



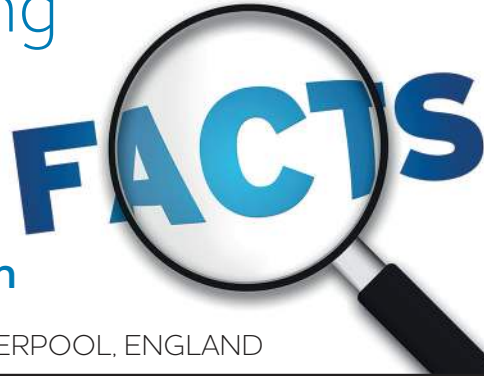
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YOUNG PRECIOUS SEED

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Fascinating Facts – Evidence from nature of a Creator’s touch

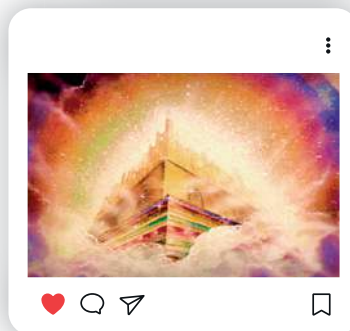
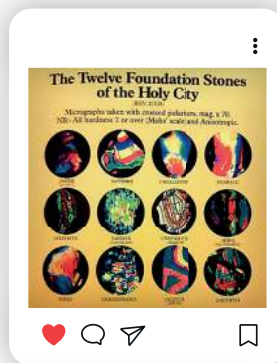


PHIL ARMSTRONG, LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND

One of the stand-out events of 2023 was the coronation of King Charles III, and I became rather interested in the Crown Jewels used in the ceremony. Perhaps you have been to the Tower of London and queued up to view this collection of ceremonial objects, which includes crowns, swords, sceptres, orbs, trumpets, and even a spoon! Among the 23,578 gemstones in the collection, the Cullinan I, also known as the Great Star of Africa, is the largest clear-cut diamond in the world. This 106g stone may sound impressive, but only until you turn to the end of the book of Revelation and find that God has made a huge city – the New Jerusalem – with twelve foundations, each made of a particular gemstone. The identity of these foundation gemstones is part of the information given to the Apostle John two thousand years ago by an angel, his extraterrestrial tour guide through his visions. They are the jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysopterus, jacinth and amethyst, Rev. 21. 19, 20.

Do you know that the choice of these gemstones is strong evidence that the scriptures are authored by God? There is something special about these twelve gemstones that John could not have known back then. Today, scientists can cut raw gemstones into very thin slices and view them through a microscope under cross-polarized light. This is very ‘pure’ light, rather than the usual jumble of wavelengths, and it is produced using two light filters like those found in polaroid sunglasses. According to David Woodward, of the twenty-eight known gemstones with a Mohs hardness value of 7 or over, sixteen of them produce a burst of different colours when pure light is sent through them. Amazingly, all twelve foundation gemstones of the city are in this group. The others are simply black when viewed under the same conditions. Woodward suggests reasons why the other four of the sixteen are not on the list, for example, ruby produces a dangerous laser light under these conditions.

If John chose gemstones at random, the probability of getting these twelve is less than 1 chance in 30 million! If John had chosen the stones without supernatural instruction, he would almost certainly have included diamond, one of the most valuable precious stones, yet it does not have the special property. These gemstones remind me that ‘all scripture is given by inspiration of God’, 2 Tim. 3. 16, and I am looking forward to the things that God has prepared for His new creation.



Sources

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DAVID WOODWARD, *Gems of the City*, Emerald Charitable Foundation, 1984.

Editor’s Introduction

Thanks once again for reading our magazine – we really do appreciate it. Whether you read it from cover to cover or just dip in and out of it, we hope that you find the articles interesting, challenging and biblical. One of our objectives is to encourage the study of scripture. Please don’t ever replace reading your Bible with reading books or magazines about the Bible. For good physical growth and health, we need to have a good diet and a reasonable amount of exercise. So it is for the spiritual health of the believer. The word of God is our food, and so we need to feed on it every day – how disciplined are you at reading the Bible? We also need spiritual exercise – you need to live and practise what you have learned from the word of God.

Every blessing,

Stephen Baker

Soul-Searching Scriptures

BY ERIC BAIJAL, WICK, SCOTLAND

One of the pieces of evidence that the Bible is the inspired word of God is the way the Holy Spirit takes a verse we may have read many times and impresses a lesson from it upon us personally. That happened to me with this verse a few months ago; and it has continued to grip me every time I read it. I found myself wondering about the wisdom of getting involved in a work opportunity that could have impacted on my freedom to preach the gospel. Then God spoke through Luke chapter 9 verse 60.

