



UK AND IRELAND

**Langham**  
PARTNERSHIP

Magnify Edition

# transform

Spring  
2023

Langham Partnership News

**‘O Magnify  
the LORD  
with me...’**

**Psalm 34:3a**



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heading home to serve at  
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## Letter from the Editor

If you would like multiple copies of this magazine for friends, church members, etc., please ask Liz Wright, address below.

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### Have you considered including Langham Partnership in your will?

Like many mission organisations we can benefit greatly when friends make a final gift that continues to bless the ministries they have generously supported in life. Once you have made proper and primary provision for family and friends this can be a very effective way to go on making a difference to the church on earth when you have joined the church in glory! If you would like to consider this option in your will please let us know and we will send you a helpful legacy leaflet. Contact Simon Foulds: simon.foulds@langham.org

Welcome to our special 'Magnify' edition of Transform. **Magnify** is our campaign to 'magnify' the amazing things that God is doing through Langham's global ministries, and to invite more people to be part of what's happening. We want you to be blessed as you bless others!

So in this Transform, be blessed as you read about: the first indigenous evangelical Scholar from his Central Asian country (**page 6-7**); the launch of a unique one-volume commentary for Central & Eastern Europe (**page 4**), and a 'Word from the World' as Africa Preaching Director Femi Adeleye urges us to read the Bible for ourselves (**page 5**). Plus we've got our regular 'Word on the World' feature by Chris Wright (**page 10**) and an article by our (relatively!) new International Director Tayo Arikawe (**page 9**).

We're excited to be holding Magnify roadshow events across the UK this year. Please visit [magnify.org.uk](http://magnify.org.uk) or email [uk@langham.org](mailto:uk@langham.org) for more information.

In Christ,

**Victoria Marsay**  
 Media Producer for LPUKI



## Langham Partnership's Vision and Mission

**Langham Partnership's Vision** is to see churches equipped for mission and growing to maturity in Christ through the ministry of pastors and leaders who believe, teach and live by the Word of God.

**Our mission** is to strengthen the ministry of the Word of God through:

- nurturing national movements for biblical preaching (**Langham Preaching**);
- fostering the creation and distribution of evangelical literature (**Langham Literature**);
- and enhancing evangelical theological education (**Langham Scholars**), especially in countries where churches are under resourced.

### follow us



[uk.langham.org](http://uk.langham.org)



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<http://uk.langham.org/give>



### Scholars

Equipping theological leaders to reach their nations for Christ.

### Preaching

Training indigenous pastors and leaders to faithfully preach God's Word.

### Literature

Developing biblical resources to equip pastors and leaders.

# Greetings from the National Director:



**'O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.'**

(Psalm 34:3, ESV)

Dear Friends

How do you respond to the invitation in this verse? Immediately, perhaps superficially we might appreciate the exhortation to 'magnify the Lord', but then we might remember that there is nothing we could possibly do to 'make God bigger'! To my mind the theological and devotional clue is in the way the verse continues – the intention is to encourage us to 'exalt his name together'. So, we are not expected to do something or to be someone who increases God's 'size' (as if!) but rather, to make him and his attributes, his holiness, his love, his power, his justice, his forgiveness, ... better known in and through our lives, lived full of praise and devotion.

The NIV has 'glorify' but we wanted 'magnify', correctly understood!

No matter how shy or cautious or embarrassed we might be in living our lives for Jesus, our ambition should be that people around should notice God more. So, if we are not somehow raising his profile by our belief and behaviour we are probably not properly playing our part.

Most of us will be wrestling with the challenge to make our Christian faith more consistent and visible. The Holy Spirit has done his work to convict and convince us and he is now, we pray, transforming us into the people God wants us to be – more identifiable as the family of his Son. Most of our churches will be trying to raise such visibility in our communities, calling all folk around to glorify and exalt the Lord's name together.

Can Langham take this a stage further? **Can we all stand 'shoulder to shoulder' with brothers and sisters around the world, helping them live out their faith in many places of poverty, pressure and potential?**

'O Magnify the Lord... let us exalt his name together.' We invite you into the theme of this particular Transform and in hope, look forward to expanding our partnership.

With Christian greetings,

**Revd Canon John Libby,**

National Director, Langham Partnership  
UK and Ireland

## Magnify Goals

### Increase Book Distribution

#### Grant 60% More Library Books

Supply 650 Majority World Seminary and Bible College libraries with £4.3m worth of books.

