

I DON'T WANT TO BE A CHRISTIAN!



By Alec Catchpole, Pozzuoli, Italy

I was born into a loving family in the heart of London in 1965, my parents doing all in their power to make a warm and happy home, making sure that we were never left wanting anything important. I was baptized a Catholic, and took the first communion, but my idea of God was that He was boring, appealing only to old ladies and little children.

Wanting to get the most out of life, I tried to live life in the fast lane. During my teenage years, I began experimenting with all types of drugs both to experience the exhilarating feelings as well hoping to expand my mind. Although I never thought that it would happen to me, I became mentally addicted.



I didn't just want to get the most out of life; I also wanted my own existence to have a purpose. Being moved by the many great social injustices abounding in our world, I hoped to be able to do something about



them. By the time I was twenty, I was a member of a revolutionary socialist political organisation called 'The Socialist Workers Party', which is committed to the violent overthrow of the ruling class. On many occasions I was involved in violence against the police during strikes or demonstrations.

When I was twenty-two I had the opportunity to live in the Caribbean for six months. Before long I made friends with a top-class athlete and was amazed when he told me that he read and believed the Bible, (thinking, as I did, that it was only for old ladies and little children). As I had a lot of time on my hands, I decided to read it for myself. I spent some time comparing socialist and biblical beliefs and solutions. I soon discovered that Jesus was so different to what I imagined Him to be. I found a Leader who preached righteousness, justice, care for the poor, honesty, and love, Matthew Chapters 5-7. What is so



marvellous about Him is that He practiced what He preached, loving and dying for His enemies, Romans 5. 8-9! The more I read, the more I was attracted to Jesus and His teachings, especially the fact that He rose from the dead and lives and reigns in heaven, Philippians 2. 5-11!

I went to church hoping to find the Lord, and

“The Lord began to change my attitudes, desires and actions.”

read these words in the hymn book, ‘My old friends I’ll say farewell, I’ll not go with you to hell, I want to follow Jesus’. This was a time of decision in my life. Would I continue with violent politics, drugs and other vices, or would I abandon my sin to follow the Lord. After weeks of an interior battle, I surrendered my life to the Lord, asking His forgiveness for a life of rebellious sin, inviting Him into my heart and life to make me into the person that He wanted me to be.

Although I wasn’t aware of it at the time, that desire to be converted to Jesus Christ, expressed through a simple, yet very sincere

prayer was to have a profound effect upon my life. The Lord began to change my attitudes, desires and actions. First, He began by liberating me from a life of violence and drug addiction, filling me rather with His peace and love, 2 Corinthians 5. 17. He gave me a hunger for His word, the Bible, the ability to understand it and the will to obey it. He gave me the conviction that where possible I should put right the many wrongs that I did before becoming a Christian, asking forgiveness of those I had hurt and paying back those that I had stolen from. That desire to have an impact for good in society is now in His hands, and he daily gives me opportunities to love, help and serve those in need.

Twenty-four years have passed since I invited Jesus into my heart and I can testify that He has been faithful, patient, loving and kind with me, and I stand on His promise that the good work that He has begun in me, He will bring to completion, Philippians 1. 6.

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

I'll get round to it sometime ...maybe tomorrow!



By Stephen G. Baker, Liverpool

How good are you at complaining? One man who was interviewed recently on television reminded us that whinging is different to complaining . . .

Whinging is apparently just moaning but not doing anything about it. Formal complaining means that you are holding the service providers responsible for what they do or do not do and making sure that you get what you are paying for.

Most of us feel that we deserve to get what we pay for. This is only fair and it is our right, but how many of us actually get round to complaining when things go wrong? The purpose of writing this article is not actually to encourage you to complain (not that it would be a bad thing) but to point out that most of us don't get round to it very often. We mean to but we don't quite get round to it. That's true about a lot of things.

Think about this for example. How many of us have joined a gym and never used it?



How often do we think about slimming but never quite get there? Or your mortgage – you know the rate could be lower but because of the hassle of changing provider you never get round to it. All of these examples are about things that could improve our lives but we put off doing anything about them.

I want to ask you to consider another area of life which we all tend to ignore and pretend that it's too much hassle – that is a relationship, or lack of one, with God. We can all argue why we don't think God is real but in our hearts we know that God is there. Most of us live life as if it will never end and accuse people who raise the issues of life after death as being morbid. But we all know that we will die one day and to ignore the afterlife is fatal. You say, 'If I'm

wrong, I'm wrong', but the reality is if you're wrong you will be lost forever in a place you don't want to be!

