

# Clifton News

291 January - March 2021

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“The LORD liveth; and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.” (Psalm 18.46).

We would like to wish all our readers the Lord’s blessing for 2021. As believers we can rejoice that the LORD lives and is on His throne. His will and purposes are being worked out in this world so that Christ will return to reign. It is our prayer that because of this pandemic, many will seek the LORD while He may be found and call upon Him while He is near (Isaiah 55.6).

Since the last publication, a number of believers have been called home to be with the Lord. David Stokoe went to be with the Lord on 9<sup>th</sup> December. David and Kathleen with their family were in fellowship in Clifton for many years from the early 1970s to 2007 when they moved to Faversham. A number of other brethren known to us were also called home, Bert Dykes (Selsdon), Fred Epps (Faversham), Randolph Rose (Lewisham), Erskine Jones (Jamaica). We uphold those who sorrow before the throne of grace..

We were able to hold our Carol service and Watchnight gospel meeting at the hall. We were so pleased to see visitors come who have been listening to the gospel on Zoom over the past few months. We give God thanks that the gospel cannot be bound and goes out in blessing (2 Timothy 2:9).

Apart from the Breaking of bread all our meetings are broadcast on Zoom. If any of you would like to listen to God’s Word, please enter the following on the Zoom website to join Clifton Hall.

Meeting ID: 756 5533 4423

Passcode: 186868

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# Meetings

## Lord's Day

Breaking of Bread 11.00 am  
(During outreach at local community events it is at 10 am)

Young people's Bible class 12.00 pm  
Family Service 4.00 pm

## Monday

Prayer and Bible Teaching 7.45 pm

## Wednesday

Seekers 6.30 pm  
(Term time only for under 10s)

Temporarily  
closed due to  
covid-19

## Friday

Friday Club 7.30 pm  
(Term time only for those over 10)

Temporarily  
closed due to  
covid-19

## SUNDAY AFTERNOON FAMILY SERVICE

### January

3 Alastair Rodger  
10 Alf Taylor  
17 John Aston  
24 Jonathan Docksey  
31 Nitish Patel

### February

7 Richard Catchpole  
14 Alastair Rodger  
21 Mike Surry  
28 Mike Surry

## **March**

7	Richard Catchpole
14	John Aston
21	Jonathan Docksey
28	Nitish Patel

## **MONDAY PRAYER AND BIBLE TEACHING**

(On Zoom only for this quarter)

## **January**

4	Eric Parmenter
11	Eric Parmenter
18	Tom Merriman
25	Tom Merriman

## **February**

1	Daniel Rudge
8	Daniel Rudge
15	Mark Lacey
22	Nitish Patel

## **March**

1	Robert Bennett
8	Robert Bennett
15	Robert Bennett
22	Nitish Patel
29	Richard Catchpole

## **SATURDAY MINISTRY MEETINGS**

(at 7.30 pm)

6 February 2021      Kevin Oh (Uxbridge)



# Question Box



*What was the star of Bethlehem?*

We answer a question that has been much asked in the news recently because of the conjunction of the two planets Jupiter and Saturn on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December 2020. It is an event that happens once every 20 years when these two biggest planets of our solar System appear to come near each other in the sky though Saturn's orbit is millions of miles further out than Jupiter. Once in 400 years, the orbits of the Earth, Jupiter and Saturn line up so that they appear to the unaided eye as one bright object. It has been calculated that one occurred in 7 BC near the time Christ was born. This is why newspapers have been calling it the "Star of Bethlehem" or the "Christmas star". Others suggest it was a comet or a shooting star.

All these attempts at natural explanations fail. When we look at what the Scriptures have to say about the star that the wise men followed, we notice a number of things. Firstly the wise men saw the star in the east and followed it for a number of weeks till they reached Jerusalem. This rules out shooting stars that are lumps of rock that hit the earth's atmosphere and burn up within seconds. The star that the wise men followed moved at the speed that the wise men could travel from the East to Judea. It seems to have disappeared as they reached Jerusalem and appeared again to show the way to Bethlehem. The star then led them to the very house where Christ was and by hovering above it (Matthew 2:9). It then disappeared once the wise men found the Saviour.

No natural phenomenon behaves like this. It clearly moved in an intelligent way and was a special astronomical object created by God for this purpose and controlled by Him.