#### Provide 20% More Books to Pastors

Equip 106,000 Langham Preaching participants with resource books.

#### Distribute 125% More Books

Increase to 300,000 books sent annually to the Majority World. Construct a new Global Centre for Biblical Literature.

### Develop Preaching Clubs

#### Increase Preachers Trained Annually

4,300 more pastors trained to enable them to preach with clarity, relevance, and faithfulness.

#### Develop More Preaching Clubs

1,700 more preaching clubs. A total of 875k people will regularly receive quality preaching from club participants.

#### Launch New Preaching Movements

60 more 'people groups' – those with a common language, culture, and geographic proximity.

### Maximise Influence of PhD Scholars

#### Increase the Quantity of PhD Scholars

A 50% increase in the number of scholars mobilised. 285 more scholars will equip 2.2 million church partners over 15 years.

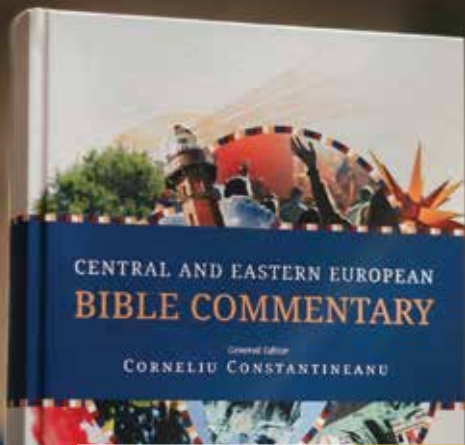
#### Maximise Influence of Post-PhD Scholars

A 150% increase in further developing PhD scholars to produce 160 desperately needed books.

#### Strengthen Majority World Partnerships

Intensify mentoring of Majority World institutions, co-sponsoring international conferences, and strategic speaking roles.

# Commentary for **Central and Eastern Europe** launched



**M**any of the commentary authors attended the special launch service in Prague, alongside various denominational leaders and Langham representatives: Ministries Director & Global Ambassador Chris Wright; International Director Tayo Arikawe and former Langham Literature Director Pieter Kwant.

It was a significant occasion as this is a unique project, bringing together evangelical scholars from 20 different Central and Eastern European countries to comment on the Bible and write articles from within their specific contexts.

The countries include Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro and Serbia.

## Significant hurdle

The project hit a significant hurdle in 2021, when tragically the General Editor **Corneliu Constantineanu** (a Langham Scholar and Langham Preaching trainer) died of Covid-19.

But praise God that a new editor stepped in (Peter Penner) and the commentary has now been printed and is ready to be promoted and distributed.

During the moving launch event, Peter noted Pieter Kwant's vast experience working on other one-volume commentaries and thanked him for sharing his expertise and inspiring the CEEBC to continue on.

**After several years of hard work, tragic loss, many prayers, and new and unlikely friendships, the Langham-supported Central Eastern European Bible Commentary (CEEBC) was finally launched in March.**



**Members of the CEEBC editorial committee, including the late Corneliu Constantineanu (first on the left).**

Peter also thanked Langham as a whole: "They have been helping, pushing, praying, supporting, completing and standing behind us with finances to help us. **We want to say thank you to Langham**, for those who have been supporting and making this project come true."

## Celebrating God

He also said it was important to celebrate God, who has made the commentary possible.

"When I think about our region,

imagine 40 years ago something like this happening, when we were in communist realities? Some of you have struggled with the realities.

"This commentary has been written by those people, but especially for the next generation, a generation that should have roots. Some of the roots are in this commentary. It also has wings to go beyond what we were."

Peter said he hopes the commentary helps people to honour God as they serve their churches and institutions, and to participate in the building of the kingdom and the mission of God until He comes.

The Central Eastern European Bible Commentary is available to purchase from [langhamliterature.org](http://langhamliterature.org)

## CEEBC FEATURES:

- **Theological applications of biblical teaching contextualised for Central and Eastern Europe**
- **More than 100 articles covering topics relevant to the Christian life in the present-day world**
- **A language that is easily understood and appealing to Christians across the globe.**



Watch the launch recording online: <https://bit.ly/3yTTTEI>



Through our Magnify campaign this year, we hope to raise support so that more ground-breaking one-volume Bible commentaries like the CEEBC can be produced. **Would you prayerfully consider helping us?** Please use the form in the centre of this Transform to respond financially.