The fact is that when it comes to life and death, existence and consciousness, God, heaven, hell and the why do we exist questions, we can't work it all out on our own. We don't have the capacity and ability to get our hands on all the information we need. We weren't around when the world began, we can't propel ourselves forward to see what the future holds but we can access the greatest book ever given to humanity to read what God has revealed. This book, the Bible, was given to us by God and its truthfulness in the ordinary things of life can be verified, i.e., what it says about geography, history, science, medical issues, etc. It was written this way to give us confidence that if it stacks up in the things we can understand then we can afford to trust God about the issues we don't know about i.e., the big issues of life which affect us all.

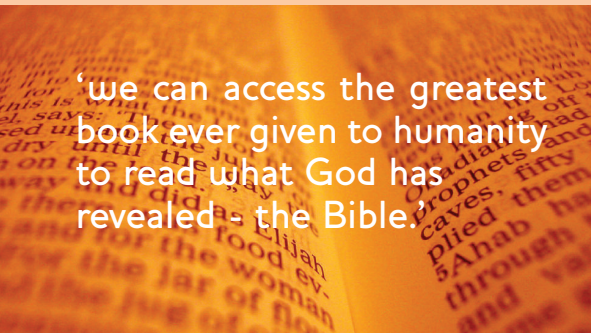
The Bible is God's revelation. He is telling us things that we would not otherwise know or understand. I am asking you to consider this and to think it through. Here are some of the things God explains:

Why is there hurt, pain and death in life? God's book says, 'By one man (Adam) sin came into the world and death by sin and

so death passed upon all men'. We hurt because of the choices we make. Ignoring God hurts, and not living the way that God created us to live also hurts.

Is there more to life than this? Jesus said that He came into the world so that we could have life as God intended. He explained that 'God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life'. God's love for the human race was such that He sent His own Son, Jesus, into the world not to condemn us but to save us. It is the death of Jesus on the cross that paid in full the price that was required to clear our guilt and reconcile us to God.

Is there life after death? The Bible teaches there is. God has been there forever. He is the great uncaused cause of everything. The Bible tells of an afterlife but it also teaches that Christ Jesus came into the world from heaven, the eternal living place of God. More than that it teaches that Jesus came back to life three days after He died and that over 500 people were witnesses of this. But back to you. What are you going to do this time? Ignore what is being said? Look into it further? Read the Bible for yourself? Seek the Lord and pray, calling out to God to hear and answer? Can I remind you – there will come a time when it will be too late! Prepare today to meet God.



'we can access the greatest book ever given to humanity to read what God has revealed - the Bible.'

DID YOU KNOW THE BIBLE IS THE BEST-SELLING BOOK OF ALL TIME WITH 100 MILLION SOLD EVERY YEAR?

THE KING'S SPEECH

By Ian Rees, Carmarthen

It was 1939, at the outbreak of World War Two, when King George VI broadcast perhaps the most famous speech he ever made. To listen to it now, on the BBC archives, is to hear the quiet dignity of a man who had a stammer that he fought all his life to control, a battle recently featuring in the award-winning film, **THE KING'S SPEECH**. It is also to hear the quiet faith of the head of a nation, an empire and a commonwealth, passing on to his subjects hope for the dark times that he feared lay ahead.

In that famous speech, the king quoted lines from a poem written by Minnie Haskins, which had been published in 1908 in a collection of her verse entitled **GOD KNOWS**. Some have thought she was an American, but she was actually brought up near Bristol. It is said that the image of the man standing at the gate of the year came to her as she stood at an upstairs balcony window one night, looking down the lit driveway to the gate of her house in Warmley, and seeing the darkness beyond it. She herself said she did not know the king was going to quote it in his Christmas broadcast in 1939, nor did she hear the speech, but heard a summary of it and thought she recognized the words. The poem had been given to the king by his wife, Queen Elizabeth, known to most of us since as Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. It stayed with the Queen Mother all her life, and was recited at her funeral in Westminster Abbey over sixty years later.

The lines of the poem quoted by the king sum up a great hunger in the heart of most men and women to know what the future holds. Countless thousands of people show that need to know by going to fortune-tellers, clairvoyants, and others who claim to be able to tell us the future. And wouldn't we all like to know what the future holds! There are so many uncertainties



**I said to the man who stood at the Gate of the Year,
'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown'.
And he replied, 'Go out into the darkness,
and put your hand into the hand of God.
That shall be to you better than light, and safer than a known way'.**

May that Almighty Hand guide and uphold us all.

around us. Will I keep my job, will I ever find a job, will I be able to pay my mortgage, will I lose my house, will I survive this illness?