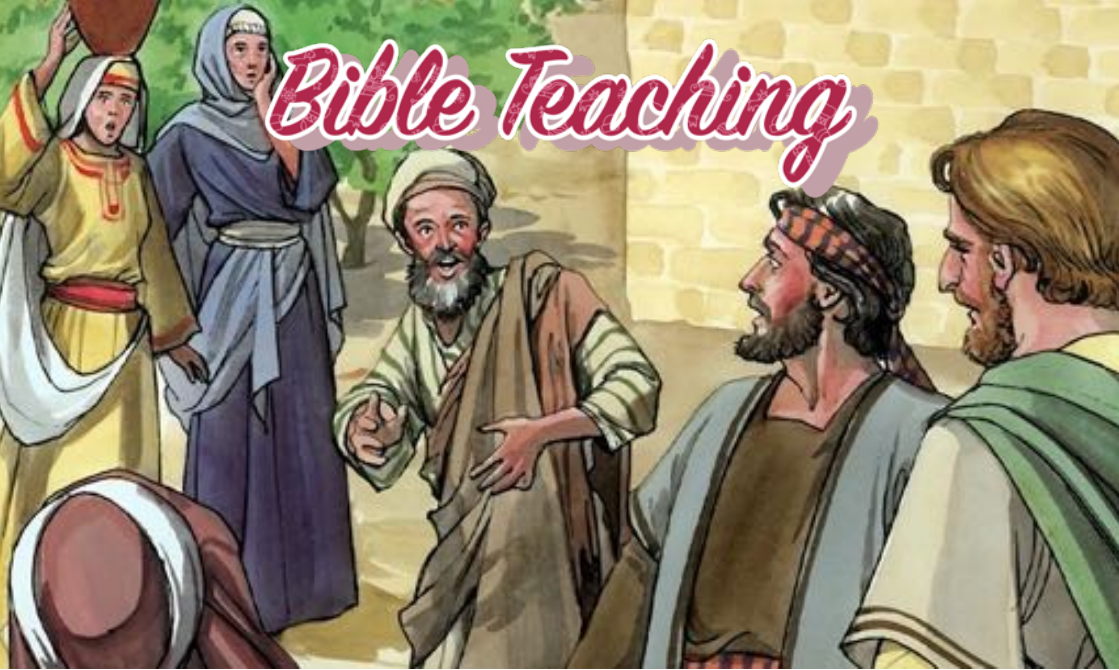
We read in Genesis that God created the stars to rule the night and for signs and for seasons (Genesis 1.14). They were also created for the benefit of mankind to aid navigation across sea and land (Acts 27.20). The stars also have names (Psalm 147.4).

Jesus is called the “Star out of Jacob” and the “Sceptre out of Israel” (Numbers 24.17). He said to the Apostle John, “I am the root and the offspring of David, *and* the bright and morning star.”(Revelation 22:16).

Jesus is the Light of the world and has the power and authority to wield the sceptre as King of kings and Lord of lords.

It is appropriate that a star led the wise men to the Saviour who is the Star that men should trust in, follow and wait for His coming from heaven to reign in power and glory.

*Nitish Patel*



## JOHN 9

(Part 3)

*From Bible notes by the late Tom Ledger*

**7. And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.**

“go wash” - If the man had washed in that pool the day before or the day after nothing would have happened. The reception of His word in the power of the Holy Spirit. The activity of the Holy Spirit needed to open our eyes blind to Christ.

“which is by interpretation, Sent” - See Scripture on “Sent” in John 1-8. See v.4 “I must work the works of Him that sent me.”

“He went his way” - Obedience, submission to His word, brings life, liberty, light. No questioning, no reasoning.

Oh, what a witness! Lord’s words confirmed, Unmistakable. Evident.



## THE NEIGHBOURS (vv. 8-12)

The Lord stays out of sight until v. 35. The reality of the healing account brought out where He was not known.

**8. “The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged?”**

“Is not this he that sat and begged” -

(A) The man is able to see everything, the sun, sky, house, the people! He has never seen them before but they have seen him! But his appearance and bearing is so different! “Why this is the same man. Incredible !”

**9. Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he.**

(B) In heaven it will be the same! Isn't that Tom Ledger? Oh no, its like him! The same person and yet oh the change!