# Word from the World

**Femi Adeleye, Langham Preaching Director for Africa, highlights the priority of studying God’s Word for ourselves especially in light of the ‘Prosperity Gospel’, which is particularly prevalent in his region.**

Some of us are content to rely on pastors or other “experts” to give us an understanding of the word of God rather than studying it ourselves. Others prefer to live only on “new revelations” of other people rather than studying the Bible daily. It is so easy to be misled if we are unwilling to use our God-given minds to study and think through the word of God, especially since those who preach and teach false gospels also read the Bible and claim to speak for God. Some of those who teach false gospels use their personal experiences as the basis for truth, forgetting that truth must be the basis of experience and not the other way around. (2 Timothy 3:16).

Thus, **we need to devote ourselves to studying all Scripture**, and not to be content with just hearing what others have to say. Yes, we need to hear it expounded, but we also need to study it, allowing our minds to grasp its truth.

Why are there so many “gospels”? The answer lies in how we interpret the Bible. Some claim to have an anointing that entitles them to some divine interpretation that is beyond us.



**Femi Adeleye (left) studying the Bible with another pastor in Ghana.**

Others interpret the Scriptures without recognising that they contain different types of literature or genres. We need to interpret the Bible in a way that does not distort its message.

Our goal must be to seek what God intends us to know and understand from the text, not what we intend to find. The primary objective is to read “out of” the text the meaning of the author – both the human and divine author – as it was understood by the audience then, and apply it to ourselves in our times. The Holy Spirit who inspired the authors will illuminate the word to us. No Christian or teacher has more of the Holy Spirit than other Christians. We should therefore not be intimidated by any claims to special “inspiration”.

It is very important to note that the different genres in the Bible are rooted in different historical-cultural contexts. For example, the Psalms, written in a poetic style, must be interpreted in a different way from the gospels, which are narratives. In interpreting prophetic passages, we need to determine the context the prophecy is given, its distant but contextual fulfilment, and how it fits into

the fact that the Messiah has come and will return as judge. We cannot read the Old Testament, which looks to the coming of the Messiah, the same way we read the New Testament, which was written after the Messiah was revealed.

**We are privileged to live at a time when there are many study tools available.** It is good to make use of them: a good translation of the Bible; a good Bible commentary and tools such as Bible concordances.

The importance of studying the Scriptures and “rightly handling the word of truth” cannot be over-emphasised. Jesus warned very clearly that prior to his return, there would be many false prophets, including some claiming to be the Christ, who would distort the truth (See Matthew 24:5 and 10-11).

This is already very much with us. False teachers and prophets use diverse ways to deceive many. What may look very attractive or popular to us may be detestable to God. Jesus warned in another passage that we must not assume that anyone who claims to have the ability to work miracles necessarily does so to the praise of God (Matt 7:21–23).

We must examine the quality and content of a person’s life and teaching in the light of the revealed will of God in the Bible.

**The Apostles also warned believers not to follow teachers who were presenting different gospels.**

Paul warned that not only would the number of such teachers increase in the last days, but that some of their teachings would be energised by demons (1 Tim 4:1). Peter indicated that false teachers would introduce their destructive heresies in subtle ways (2 Pet 2:1). He warned that they would seek to exploit the church (2:3) and take delight in pleasures (2:13). In addition to their being experts in greed (2:14), they would forsake the right way (2:15).

If we do not resist such teachers and their doctrines, however appealing they may be, the ultimate risk is that we, too, may drift from the right way and embrace a different gospel, which is really no gospel at all (Gal 1:6–7). The way to resist them is by understanding the truth ourselves.

*This is an edited excerpt from Femi Adeleye’s book ‘Preachers of a Different Gospel’ (Hippobooks, an imprint of WordAlive, ACTS, Step, and Zondervan, 2011).*

# Scholar from dangerous Central Asian country returning to **serve underground seminary**

Thanks to the generosity of Langham's supporters, Stan's first evangelical scholar ever is currently completing his PhD (in the US). He will return to serve the Church in this country, where preaching the gospel is illegal and violence against Christians is common.

"My name is Amir\*. I was born in Eastern Stan in a really rural area. When I was seven years old my parents decided to move to the capital city for a better life. So I grew up in a big city of two million people. Since we were part of the Soviet Union, maybe 20 per cent of the population is Russian. They would identify themselves as Russian Orthodox. Those like me who speak Stani as their primary language would identify themselves as Muslim.

