

# Turning Back Time

Our front page shows the impressive sight of a steam engine in action. Up and down the UK there are many old railways which have been restored to allow steam trains to operate. These are very popular days out for families – especially for grandfathers, it seems!

It's a common feature to find a band of dedicated volunteers in these places. Whilst there may be some paid staff, usually these railways will be hugely reliant on willing hands to keep the machinery working, clean and in service. There seems to be no shortage of them either. For some, it is the opportunity to exercise otherwise unused skills; for others, it is a welcome social activity. For volunteers and visitors alike, steam trains provide an enjoyable visit to a past age.

Especially as we get older, we tend to wish we could 'turn back time'. Maybe it would be to re-live happy experiences or to spend time with loved ones who are no longer with us. Perhaps it would be to take different decisions at crucial times in our lives. For some, it might be to escape present difficulties.

However, of course we cannot do this. We live in the 'here and now', we are told that we cannot 'live in the past'. We live in the present and can hope for the future. There are some interesting Bible examples of people who would have liked to go back and make different life choices.

## Esau – Wishful Thinking

Isaac had two sons, Esau and Jacob. Esau was the elder, and as such would receive the larger inheritance and

blessing from his father, as was his birthright. However, after a day's hunting, he was famished and found Jacob with a pot of stew. For the sake



of a meal, he gave his birthright to Jacob, showing just how little he cared about the future, or God's blessings.

When Jacob took those blessings, admittedly by subterfuge, Esau was deeply upset. He wept and swore to kill Jacob. But there was no going back – he had made his decision, as the New Testament comments:

*Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears (Hebrews 12:16–17).*

We have to live with our life decisions, so let's make the right ones.

## Paul – Why Go Back?

The Apostle Paul was always very conscious of his own past. He had persecuted the Christians, even having

some killed, before his own conversion. He was so grateful that he had been called by Jesus, and forgiven.

*I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief (1 Timothy 1:12–13).*

In his writings, he reminds the believers that they had all come from unbelief, some from very godless backgrounds indeed, and how privileged they were to be part of God's family.

*Remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:11–13).*

Because of this, he is forthright in telling them NOT to go back to their former state. Why would they? Whether originally Jew or Gentile, there is no better state than being known by God, and through Jesus becoming part of His family.

*But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? (Galatians 4:9).*

God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the

*heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered... What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life (Romans 6:17, 21–22).*

The same applies to us; if we have made the right decision to follow Jesus, we must stick with it and keep trying to do the right things, to please God.

## **Living for the Future**

There is one way in which time can and will be turned back. In the Kingdom of God, the conditions of the Garden of Eden will be restored. Read Isaiah chapter 65 and Revelation chapters 21–22 to see descriptions of long life, fruitful agriculture, safety and godly living.

This is the hope we can share through Jesus; we make our decision whether to follow him now. Let's make that commitment and live in hope:

*Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new..." He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son (Revelation 21:5, 7).*

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