

The Bible – Key to the Future

THE old man, Daniel, was waiting. He had waited for many years. He had seen kings, conquerors and even empires come and go, and he had held high office in them. He was respected as a wise man, a skilful administrator and a man of faith.

Yet there was one thing he really wanted, one event which would vindicate his faith and fill his heart with joy. And now it was time.

It was around 540 BC and Daniel believed that God was going to bring the Jews out of exile and return the people to the Land of Israel. What is remarkable is that he knew when this would happen, because he read what God's prophets had written:

I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem (Daniel 9:2).

Sure enough, 70 years after the Jews were taken into captivity by the Babylonians, the Medo-Persian successors to Babylon allowed them to return to their homeland.

Foretelling the Future

Moving forward to the New Testament, we find more wise men using the Bible to unlock the future. At the birth of Jesus, we read about travellers coming from the East

to visit the new-born king. They asked at the palace in Jerusalem:

Where is he who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East and have come to worship him (Matthew 2:2).

The people of Jerusalem used their Old Testament – specifically the prophecy of Micah chapter 5 – to answer the question:

But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel (v6).

The birth of Jesus was foretold in such detail that these men were able to travel to Israel at the right time and be directed to Bethlehem, where Jesus was born. This is remarkable, but quite normal for Bible prophecy. The Word of God tells us what will happen in the future, and what we should do about it.

What Next?

How often we wish we could see into the future, to know what lies ahead for us. The Bible does not foretell the events of our individual lives, but it gives very clear details of the future of the world, and how we can fit into it.

Firstly, the Lord Jesus Christ is going to return to the earth:

This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw him go into heaven (Acts 1:11).

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

He will raise those men and women who have heard his message, then judge them, to decide who should be part of the Kingdom of God which will follow:

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt (Daniel 12:2).

Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear his voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation (John 5:28–29).

For those who have responded to Jesus' message in the right way, there is a welcome into the Kingdom he will rule for his Father, where they will live forever:

Then the King will say to those on his right hand, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).

That kingdom will be a perfect world, here on the earth, where eventually God Himself can live with men and women.

And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:3–4).

Using the Key

God wants every one of us to be part of that kingdom, and He even sent Jesus to die and make it possible. To use this key and unlock our future, we need to read our Bibles to understand what God wants, then:

- ◆ Believe God
- ◆ Be baptised
- ◆ Live God-centred lives.

God gives us the key – we have simply to use it!