## Being a Christian is not really safe

"Evangelicals are a mixture of Stanis and Russians together. I think there are between 0.2 and 0.7 per cent in this range. Being a Christian is not really safe so when my parents accepted Christ, after two months **someone told them that they're going to kill them**. And they also told my parents that they know the schools that me

**Around the world, more than 315 Langham Scholars are serving in 90+ nations. But the country of Stan\* has never had an indigenous, evangelical scholar - until now.**

and my sister go to and which classes we were in.

"Therefore, I grew up with this very high sense of being alert to not tell anybody that I'm a Christian because **being a Christian in Stan most of the time means it's dangerous**. So we have that grand narrative saying if you're Stani you have to be Muslim. So Islamic faith determines or identifies your ethnic identity. In the Islamic faith they think everyone is Muslim initially so everyone is just in delusion when they're not Muslims. So when you

accept Islam it's like you came back to actual faith.

"When I share the gospel message with Stanis the first question is how a Stani can be a Christian. For the Stani Church to multiply, we need Stani workers.

## The harvest is plentiful

"In the Bible it says the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. That exactly fits Stan. The harvest is very very plentiful. Stani people, Stani Muslims, non-Muslims. They're very



Amir\* is the first indigenous evangelical scholar in Stan

open to these religious conversations, to the questions of faith. That's what they want to talk about. But **we have very very few people from the Church who can effectively communicate it to engage with those issues."**

Amir's PhD will create new opportunities for him to equip church leaders across the country.

"I think that education in the first place is not just information it's a transformation. So I think PhD has a different level of impacting us, changing us, so we think maybe in deeper ways in some issues comparing to Master's degree students. To my knowledge – I might be wrong – there is no Stani-speaking Stanis who have this degree from a seminary. We have so many Islamic schools in Stan and whenever a regular Stani Christian wants to talk to these Muslims, they say you don't have proper training to talk about these kinds of issues so stop talking to me.

"Another reason for me to have a PhD is to show them I am educated, I have all the credentials to talk to you about the religious issues. So when I graduate, I'm going to be the first



Stani whose primary language is Stani who has that PhD.

"This I hope will motivate other young Stanis to study and have a deeper understanding of what they believe.

**"Without this Langham Scholarship I wouldn't be able to afford to study here.**

"We are planning to move back to Stan as soon as I'm done. I'll be teaching in one of our underground seminaries. I'll keep writing articles, maybe even books.

### **Creating an authentic Christian identity**

"But the big vision for me is to create an authentic Stani Christian identity

and to do that I think we need real Stani Christians there first.

"We have to stop sending missionaries there or stop using all these resources produced outside of Stan. So we have to produce the theology there.

**"In heaven I want to speak the Stan language,** which means I want to have many Stanis there!

"So it's worth sacrificing ten to twelve years here on earth."

Amir is aiming to graduate in May and plans to return to Stan with his family in June.

He is one of 85 Langham Scholars currently completing their PhD. On average, each Langham Scholar will train 7,733 students over the course of their career.

*\*The Central Asian country featured in this article is extremely sensitive, so names and places have been changed to protect identities.*



Through our Magnify campaign this year, we hope to raise enough support to enable 50% more Scholars – like Amir – to gain PhDs, then impact their nations for Christ. **Would you prayerfully consider joining us in this?** Please use the form in the centre of this Transform to respond financially.



# Supporter's Page

## Who is Jose Laussu?

**My name is Jose Laussu, a Baptist minister and Langham's Supporter Development Officer in Scotland. I live in Largs on the West Coast of Scotland.**



I grew up in a loving Christian home attending evangelical churches and my parents taught Christian values to the family. But I began to have a personal

relationship with Jesus at age 14 after a year of preparatory school studying catechism in the format of questions and answers. A career in the oil industry emerged as my first job, where I worked as a quality assurance and quality control inspector and two years later, I sensed God's calling for ministry. I then studied at multidenominational theological institutions, which gave me the platform of rubbing shoulders with biblical scholars and peers who sharpened and shaped my identity as a minister and provided me with helpful role models of evangelical preaching and pastoral care.

As an ordained minister, I am deeply committed to the gracious wisdom of Scripture and its power to transform lives. I endorse a trinitarian and cross-

centred theology, the sufficiency of Scripture, fidelity to the text, salvation, evangelism, social concern, mission, worshipping relationship with God, the preservation of sound doctrine and the pursuit of godliness.