Benjamin Franklin is reputed to have said, 'In the world nothing can be said to be certain except death and taxes'. The Bible says nothing about taxes (apart from the fact that we all need to pay them!) but it does tell us, 'It is appointed unto men once to die and after this the judgement'.

So God adds the judgement day to the certainties that lie ahead of us. He is a holy and a righteous God, who will not and cannot overlook our sin. He reminds us that all, with the sole exception of His Son the Lord Jesus, have sinned, falling short of His standard of purity, and that the wages of sin is death.

Can we avoid death and judgement? Are they inevitable, after all? Yes, we can avoid the judgement day. God, in love and mercy to sinners, sent His Son, known as Jesus of Nazareth, to die on a cross. Men put Him to a vicious death because they hated Him without a cause, refusing to believe what He taught. Yet, God Himself was deeply involved in the death of His Son, viewing Him as the willing substitute for sinners, bearing our sin and shame, and so judging His Son on that cross for sin He had never done.

The Lord Jesus suffered, the just in the place of the unjust, to bring us to God. So God will

now forgive the sin of all who turn away from their sinful ways, believing that Christ died for sinners upon the cross, and claiming Him as their substitute, the One who died in their place. In this way, a holy God can forgive sin, and spare sinners His judgement, seeing their sin as having already been judged when His Son died on the cross. And for those who believe and trust in Christ, taking Him as their Lord and Saviour, there will be no judgement day. The judgement day for those who believe in Him does not lie in the future, beyond the grave. For us, the judgement day has already taken place at Calvary, though it was not we who were judged then. Our sins were judged, and our punishment for them borne by our substitute, Jesus Christ

Uncertain of the future? Put your hand in the hand of God. That will be better to you than light, and safer than a known way. Trust in His Son, and you will know that he has already faced and dealt with death and judgement for you. Go forward, then, knowing that although you do not know the future you know the One who holds the future, and you, in his hand.

The problem of taxes, however, is another matter!





Vital Communication

By Blair Martin, Livingston

With many mobile phones, internet, social networking and 24-hour news channels it seems to me that there have never been so many methods of communication. Sometimes we may wish for peace and quiet and a chance to escape the steady stream of information we get. A lot of what we receive is unimportant to us but some is of great importance.

Recently I read of how a mobile phone saved the life of a young mother in Malawi. It was late in the evening in the village of Nkhotakota. There was no electricity in this village and none in the Bua Community Health Centre that served many people, including a pregnant mother who went into pre-term labour. The local Health Surveillance Assistant (HSA) was called to provide assistance because the local maternity nurse was not at home. The

battery-powered radio at the health centre had long-since died, and the only form of communication they had was the mobile phone that was provided to the HSA. The HSA, who had recharged her phone that day using a solar panel charger, sent a text message to the maternity matron at the District Hospital who immediately dispatched an ambulance to pick up the expectant mother. She was taken to the hospital and treated. Had it not been for that text message, the mother would have died.

While it is great that we can communicate with each other through these various ways and they can benefit us so much, the most important communication in this world's history is God's word – the Bible. As the Queen reminded us in her Christmas speech it is 400 years since the Bible first became available in English. Originally the Bible was written by about 40 men over a period of 1600 years in Greek, Latin and Hebrew. Every one of these men was inspired by God and didn't add or take away a single word themselves.

Why was God so keen to reach out to us and communicate in this way? The Bible tells us that God had a close relationship with the first man, Adam, which was spoiled because of Adam's disobedience and sin. We just have

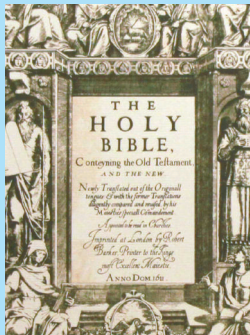


The Great Isaiah scroll from Qumran caves

to look at the news channels to see that there is sin in the world – scandals, perversions and brutality are all around us. The Bible makes clear, however, that sin has affected all our lives and tells us that ‘through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men because all sinned’, Romans 5. 12. None of us can live up to God’s standard of perfection and we are separated from Him because of that. This means that ultimately we cannot enter Heaven to be with God and will be punished eternally for our own sin in Hell. God loves us and doesn’t want this for us so has written the Bible to tell us how we can be saved from this punishment and brought to Him.