In this second main section of Luke's Gospel, the Lord Jesus begins His journey to Jerusalem. The disciples are going to learn that there will be personal sacrifice in following the Lord. He teaches them that the path of discipleship is not one associated with rest or comfort on earth. The Lord then turns to a man and commands, 'Follow me'.

Luke records that the man asks to be excused so he can first bury his father. There is no indication that his father was dead yet! He uses what might be thought to be a legitimate excuse of family responsibilities to avoid obeying the Lord's command, but the Lord Jesus replies, 'Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God'.

As I understand the verse, the Lord Jesus was telling the man that the spiritually dead could deal with the burial of the dead. In other words, there are certain responsibilities that unsaved men can fulfil perfectly well. He, however, was commanded to go and preach that men should repent and receive the King. Only believers can do this.

This verse has impressed itself upon me in relation to my

priorities and the use of time. There is a danger that a believer wastes time on sinful or worthless pursuits. However, there is also a possibility that they could be diverted from their primary calling by being taken up with legitimate commitments that are not where God would have them spend their time.

There are many worthy causes in our communities. There may be times for the sake of the reputation of the Lord and the local church when it is prudent to help. It would be a sad indictment on us if believers were the people who never show kindness to the elderly or provide help in the local school when volunteers are needed. However, we must never forget that our primary calling is to reach people with the gospel of Christ.

I have not managed yet to get these issues completely in balance in my life, but this verse helps me decide how I manage my time. Is the commitment or obligation core to my identity as a Christian? How does it fit with my personal calling? Could an unsaved person equally carry out the task? Is it legitimate and helpful for the advancement of the gospel? Why am I undertaking it?

'Letting the dead bury the dead' partly informs my decision not to be involved in the political system and to ask why I spend time in any charitable cause. Is it being done as part of secular employment? Is it being done with the advancement of the gospel in mind or is it a drain on my time that diverts me from my core responsibilities as a Christian?

I am praying that this verse will also help you prioritize spiritual commitments and obligations in your life.



We four kings... – Lessons from some of Judah's kings

BY RICHARD SMITH, BRIDGE OF WEIR, SCOTLAND



If Rehoboam was a carnal man, lacking in any conviction at all, is there any hope for his family? You've maybe heard the expression, 'the apple doesn't fall far from the tree', or 'a chip off the old block'. In other words, we often behave in the way that our parents did before us. It is certainly unusual, and often not an easy path, for a person to come out of the shadow of their parents – but it is possible!

Abijah had a lot of obstacles to overcome. His father was an arrogant, selfish, carnal man who was devoid of moral compass. God's instruction had been that Judah was not to fight with Israel after the division at Shechem, 2 Chr. 11. 4, and initially Israel had obeyed. However, that changed and 1 Kings chapter 15 verse 6 tells us that Rehoboam and Jeroboam had been at war all Abijah's life – he had never known anything else. What about his mother? She was Maacah the granddaughter of Absalom who had attempted to remove David, his own father, from the throne of Israel. She, according to 2 Chronicles chapter 15, worshipped an idol and had made a 'detestable image', v. 16 ESV, of it. Because of his recent family history Abijah was up against it! What would he do? 'And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him', 1 Kgs 15. 3. In particular, 2 Chr. 13. 2, 'there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam', in spite of God's instruction not to go to war against his relatives.

Do we just write Abijah off? Is he just a casualty of his parents' sin? There is a fascinating expression in 1 Kings chapter 15 verse 3, 'his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father'. This verse is worth investigating because it is making a comparison with the greatest king there has ever been, King David. There is a clue that although he was not the man after God's own heart that his forefather David had been, 1 Sam. 13. 14, there was a faint glimmer of his great-grandfather. Let's view Abijah in the same way as we viewed Rehoboam, in the 'triangle of conviction', namely his attitude towards the word of God, the house of God and the people of God. In the battle he had with Jeroboam, recorded in 2 Chronicles chapter 13, we see a different picture. Instead of risking his people's lives by putting them straight into war with an army twice the size of his, he tried to reason with Israel. He reminded them of the worship of God that went on in the house of God in Jerusalem. He clearly knew the word of God, because he understood the priesthood and the sacrificial system. It becomes clear that Abijah was a man of great conviction, had a real desire for God, His word, His house and His people. So, what was his problem?

Where Rehoboam lacked **conviction**, Abijah lacked **courage**. He didn't have the courage to reverse his father's bad decision to go to war with Jeroboam, or to remove his mother from the throne of Judah. He didn't have the courage to lead the nation back to the Lord again. He simply didn't have any backbone. It must have been a miserable life for Abijah, knowing the truth and not doing it. He must have felt his three years on the throne were a complete failure. To crown his disastrous reign, he realized that while he was trying to reason with Israel, they had trapped him in a military 'pincer movement', and were about to massacre the people of Judah. That was when Judah cried to the Lord, raised the battle cry, and roundly defeated Israel in what had seemed an unwinnable war. What was the secret? 2 Chronicles chapter 13 verse 18 states, 'Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the LORD God of their fathers'.