Having both secular employment and ministry experience, after my tenure with the Baptist Mission Society, I joined Langham Partnership persuaded by my admiration for John Stott, his books, commitment to biblical faithfulness, expository preaching, sensitivity to issues of poverty and concern to equip leaders in the Majority World.

### What excites me about my role

Through my current role, I have the opportunity of affirming uncompromising love in my relationship with the supporters by keeping them informed about Langham's work and praying with them and walking with them in the journey of supporting God's work through Langham around the world. The joy is incalculable!

If you are in Scotland and would like to contact Jose, please email him: jose.laussu@langham.org



## "We attend Langham Live because..."

... it's so encouraging! We're privileged to meet and pray with saints worldwide. It helps us remember that **God's mission is so much bigger than our small village church.**

Sue and Richard Nicholson, Derbyshire.



## Giving to Langham

In this special Magnify edition of Transform, your giving form is stapled into the middle of the magazine. Please prayerfully consider financially supporting Langham's work around the world.

## Hearts warmed at Shore Street Presbyterian Church, Donaghadee

In March, our Supporter Development Officer in Ireland Mark Armstrong was privileged to present Langham at Shore Street Presbyterian Church, Donaghadee (NI). Around 250 people in the congregation were encouraged and inspired as they listened to Mark share what God is doing through Langham around the world. If you would appreciate a Langham presentation at your church, please email: uk@langham.org



Mark Armstrong with Shore Street minister Rev Graeme Fowles.

## Why do you support Langham?

*"God has graciously given me biblical tools and deep fellowship with other believers. I would like my gift to help others to understand God's word in their culture."*

A supporter in Northern Ireland who donated to the Christmas Appeal



# A Letter from our International Director...

**I grew up in a nominal Christian home and my parents taught us good morals. We went to church regularly but I did not place faith in Jesus Christ to be my Saviour during this time. The turning point for salvation came to me during my first year in university in Nigeria. I was invited to attend a Christian Union event on the university campus. It was during this programme that I heard the gospel proclaimed clearly to me. I knew that church attendance or just having good morals would not save me. Instead, I learned that Christ has paid the price for my sins and he paid it in full. Therefore, the only condition required of me was to place my faith in him for eternal salvation. Ever since then, I have been enjoying the joy of Christ as I keep growing up in him, despite the challenges of life.**

**B**efore I joined Langham, I worked for GEM Europe as Europe Director and later I served as the Director of Ministries at the London City Mission. I led and developed strategic missional plans for these organisations, as well as providing executive leadership and management for my teams. I got to know about the role of Langham Partnership International Director through Langham's recruitment agency. I was asked to apply based on my records of strategic ministry impact and development delivered to my previous organisation. The ministry of Langham resonated with my desire to see the Word of God taught and preached throughout every area of the world and I am excited to be part of this ministry now.

My hopes and plans for Langham are geared toward expanding our programmes to serve more leaders across the globe. **There are still many leaders in the Majority World that**

**need equipping toward preaching and teaching God's Word faithfully and expositively.** So, I would like to see Langham grow to serve more pastors and leaders to be able to fulfil God's mission effectively in their own, often challenging, contexts. It is a fact that churches rise or fall based on their faithfulness to Christ and the proclamation of his gospel. That is why equipping and training are important for those who teach and preach God's Word.

There is still a growing need to raise more scholars in Biblical studies in the Majority World so that they can help provide training support for the churches, and also to engage contextually with their own unique issues by writing or teaching. Often times many seminaries lack appropriate Biblical resources, especially those written by their own regional scholars.

This is why I would like to see some growth in our Publishing/Literature



Programme. I have just returned from the Czech Republic to launch the first ever Central and Eastern European Bible Commentary, written by over 100 scholars from about 20 countries in that region (page 4). I would like to see more of these in other parts of the world.

Just like above, I would like to expand the scope of our partnership to include more national member countries especially those from the Majority World. Apart from monetary support, these non-western partners will bring valuable mission perspectives to our global ministries.