Raised in incorruption - no more decay  
Raised in glory - spender, beauty  
Raised in power - strength, no more weakness  
A spectacular body

“I am he” - When the blind man says “I am he” i.e. I am the blind beggar etc ... But when the Lord says I am He, oh the difference.

**10. Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened?**

Bewilderment ! Amazed. Perplexed. Mystified!  
Has our conversion (a miracle!) caused questions to be asked?

2 Cor. 5.17, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation”

1 Cor 2.15, “But he that is spiritual judgeth all things (He is able to discern the nature of things, their true value. He knows what is from God and is able to understand it and enjoy it), yet he himself is judged of no man.” (1Corinthians 2:15)

(The nature of man cannot understand a man who is in fellowship with God with his mind and outlook and purpose).

**11. He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.**

(A) "A man that is called Jesus" - He has yet little if any understanding of His person. Yet we are to see this man growing in his apprehension of the Lord. What of us?

Cp chapter 4.

v. 9, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me ..."

v. 11, "The woman saith unto him, Sir ..."

v. 19, "thou art a prophet."

v. 29, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"

(B) "made clay and anointed mine eyes" - That is what He did for me! So we know Him first by what He has done for us! His salvation! His lowliness, His humanity, His humiliation, His cross.

Psalm 103.1-2, "Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

Psalm 104.1, "Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty."

"I know not" -

**Don't let pride destroy our simplicity and honesty.  
Keep to simplicity. Keep to what you know!**

(Below are a additional notes found on the chapter which are not part of Tom's preaching notes)

#### **V. 11**

The blind man told his story of his healing.  
He did not overstate his experience  
He did not try to tell what he did not know  
He did not glamourise his experience.  
No speculation etc ...

#### **V. 15**

Asked, kept on asking (imperfect tense). The man was being interrogated.

#### **V. 17**

The blind man did not reason, argue or question. He obeyed blindly!

"He is a prophet" "Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world." (John 6.14)

"And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?" (John 7.31)

#### **V. 22-23**

The fear of man especially religious man. "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe." (Prov. 29.25)

#### **V. 28**

Reviled, abuse, insult, became abusive

#### **V. 30-33**

The child of God knows more than the the learned atheistic professor.

\*\*\* Concluded \*\*\*

# Good News



## BEING READY

Many years ago, John was a poor servant boy to a rich doctor in London, England. John's master loved the Lord Jesus and often had church meetings in the large living room of his home.

At one of these meetings the doctor talked about the coming again of the Lord Jesus to take to Heaven all those who believe in Him.

Everyone else, he said, would be left behind. After the meeting was over, the doctor said, "Well, John, I just want to tell you that if Jesus comes before I die, I shall no longer want the things I have now.

He will take me away with Him and then you may have my house and all my money." Such an offer took John by surprise.

He could only stammer his thanks. That night he lay awake wondering why his master had offered him all that wealth.

Suddenly he thought, "Why should I want a house and furniture, a car, horses, and money after the Lord comes? How terrible it would

be to be left behind, even if all my master's belongings were mine!"

Soon he could bear the thought no longer. He slipped out of bed, ran quickly down the hall to the room where his master slept and knocked on the door.

"Why, John," asked the doctor, "what's the matter? What do you want?" "Please sir," answered John, "I don't want your house after the Lord comes, or your car, or horses, or money." "Well, John, what do you want?" "Oh sir, I want to be ready when the Lord comes, to go with Him to Heaven." Right there in the doctor's bedroom John put his trust in the Lord Jesus. Right there John was saved. Right there John was ready for the Lord's coming.

Dear reader, are you ready like John for the coming of the Lord Jesus? It can happen at any time and if you are not saved you will not be taken to heaven. All that you possess in this world will not be of any help in that day when judgment comes. Jesus said, "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matthew 6:20-21).

You can be ready by trusting the Lord Jesus as your Saviour. His blood shed on the cross alone can fit you for heaven. Put your trust that in finished work and not on your own works of self righteousness which in the sight of God are filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6).

"Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not." (Luke 12:40)





*Design in Creation*

# LOCUSTS

By Geoffrey R. Guile, BSc, MSc, PhD.  
Coltishall, Norfolk.