The first four books of the New Testament tell us about the perfect, sinless life of the Lord Jesus. He is God the Son and came into the world to show us the love of God

and to make a way that we can be reconciled to God. He came to die on the cross and take the punishment for sin in our place. ‘God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us’, Romans 5. 8.



God is holy and righteous and cannot let sin go unpunished. We could never pay the penalty ourselves so the Lord Jesus took the punishment for our sin during the three hours of darkness when He was on the cross. On this basis God can forgive those who repent of their sins and come to Him in faith realizing He is their only hope of salvation.

So the decision is yours. God has told you, in the Bible, His way of salvation. Now it is up to you to agree with God that you are a sinner and repent of your sins or reject God’s way of salvation and accept the punishment yourself.

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

John 3. 36

How? What?
WHERE?
TEN?

Guess Work or God's Work?

By Paul McAuley, Belfast, N. Ireland

Without doubt it was the longest and most interesting visit I have ever had to a petrol station in my life! I had just been preaching the gospel in a portable hall adjacent to the petrol station and called in afterwards to buy some victuals to last me the 15-minute journey home! The woman serving at the till asked me what I had been up to so I took the opportunity to tell her about the wonderful message of the gospel and the greatness of the salvation that God offers through Christ. She was totally underwhelmed! I asked her what she thought about such matters and she told me she was an atheist. When I asked her why she was an atheist she said, 'Because of science', although the tone of her voice conveyed an additional word, 'Because of science, stupid!' So this led to an interesting conversation about science, and resulted in her saying that neither of us knew enough about science to say whether it proves or disproves God. Despite the faulty thinking she evidenced by that statement, I let it go, just reminding her that she was the one who said her atheism was because of science.

I asked if I could read something to her from the Bible (the shop was very quiet), so she agreed. I opened my Bible to Psalm 22 and read some verses from it, then I read from Isaiah 53. I asked her who those passages were speaking about. She answered, 'Jesus', in a tone that implied it was the most obvious question ever; so I agreed with her that it was obvious - couldn't be anyone else - she nodded, as if to say, 'When are you going to get to the point?!?' So I asked her how such accurate, graphic descriptions could be given hundreds of years before Jesus was born. She hadn't realized this, so I explained that Psalm 22 was written about 1000BC and Isaiah 53 about 700BC, and these were just two out of dozens of ancient prophecies about the coming Christ.

She was at a loss for words, so I thought I would give an illustration to try to show what is going on. I said, 'Suppose I said to you, Tomorrow a car will come here for petrol, you wouldn't think I was possessed of any prophetic gift, but suppose I told you that a red Ford Focus was going to come into the forecourt at 09.02. Suppose I gave you the registration of the car, the names, addresses, ages and occupations of the people in the car. Now imagine you're standing here tomorrow morning and at 09.02 in drives the red Focus with everything exactly as I described, what would you think?'

She replied, 'I'd think you'd arranged it'. Of course she would! There's no way that could have been a lucky guess. So the question I had for her, as I pointed to the open Bible, was this, 'Who arranged that? Who gave David and Isaiah the telescope that allowed them to look down the centuries to events that were totally outside their experience? Who put their hand into the affairs of men to bring about the fulfilment of these Scriptures?' She didn't have an answer, I'm wondering, do you? The Bible gives the only answer that makes sense,

'Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit', 2 Peter 1. 21.'

But this is not just a subject of intellectual interest, but of huge personal relevance. These prophetic portraits not only tell us that the Saviour would suffer, how He would suffer, and when He would suffer, Daniel 9. 24-27, but they tell us why He would suffer - 'He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities' - He suffered as a sacrifice for sin, to be a substitute for sinners so that we could be saved. God has given ample evidence to show that this is the Saviour you need, and this is the only Saviour worth trusting.

QUICK QUOTE

I am an historian, I am not a believer, but I must confess as an historian that this penniless preacher from Nazareth is irrevocably the very center of history. Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all history. H. G. Wells

What think ye of Christ?

This copy of *faith*matters comes to you with the compliments of:



We hope you have enjoyed reading it and that you will follow up the suggestion made in the articles that you should read the Bible for yourself. We are not asking that you join a church, nor become 'religious' or turn over a new leaf, but that you find the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour and Friend. He can forgive your sins and assure you of peace in your life and a place in heaven.

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