As Langham continues to serve the Majority World churches and leaders in the ways described above, we are therefore magnifying their voices. We do not give them a voice because they already have a voice given to them by God. But Langham provides the conduit for these voices to be heard in the global landscape of mission, through our programmes (Preaching, Scholars and Literature). In doing this, the Majority World churches and leaders will be able to strengthen churches in the Northern Hemisphere, especially in a time like this, when Christian faith is shrinking in many western countries. Therefore, we see that the success of "Magnify" would have many ripple effects, ranging from local impacts to strengthening the global church. **So, I welcome you to join hands with us in this Magnify campaign.**

'For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown for His name in ministering to the needs of God's people, as you do.' (Hebrews 6:10)

Thank you for your partnership in the gospel.

In His Grip Alone,

**Rev Tayo Arikawe**



**Rev Tayo Arikawe speaking at the Central Eastern European Bible Commentary launch in Prague (see page 4 for more).**



# Word on the World

Chris Wright seeks a biblical response to the earthquake in Turkey.

## “You have shaken the land...”

I was reading Psalm 60 the morning after the news broke of the devastating earthquake in southern Turkey and northern Syria on 6th February 2023. The words of verse 2 stood out like a literal description and a desperate prayer. I read the verse in some astonishment, imagining it as the cry of people in that region

*You have shaken the land and torn it open*

*Mend its fractures, for it is quaking...*

The context of the rest of the Psalm shows that it was not referring to a literal earthquake, but an experience of extreme danger from hostile enemies, a threat so severe that God seemed to have abandoned them and it felt like the earth itself was falling apart. The Psalm cries out to God for help, but whereas the Psalmist has faith that God will ultimately come to their aid and give them victory, we cannot know what kind of faith or prayer is on the lips or in the hearts of the suffering, bereaved and dying thousands in Turkey and Syria – other than that our God, who knows when a sparrow falls to earth, sees and hears the pain of every man, woman and child created in his own image. And we can add our laments and grief along with them, as the Psalmists do when their suffering seemed as inexplicable as it was unbearable. Lord have mercy!

There is something so viscerally terrifying about a powerful earthquake that it becomes a very understandable metaphor for what happens when God acts in judgment. Isaiah 24 is just such a portrayal of the comprehensively cosmic judgment of God on the whole earth and all peoples – a cataclysmic vision that is matched only by its echoes of the

final judgment in Revelation.

*<sup>19</sup> The earth is broken up, the earth is split asunder, the earth is violently shaken.*

*<sup>20</sup> The earth reels like a drunkard, it sways like a hut in the wind; so heavy upon it is the guilt of its rebellion*

*that it falls—never to rise again.* (Isa. 24:19-20)

And here is that echo in Revelation. It is the seventh and final “bowl of wrath”, and its target is the world of human rebellion symbolised as “Babylon”, whose fall will be portrayed and celebrated in the following chapters

*<sup>17</sup> The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, “It is done!” <sup>18</sup> Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since mankind was the quake. <sup>19</sup> The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath (Rev. 16:17-19).*

### Not judgment

But if earthquakes can be a metaphor for the judgment of God, we cannot reverse the logic of the metaphor and suggest that any literal earthquake is actually an act of God’s judgment in our day. Sadly there are those who make that assumption about natural disasters, with the pastorally and morally monstrous implication that

those whose lives are torn apart by them are somehow to blame for their own suffering. Didn’t Jesus forbid us to make such assumptions (Luke 13:1-5)? We know that those living and dying in northern Syria have suffered the worst, how can we think that the God who apparently shows up in blessing among joyful students in Asbury, USA, should show up in cataclysmic wrath on people who have already been the victims of years of human evil, violence and savagery? Of course, we believe the Bible’s severe warnings about the awful reality of God’s judgment, but we do not have the prophetic authority of inspired Scripture to identify any “natural disaster” (or any individual suffering, accident or illness, either) as an instance of that judgment in action.

### Not the curse

Another “spiritual” reaction to such events connects them to God’s curse on the ground in Genesis 3. I have to say that I am not convinced of this, however plausible it may seem. The curse of Genesis 3 relates to the relationship between humanity and the soil on which we live and depend, a relationship in which human work is now toilsome, sweated and a struggle. Paul does of course tell us that the whole creation is subjected to frustration and looks forward to its liberation along with the redemption of our bodies (Rom. 8). But it is dubious, in my mind, to equate this “frustration” with the movement of the tectonic plates in the earth’s crust and the resulting occurrence of earthquakes, volcanoes and tsunamis. Without those fundamental geological processes our planet would not support life on

earth as we know it, for those tectonic movements and volcanoes account for so much else – mountains, rivers, soil, precipitation etc – the very things that have enabled human habitation and civilization.