“The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands.”  
(Proverbs 30.27)

Last summer, there was a plague of locusts in East Africa that was the worst in 70 years. Locust swarms can cover hundreds of square miles, and each square mile will contain up to 200 million individuals. An adult locust can consume its own body weight in food every day and the impact of these swarms is often catastrophic. Last year one swarm in Kenya contained 200 *billion* locusts, covered 900,000 square miles and consumed food at the rate of four tonnes *every second*, about same amount as 150 million people.



## WHAT ARE LOCUSTS?

Locusts are actually just a type of grasshopper. They occur in many parts of the world but are not native to the UK. The young (called nymphs) are wingless and only the adults can fly. Normally they are solitary insects and you would hardly notice them. But when good weather conditions result in an abundance of food, their numbers increase rapidly, and a change in their appearance and behaviour occurs. The normally green nymphs become pink, and develop into bright yellow and black adults instead of the normal greenish-brown colour; they also become much more gregarious and form the flying swarms that can travel up to 90 miles per day, eating all the green vegetation and crops in their path.

These swarms can also cross vast stretches of water. In 1954 a swarm travelled from Morocco to the UK and in 1988 a swarm crossed the Atlantic from Africa to the Caribbean.



## LOCUSTS SHOW AMAZING DESIGN

Locust wings, like those of many insects, consist of thin membranes, one tenth the thickness of a human hair, supported by relatively thick longitudinal 'veins' with thinner veins connecting them and dividing the wing into 'cells'. The wing membranes are relatively fragile, but adult locusts live for up to 10 weeks and may fly for thousands of miles, beating their wings many millions of times during the course of their life. Insect wing membranes cannot heal if they are damaged, so how do they last so long?

It has been shown that the veins in the wings prevent tears spreading—without the veins, any tears in the wing membrane would



rapidly spread and the locust would be unable to fly. But because of the veins, tears are limited to one cell and the wing is preserved. This has been likened to the watertight compartments that help prevent a ship from sinking if the hull is holed.

Furthermore, it has been shown that the presence and pattern of the veins controls how the wings bend as they beat—and they bend in just the right way to achieve very high efficiency—much higher than if they were rigid structures.

These facts, of course, are evidence that locusts, like all life forms, were created by a Master Designer, they did not develop by a random process over millions of years, but were created complete and fully formed.

## **BUT WHY WERE LOCUSTS CREATED?**

As we noted, locusts are simply grasshoppers, and grasshoppers are a relatively innocuous creature. But we now live in a fallen creation, upon which the curse was placed, because of the sin of the first man. (See Genesis ch. 3, Romans. 8.20.) Thus, creatures today are not exactly the same as they were when originally created, and their behaviour will not be the same either. God has allowed the locust to become a creature that can change its behaviour in the way that it does in His sovereign purposes, just as He allowed some animals to become carnivorous and predatory.

## **LOCUSTS IN THE BIBLE**

The first mention of locusts in scripture is as the eighth plague of Egypt, in Exodus chapter 10, where God sent them as judgment on the Egyptians. But while they were used as God's instruments of judgment on Egypt then, and later on Israel (Joel ch. 1), locusts were an insect that the Israelites were to regard as clean, thus they could be eaten as food. Matthew 3.4 tells us that the diet of John the Baptist was locusts and wild honey. Weight for weight locusts have been shown to have a nutritional composition comparable to that of beef, so John certainly would not have been undernourished by his diet. While many Israelites will have eaten locusts following the giving of the law, even to the present day, is it not remarkable that a specific provision in the law of God helped provide for the needs of the servant of God many centuries later?



In Revelation chapter 9 locusts are used as a picture of demonic spirits, fallen angels that are currently imprisoned in the abyss, but they will be released in the tribulation period, where they will "torment men five months" out of malice, but even in this they will be God's instruments of judgment upon those who have rejected His Son as Saviour, and Israel who has rejected her Messiah.

The plagues of Egypt were indeed fearful, but the events that will take place in the future period of tribulation will be far more fearful. Believers today can give thanks that God "hath not appointed us to wrath" (1 Thes. 5.9), for all true believers will be taken to be with the Lord Jesus Christ before that time begins (1 Thes. ch.4).

At the start of this new year many believers may be wondering if this will be the year when He returns to take His people home to heaven. If he does will you be amongst those who go to be "forever with the Lord"? The wonderful message of the "gospel of the grace of God" will no longer be preached after His coming; if you have not done so already we urge you to turn to Him before it is too late.





The Sea of Galilee

