In Old Testament times the land of Israel was surrounded by three great powers. To the south was Egypt. To the north-east was Babylon. In the north-west was the land of the Phoenicians, often referred to by the name of their capital city, Tyre.

The Bible said plainly that each of these three nations was to be punished for its iniquity. But the nature of the punishment was to be different in each case.

Babylon was to be destroyed, and to remain a collection of uninhabited ruins.

Tyre was also to be destroyed, but not to remain as ruins. In her case, the very stones of the city were all to be cast into the sea.

Egypt, on the other hand, was not to be wiped out, She was to live on, but as an impoverished second-rate nation.

Here are the actual words of the prophecies.

BABYLON: "It shall be *no more inhabited* for ever; neither shall it be dwelt in front generation to generation... And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations; but thou shalt be *desolate for ever*, saith the Lord... And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling place for dragons (jackals), an astonishment, and an hissing, without an inhabitant." (Jeremiah 50: 39; 51: 26, 37)

TYRE: "And they shall make a spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy merchandise: and they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses: and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust *in the midst of the water*... And I will make thee like the top of a rock; thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more." (Ezekiel 26: 12, 14)

EGYPT: "It shall be the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations: for *I will diminish them*, that they shall no more rule over the nations." (Ezekiel 29. 15)

Each of these three great nations has suffered exactly the fate that the Bible mapped out for it. You can visit each place to-day and see for yourself the evidence that the Bible's word comes to pass.

In Egypt you can wander among the pyramids and the other relics of her glorious past. You can sit among the monuments and marvel that this nation, once one of the mightiest on earth, has become so poor. And then, if you open your Bible, you will see that this is just what the prophets said would happen to it.

But although you can have your passport stamped "Egypt", you will never be able to have it stamped "Babylon". That proud nation, once the most powerful in the whole world, and the conqueror of Egypt, has been utterly destroyed—just as the Bible said it would be. The ruins of the great city are still there, as excavations of the site have proved. They are inhabited only by wild animals, for this great city has never been rebuilt, just as Jeremiah foretold.

If you wish to see the ruins of ancient Tyre, however, you will need a frogman's suit. History tells how the ruins of the city actually were cast into the sea, hundreds of years after Ezekiel had said that they would be. In B. C. 332 Alexander the Great wanted to subdue an island fortress lying off the coast, near the ruins of the former city. He achieved his aim by building a causeway out to the island, and he used the remains of ancient Tyre for material.

Why Hitler Failed

It is not only in the remote past that the Bible's word has unerringly come true. Some of the Bible's most remarkable prophecies have been fulfilled during the twentieth century.

About thirty years ago Adolf Hitler's scheme to conquer the world was already in motion. By the summer of 1940 everything had gone according to plan. The whole of the mainland of Western Europe was bowing to the Nazis, and it looked as though the German war machine was unstoppable.

Yet within five years Hitler's mutilated body lay in the ruins of his Berlin headquarters, and Nazi Germany was no more. What went wrong? How did Hitler fail, after coming so close to success?

Historians usually explain Hitler's failure by listing a series of extraordinary blunders (like bombing British civilian targets instead of airfields in 1940, and invading Russia in 1941) when Hitler overruled the carefully laid plans of his own generals. But this only throws the problem a stage further back. How did a brilliant leader like Hitler come to make so many fateful mistakes?

The real answer to these questions is a very simple one, but so unexpected that historians usually miss it. God had said of Israel:

"Cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee."
(Genesis 27: 29. Also Genesis 12: 3 and Numbers 24: 9).

When the Nazi party adopted Hitler's plan to wipe out the Jewish nation, it signed its own death warrant. God had warned the world that He would oppose those who opposed His nation, Israel. By murdering millions of Jews the Nazis were challenging the Almighty to His face. No wonder they lost the war!

Extraordinary History

Almost everything about Jewish history is extraordinary. They first became a kingdom in the land of Israel about a thousand years before Christ. Successive invaders carried off vast numbers of Jewish captives into foreign lands, until by the time of Christ there were Jews scattered all over the Roman Empire.

But they still had a homeland of their own until about the middle of the Second Century. Then the Romans ploughed up the site of the Jewish religious centre in Jerusalem, and sent all the remaining inhabitants of Judea (as the land around Jerusalem was called) into exile.

