

# Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1451



***Making Music – page 3***

***Are You Watching for Jesus? – page 9***

***Three Steps to a Happier Life (2) – page 15***

# Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

121st Year

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1451

A monthly magazine published by the Christadelphians (Brethren in Christ) and available throughout the world. Its objectives are – to encourage study of the Bible as God's inspired message to men; to call attention to the Divine offer of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ; and to warn men and women that soon Christ will return to Earth as judge and ruler of God's world-wide Kingdom.

## Magazine orders to the address nearest you:



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**New Zealand** – Christadelphian Witness, P.O. Box 15-457, New Lynn, Auckland, New Zealand

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– Bible Mission, PO Box 61, Solo, Java

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**Bangladesh** – Christadelphian Bible Students, PO Box 9052, Banani, Dhaka 1213

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**Publisher:** The Glad Tidings Publishing Association (a registered charity) number 248352  
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## Acknowledgements

### Photographs:

Cover: Laurence at the Organ,  
Brisbane Town Hall,  
Australia John Quixley

### Illustrations:

Photos.com pg 3; Christian Clipart 10,14; CMPA 17b; Felicity Norris 11; Art Today 4-9,12-13,15-17a,19.

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# Making Music

Aldous Huxley was a writer with a very clever turn of phrase. He once said: *“There is only one corner of the universe you can be certain of improving, and that is your own self. So you have to begin there, not outside, not on other people. That comes afterwards, when you have worked on your own corner”.*

That takes some doing, of course, for it is always easier to see the potential for improvement in other people, or in other situations, rather than in ourselves. It takes time for us to realise that we only see part of the whole picture.

## Unseen World

The apostle Paul once said that he could endure his present problems by looking beyond them to the unseen realities of life. He believed wholeheartedly in the purpose of God and in the unseen world – inhabited by God, the Lord Jesus and the angels, who now occupy heaven. For Paul, as for all other true believers, that world is every bit as real as the one in which he lived – which he could see and hear. This is what he said:

*“Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but **the things which are not seen are eternal**” (2 Corinthians 4:17,18).*

A moment's thought will confirm the validity of what Paul says. There are lots of things in life we cannot understand. Take Music as one example. Huxley said of that: *“After silence, that which comes nearest to expressing the*

*inexpressible is music”.* Many readers will find that assessment baffling; whilst others might nod profoundly and agree that, for them, music affects or touches them in a way that few other things can. Some people are on music's wavelength; others are not.

## Reading Music

It's not just musical appreciation that divides people into different categories – some people liking one thing, some another, some nothing at all! It is the same when it comes to making music. Laurence Lephherd, who is a Christadelphian, is pictured on this month's front cover, during a recording session for a music CD, at the organ of the Brisbane Town Hall in February 2002.

Many of us might look at the music he is playing but not understand it at all, far less be able to produce it ourselves. Others would just love to have a go on that organ, if only they had the opportunity. It's a matter of ability, understanding, interest and willingness. Those are among the factors that

separate us into different groups of people who do various things, or who choose not to.

The gospel of salvation has a similar effect – dividing people into different groups. Some understand and believe it; others have no interest, no insight and no inclination to find out about the things of God – things that belong to the unseen world. If you thought that the gospel was given to mankind to unite everybody and give them a common hope of universal salvation, then you have never considered seriously this saying of Jesus:

*“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.’ And ‘a man’s foes will be those of his own household’” (Matthew 10:34-36).*

## **Making Music Within**

When we become interested in what the gospel teaches and make it the centre of our lives, as we need to do, that can have a separating or dividing effect simply because it gives us such a different perspective on life. We get to understand what God is doing in the world and how that affects us. We come to realise that there is a plan and purpose in life and that we have become part of it; and we respond to God’s gracious invitation to put Him at the centre of our lives, as we follow the Lord Jesus.

That doesn’t mean that we cut ourselves off from those we know and love; of course not! It becomes our greatest desire that they should share our insight and understanding and that they too should find hope and meaning in life. Again it’s helpful to think about music and its effect.

Think what it is like when somebody takes an interest in music, or learns to play an instrument. The whole household knows about it, either because music is being

played somewhere or because practice sessions are underway. It follows that the sound of music – pleasant or otherwise – is likely to flood every corner and fill every ear!