What is certain is that human sin, wickedness and folly make the results of natural disasters very much more destructive of human life than they would otherwise be. Every earthquake seems to be followed by angry accusations, not only over the slow and inequitable arrival of aid (often hindered by political obduracy), but even more over the prior corruption, greed, bribery, and sheer malpractice, negligence and political collusion, that claimed so many lives in thoroughly unsafe buildings. This has certainly been exposed and reported in appalling detail in Turkey. It is telling, therefore, that when Isaiah links the “earthquake-like” judgment of God to the curse, it is specifically human sin and guilt that he puts his finger on, even as he begins with the suffering of the earth itself, an eery premonition of the climate crisis we also now face.

<sup>4</sup> *The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the heavens languish with the earth.*

<sup>5</sup> **The earth is defiled by its people;** *they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant.*

<sup>6</sup> *Therefore a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt.* (Isa. 24:4-6)

## Not “signs of the end times”

Another popular response to such calamities is to regard them as signs that we are nearing the last days of this world. Didn't Jesus say that we would know the end was near when the news is filled with wars, rumours of wars, earthquakes and famines? Well, no. Actually he said the opposite.

<sup>7</sup> *When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.* <sup>8</sup> *Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in*



The cleanup of the wreckage of a collapsed building, Diyarbakir, Turkey.

*various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.* (Mark 13:7-8).

Such things are the stuff of human history throughout the ages, and will continue to be so until Christ returns. It is only three weeks since the earthquake, as I write, yet already it has faded from our news bulletins, displaced by other tragedies – just as it displaced saturation news of the invasion of Ukraine, floods in Pakistan, famine in Somalia, anarchy in Haiti, wars in Yemen, Congo, Myanmar... and on and on. Our memories are short, as is our capacity to bear it all. Jesus was right, such things happen but the end is still to come.

“The beginning of birth pains”, was a Jewish saying that recognized there would be a period of great suffering before the Messiah would come - the pains before the birth. Likewise, Jesus implies that such birth pains have indeed begun, for he will return and there will be both judgment and salvation. So when we hear of such things, it is not “telling us the time”, but telling us not to be alarmed, but to live in faith, expectancy and hope.

And to live without fear. For that is the “meantime” response that the Psalms call for, even when the unthinkable happens. For God is the refuge for all who trust in him – whether they actually live or die in the storm. Faith is not immunity against all disaster, but the presence of God in the midst of it. It is said that a journalist asked a bereaved homeless woman in the wake of the Haiti earthquake, “Where is your God now?” to which she replied, “Where he’s

always been – here beside me.”

<sup>1</sup> *God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.*

<sup>2</sup> *Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way*

*and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,*

<sup>3</sup> *though its waters roar and foam*

*and the mountains quake with their surging* (Ps. 46:1-3)

The last word goes to Isaiah, with yet another familiar echo picked up in Revelation. After his devastating chapter 24 comes the good news of chapter 25. Not only is God himself the refuge from the storm (see vs. 4-5), but God will ultimately destroy the storm itself – the all-destroying storm of death. And God will do it “on this mountain” – meaning Jerusalem, where a small hill called Calvary would be the place where, through the death of his own Son, God himself would swallow up death forever.

<sup>7</sup> *On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples,*

*the sheet that covers all nations;*

<sup>8</sup> *he will swallow up death forever.*

*The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears*

*from all faces;*

*he will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth.*

*The LORD has spoken.*

<sup>9</sup> *In that day they will say,*

*“Surely this is our God;*

*we trusted in him, and he saved us.*

*This is the LORD, we trusted in him;*

*let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.”* (Isa. 25:7-9).

We would love to  
see you this year!

# Magnify Launch

All Souls, Langham Place, London,  
22nd April 10.30am -1.30pm



## Road shows

### May:

Manchester,  
Dumfries and Galloway

### June:

Sheffield, Nottingham, Cambridge

### September:

Dundee, Aberdeen, Tonbridge,  
Brighton, Inverness, Exeter,  
Birmingham

### October:

Bristol, Cardiff, Oxford  
and Lisburn.

TBC: Newcastle and Carlisle

## Conventions

### Keswick Portstewart

(8th-15th July)

**Keswick** (15th July-4th August)

### Bangor Worldwide

(18th-27th August)

TBC: New Horizons, Coleraine  
(5-11th August)

For more information  
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