For the next seventeen centuries the ancient land of Israel was inhabited by foreigners, while the Jews themselves lived in little communities, scattered all over the western world. Any other minority group would have been assimilated by the peoples among whom they lived, as, for example, the Normans were assimilated by the English whom they conquered in 1066. But somehow the Jews survived as a very distinct people.

Finally, within living memory, more than two million Jews have gone back to their ancient homeland. They have wrested a large part of it out of the hands of the Arabs, reclaimed its desert wastes, and made a prosperous, independent country of it.

Extraordinary Prophecies

But the most extraordinary thing of all about Jewish history is this:

it has all been foretold in the Bible!

There are very many passages in the Bible where the future of the children of Israel was predicted. Here are just a few examples for you to think about:

THE JEWS SCATTERED

"I will scatter you among the heathen (nations)... and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste. Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land." (Leviticus 26: 33, 34).

"They shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." (Luke 21: 24).

"I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee." (Jeremiah 46: 28)

THE JEWS' EVENTUAL RETURN

"Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness *in the latter days*". (Hosea 3: 5).

"It is even the time of Jacob's (Israel's) trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. ... I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, " (Jeremiah 30: 7, 10)

"I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. " (Ezekiel 11: 17).

The Promise of Christ's Return

We have seen some very powerful reasons for believing that the Bible foretells future history with uncanny accuracy. Israel, Egypt, Babylon, Tyre — each has had a very different history from the others, but in every case the Bible has said exactly what that history would be.

Consequently, when the Bible says that Jesus Christ will return to earth in person, we have every reason to believe that he really will. For both Jesus and his apostles did say so, dozens and dozens of times.

One day, when Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives, his disciples referred to this fact "Tell us," they asked, "when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matthew 24: 3).

In Luke's account of the answer to this question Jesus uttered some words that have been quoted above. He spoke of the coming exile of the Jewish nation, and then added that "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, *until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*" (Luke 21: 24).

Those last few words are very important. Jesus is telling us that after Jerusalem ceases to be "trodden down of the Gentiles" — that is, after the Jews have returned to their own land and its capital city, Jerusalem — his Second Coming will take place.

This gives us an important clue that the return of Christ is likely to take place soon. In 1948 the Jews captured the modern suburbs of Jerusalem, but for nineteen years they were kept out of the ancient city centre. Then in June 1967, the third Arab-Israeli war brought a dramatic change in the situation. The Jews captured the old city! Jerusalem was no longer "trodden down of the Gentiles."

While, at the time of writing this booklet, the future of the Holy City is still disputed—nevertheless the stage is now set for Jesus Christ to return to Jerusalem, just as the Bible foretold.

The Shadow of the Bomb

The Bomb is no longer front page news. For the first few years after Hiroshima we talked about it a lot. But now we have learnt to live with it. Men are busy replacing the slums of London and New York with magnificent new buildings, forgetful that one solitary rocket could reduce either of those cities to a smouldering ruin.

But one day there will come another crisis, when the world will once more approach the brink of nuclear war. When that happens, fear will once more grip the hearts of civilized men and women, as they face the prospect of something that is unimaginably horrible, yet beyond their power to control.

There is, however, one bright ray of hope lighting up this gloomy picture. **Jesus Christ clearly foresaw mankind's terrible Twentieth-Century problem.**

Having spoken of the return of the Jews to Jerusalem, in the passage quoted above, he immediately went on to describe the state of the world at that time. "There shall be... upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity", he said. "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth:" (Luke 21: 25, 26).

If you doubt whether this fits the world's situation to-day, just try to imagine how you would feel if you picked up a newspaper and saw the headline, "Russia Expected to Declare War To-day!" Then read Christ's words again, and marvel at their accuracy of expression. And finally, go on to read his words in the next verse, and rejoice at their promise:

"And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Luke 21: 27).

Saving the World from Destruction

Will nuclear warfare ever break out, or not?

Wishful thinking would have us believe that the Bomb will never be used. Common sense tells us that as more and more countries learn how to make it, the chances of its being used grow greater and greater. Some time in the nineteen seventies China will probably have a great stockpile of H-bombs, and powerful rockets to deliver them. What will happen when the United States intervenes in a country like Vietnam then? What will happen if Egypt and Israel ever possess the Bomb?