What about us? Whatever our background, however strong or weak our parental example might be, we must all stand on our own two feet, develop convictions about what matters to the Lord, and defend them with the courage of our convictions. Where does that courage come from? Is it within? Not at all – it is from reliance upon the Lord. It comes from an acceptance that I can do all things through Christ who pours His strength into me, Phil. 4. 13!



Saints' CVs: William Tyndale

BY JEREMY SINGER, BRIDGE OF WEIR, SCOTLAND

WILLIAM TYNDALE 1494-1536

Can you imagine the hardship of not being able to read the Bible in your own language? This was the situation throughout the Middle Ages when the scriptures were only available in Latin, which few people could read or understand.

William Tyndale stated his great ambition to a Catholic priest, 'If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy who drives a plough to know more of the scriptures than you do'.¹ Tyndale's life work was to translate the Bible from the original Hebrew and Greek languages into English. This effort was bitterly opposed by the Catholic church, but Tyndale persevered despite tremendous persecution.

Educated at Oxford and Cambridge, Tyndale was fluent in many languages. He had access to an edition of the Greek New Testament compiled by the scholar Erasmus, and published in 1516. Tyndale was forced to flee to mainland Europe in 1524. He not only faced pressure from church authorities in England, but also offended Henry VIII since he opposed the king's divorce and remarriage.

Tyndale's complete New Testament in English was printed in 1526 at Worms, a city strongly associated with Martin Luther. Some of these precious books were smuggled into England, although, sadly, many were burned by the authorities. Today there are only three remaining copies of Tyndale's original New Testament edition, one of which is held at the British Library.²

Later, Tyndale moved to Antwerp where he continued working on an English translation of the Old Testament. He was arrested in 1535 and imprisoned in Vilvoorde near Brussels. He spent a cold winter in jail; like the Apostle Paul, 2 Tim. 4. 13, he begged for a warmer coat and some study materials:

'Send me, for the Lord Jesus' sake, a warmer cap ... and a warmer coat. ... But above all, I beg and entreat your clemency earnestly to intercede with the lord commissary, that he would deign to allow me the use of my Hebrew Bible, Hebrew grammar, and Hebrew lexicon, and that I might employ my time with that study'.³

Tragically, in 1536 Tyndale was found guilty of heresy and condemned to death. He was strangled then burned at the stake. According to Foxe's Book of Martyrs, Tyndale's final words were: 'Lord, open the king of England's eyes'. This dying prayer was answered remarkably – within two years Henry VIII would

approve English Bibles being placed in churches, and within a century James I would commission a full translation of the Bible into English.

Notably, all modern English translations trace their heritage to Tyndale's work. He coined recognizable phrases like 'let there be light' and 'the salt of the earth'. Tyndale refused to use Catholic idioms in his translation; for instance, he translated the Greek word *ekklesia* as 'congregation' rather than 'church'. Literary scholars recognize Tyndale as the 'father of modern English'.⁴

When we encounter Tyndale's translation, it does sound strangely familiar to us. Here is a well-known evangelical passage:

'For by grace are ye made safe thorowe fayth and that not of youre selves. For it is the gyfte of God and commeth not of workes lest eny man shuld bost him silfe', Eph. 2. 8, 9.

On the other hand, some renderings might cause a wry smile. Here Tyndale describes Joseph:

'And the LORde was with Ioseph and he was a luckie felowe and continued in the house of his master the Egipitian', Gen. 39. 2.

If you are interested in reading the full text of William Tyndale's translation it can be accessed online at <https://www.biblestudytools.com/tyn/>.

So, what is our response to the life and work of William Tyndale? Surely, we must appreciate more fervently the value of the scriptures in our own language. We can thank God for Bible translators – people from centuries ago like Tyndale, together with more modern contributors such as Frances Siewert who compiled the Amplified Bible. Further, we can support the ongoing work of scripture translation and distribution. According to the Bible Society, complete translations of the Bible are available in 700 languages but there are more than 7000 languages in the world.⁵ Finally, we have renewed confidence in the preservation of God's word. We close with Tyndale's translation of the Lord Jesus describing the permanence of scripture:

'Heven and erth shall perisshe: but my wordes shall abyde,' Matt. 24. 35.



¹ As quoted in the *Actes and Monuments of these Latter and Perillous Days, touching Matters of the Church (Foxe's Book of Martyrs)* by John Foxe. Source: <https://quotepark.com/quotes/1939813-william-tyndale-if-god-spare-my-life-ere-many-yeares-i-wyl-cause/>.

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