There is no need to speculate whether these fiendish weapons will be used. Book after book of the Bible indicates that they may. But the Bible also promises that the world will not be destroyed by them. Jesus will use his God-given power to prevent this.

The prophet Daniel says that Jesus will come at "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time." (Daniel 12: 1).

The prophet Isaiah describes the same events like this:

"The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard... The inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left." (Isaiah 24: 19, 20, 6).

Another prophet, Jeremiah, fills in more of the gruesome details:

"Evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground." (Jeremiah 25: 32, 33).

If this were the whole story, the prospect in store for the human race would be terrible indeed. But all these prophets also speak of the coming of God's chosen King, to rule over the world in peace and righteousness.

The words of Jesus himself, in the last book of the New Testament, describe these coming events beautifully:

"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ. ... And *the nations were angry*, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and *shouldst destroy them which destroy the earth*," (Revelation 11: 15-18).

So we can be thankful that angry governments will not be permitted to destroy the earth. Those who try to do so will be destroyed by Jesus Christ, when he returns to the earth.

The Bible Lives for Ever...

We have looked at a little of the evidence that the Bible's word comes true.

It correctly foretold the future history of three great nations of antiquity. Tyre, Babylon and Egypt.

It correctly foretold the whole extraordinary history of the Jews, right down to the present day. It has described in detail the tragic situation of our modern civilisation, overshadowed by the fear of a nuclear holocaust.

These things show that the Bible really does live for ever. We can rely upon its promises. We can believe what it tells us about everlasting life.

But what *does* it tell us about everlasting life? It is astonishing how often people misunderstand this subject. You should read the next section of this pamphlet very carefully indeed.

... So Could You

Another proof that the Bible comes from God lies in the kind of thing it says about the human race. Men love to flatter themselves, to believe pleasant things. If the Bible were an ordinary man-made book it would tell us the sort of thing we like to hear. But, instead, the Bible tells us the plain, often ugly, truth.

This applies particularly to the subject of death. Men hate to think that death is the end of them. Nearly every religion in the world teaches that man has inside him a soul that lives on after the body is dead. Surveys have even shown that many people who do not believe in God still cling to the belief that their souls will survive death!

Without any doubt, the idea of the immortality of the human soul is the most popular religious belief in the world.

Yet the Bible teaches no such thing!

Instead it tells us bluntly that when a person dies, his soul dies too. For example, a massacre is described like this:

"And they smote *all the souls* that were therein with the edge of the sword, *utterly destroying them*; there was not any left to breathe." (Joshua 11: 11).

Again, God said:

"All souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine; the *soul that sinneth, it shall die*" (Ezekiel 18: 4).

As for death, the Bible describes it as a state of complete unconsciousness, thus:

"His (man's) breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his *thoughts perish*." (Psalm 146: 4).

"The living know that they shall die: *but the dead know not anything... their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished... there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest*." (Ecclesiastes 9: 5-10).

The Promise of Jesus

The greatest tragedy in the world is that so many millions of people cheerfully believe that they *will* live for ever, when the Bible declares that they will not!

Yet Jesus says that they *could* live for ever — if, and only if, they will accept his conditions.

"I am come that they *might* have life," he explained (John 10: 10). But very few people seized their opportunity. "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life," he lamented to the masses (John 5. 40).

But even Jesus was not able to convince his listeners of the horror of their position, "Are there few that be saved?" they asked him, as if surprised that he should suggest such an unpleasant thing.

"Strive to enter in at the strait (i. e. narrow) gate", he replied, "for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke 13: 23, 24).

On another occasion, he enlarged on this warning.

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and *few there be that find it.*" (Matthew 7: 13, 14).

The Narrow Way

It is unpleasant, but it is a fact. The Son of God himself says so. The way to life is a narrow one, and relatively few people will find it!

You *could* live for ever, he reveals. But you *will not*, unless you make a teal effort to find that narrow road, and walk along it.

God demands three things of us, if we would find salvation: faith, baptism, and love. Each of these is vitally important.

Some enthusiastic people, who would probably describe themselves as "Evangelical Christians", speak as if the faith was the only thing that really mattered. Others, equally sincere, but equally misguided, declare that love is the only thing that really matters.

But the Bible says, plainly and emphatically, that all three matter. Faith, baptism, love — these are the three vital steps on the road to salvation. We must therefore look carefully at each of them in turn.

Faith

In the English language the words "faith" and "belief" stand for two different things. "Faith" is something in the heart, a feeling of trust and confidence. "Belief" is something in the mind, a knowledge of certain ideas, and a recognition that they must be true.

But in Greek, the language in which the New Testament was written, there is *only one word* for both "faith" *and* "belief". This word is usually translated "faith", for example in such verses as:

"By grace are ye saved through faith" (Ephesians 2: 8)

"Without faith it is impossible to please him" (Hebrews 11: 6)

But the same word is translated "belief" in this passage:

"God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and *belief of the truth*". (2 Thessalonians 2: 13).

Evidently the faith of the early Christians was not just a feeling in their hearts. *It was based upon an acceptance of the true teaching of the Bible.* In the same chapter (v. 10) the apostle Paul refers to unbelievers as "them that perish; *because they received not the love of the*

truth, that they might be saved.”

Because of the great importance of true Bible teaching, the Apostle Paul gave this advice to his friend Timothy:

“Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known *the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation* through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 3: 14, 15).

This was good advice for Timothy. It is good advice for us, too. We cannot expect to please God unless we read His Book and believe its teaching.

Baptism

Solicitors spend a large part of their lives drawing up legal contracts. When two men come to an agreement on some business matter they take care to obtain the proper legal document, which they then sign upon the dotted line.

People are usually much more slipshod about making a contract to serve God. The New Testament explains why Jesus provided the solemn ceremony of baptism. It is the way for us to “sign upon the dotted line” when we accept his teaching and decide to follow him. Consider the following passages:

- (1) “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ”. (Galatians 3: 27).
- (2) “Baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God)” (1 Peter 3: 21).
- (3) “Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, ‘I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?’ And Jesus answering said unto him, ‘Suffer it to be so now: for *thus* it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness” (Matthew 3: 13-15).
- (4) “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16: 16).
- (5) “Why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins”. (Acts 22: 16).

There is no mistaking the meaning of simple statements like these. Jesus gave us an example by being baptized himself. He commanded all who believed him to be baptized. The apostles baptized all their converts. In the early days, the only way to become a Christian was to be baptized into Christ.

Is Christening Enough?

If you ask your minister this question, he will probably say, “Yes”.

But if you turn to the Bible for an answer, you will find a very emphatic, “No!”

For the christening of babies was absolutely unheard of in the days of Jesus and his apostles. It is not mentioned anywhere in the Bible. It is a well-known historical fact that it was introduced into the church long after the apostles were dead, by men who thought they could improve upon the methods of Jesus!

In the New Testament, the word “baptism” always refers to the immersion of believers. It was always accompanied by repentance on the part of the person being baptised. It always took place *after* a person had come to believe in the teaching of Jesus and the apostles, Thus:

"When they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." (Acts 8: 12)

Can babies repent? Can babies believe the teaching of the apostles? Of course not! No wonder, then, that the baptism of the Bible was not for babies, but for serious-minded men and women.

It makes little difference whether you have been christened as a baby or not. The call of Jesus is the same as it always was. "If ye love me, keep my commandments!" (John 14: 15)

He commands us all to believe, repent, and then be baptised (by immersion). Are you willing to obey his command?

The Meaning of Love

One day a lawyer came up to Jesus, and asked him which was the greatest commandment in the Old Testament Law. This was the Lord's reply:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Matthew 22: 37-39) These words summarize the life of a true Christian. First and foremost, he loves his God. He reads God's Word, he prays, he worships. Besides all this, he loves his neighbour; he lives unselfishly, seeking the good of his fellow men.

It is not possible to do all this without making an effort. Christianity is not an armchair religion.

A life of love is bound to be a life of sacrifice.

Yet Jesus has made us a very wonderful promise: the more we sacrifice, the happier we shall be! He said:

"Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life." (Mark 10: 29, 30).

The way to life eternal is a narrow road, and at times an uphill road. But it is a joyful road:

Those who tread it in sincerity will have no regrets.

Read the Bible, believe the Bible, obey the Bible. That is all the Bible asks us to do. Are you prepared to do it?

Remember, the Bible always keeps its word.

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