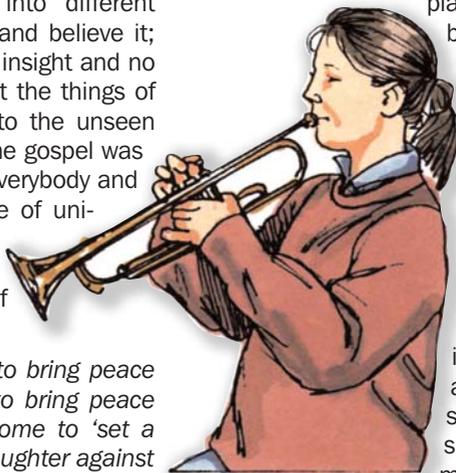
Giving us an insight into his inner life, the apostle Paul once said that believers should strive to make music in their

hearts, by which he meant that their contemplation upon the grace and mercy of God should have such an uplifting effect that it would be as though they were singing with joy inside themselves:

*“Do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:18-21).*

Notice the sequence of thought: if you make melody in your heart to the Lord – being right with him, thanking him for all he does and feeling at one with him, then you will also live harmoniously with fellow-believers. It’s a matter of attending to that one corner of the universe you can be certain of improving – your own self – and then working out from there so that you can share the blessings and benefits with others.

**Editor**



# Why Are People So Hurtful?

**At the supermarket a man almost knocks you over as he forces his trolley ahead into the queue. At the exit a child sobs because her brother has taken her chocolate.**

Sounds familiar? Yes, we're used to unkind behaviour. It seems there's no car journey without coming across rudeness on the road. "Road rage"; "trolley rage"; and worse, – war, oppression, genocide. They all come down to the same thing: People are just not kind to each other.

## What Started It?

So, are we born like that? Many parents would say yes when they see their children squabbling, wanting their own way. As they grow, it often worsens; older, or more powerful, children sometimes bully the weaker ones. Occasionally that bullying has a tragic consequence – children have been killed, or have killed themselves, as a result. Not all children are bullies, of course, but most parents prefer to see a gentler side exhibited by their youngsters.

Yet adults find the same thing in the workplace – it's just that the 'playground behaviour' there is more sophisticated. Powerful characters on the factory floor can make life a misery for those who need the work



so much they can't make a fuss about how they are treated. And it doesn't stop there. 'Corporate bullying' happens too, when big companies swallow up small ones and don't care what happens to the employees; indeed they make the acquisition so they can make savings by laying people off. It's the way market forces operate – making money is what it's all about, sometimes regardless of the hurt that is caused.

## Worldwide Evil

It should be no surprise that the things that happen at home, at school or in the workplace also happen worldwide, the difference being the scale of what then happens. Thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, can die because they don't submit to the wishes of the people governing their country, or because they are just not properly cared for.

Poor services can result in vital shortages; poor healthcare can mean widespread disease and death; and food shortages result in famines. Wars with neighbours – like the Israelis and Palestinians or between India and Pakistan – can result in hundreds of needless deaths. And internal strife – like that now going on in Iraq – can mean that military forces and civilians are blown to pieces every day.

Sometimes people ask why God lets these things happen. The better-informed might



even ask how these events can be reconciled with the Scriptures that say that God hates the wicked:

*“The LORD knows the thoughts of man, that they are futile ... He has brought on them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; the LORD our God shall cut them off (Psalm 94:11,23).*

Yet it seems that such people do very nicely and that nothing really troubles them or interferes with their way of life. So what is going on?

But just before we pass judgement on all those people we don't much like or approve of, ask yourself these questions.



- ✪ “What about me?”
- ✪ Have you ever lost control?
- ✪ Done something you later came to regret?
- ✪ Said a hurtful or spiteful word?

Of course you have! We all have! But does God want us to be like that? And what can we do about it, if anything?

## What God Intended

When God first put people on the earth he saw that everything was ‘very good’ (Genesis 1:31). It might have stayed like that if there had been no rules and no laws. It was only when God introduced a law – forbidding access to the fruit of one tree, while allowing access to all the other ones – that it became possible to ascertain whether goodness would become the order of the day. All God asked Adam and Eve to do was to follow the instructions He had provided. They were to steer clear of the forbidden fruit; what could be simpler?

But they didn't do it. Instead they chose

their own course of action – they broke the law of God, ate the fruit and, in the process, tried to increase their own prestige (Genesis 3:1-7) and to diminish God's authority and the superiority of His order. Eden saw the birth of humanism – the start of a process of putting man, and his wants and needs, both first and foremost. It was a disastrous start and things soon went from bad to worse.

God could not have disobedience in His new creation. Just as, say, the planners of a military campaign must have total obedience from their troops if their plans are to work; so God had to have obedient people on his planet. Only those who respected God and his earth would treat it

in the way he had designed it. People who put self and selfish desires first would be likely to despoil, pollute and corrupt God's creation – which is exactly what has come about.

## Evicted and Affected

Adam and Eve were thrown out of paradise – they had to leave the Garden of Eden and start afresh in the less-favoured world outside. It was not just that difference with which they had to cope either. As a result of their act of disobedience they were different inside. They thought differently, felt differently and thus acted differently – for Sin had come into their lives as an active and persuasive force:

*“Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12).*

All people born after Adam inherited his

tendency to do wrong rather than right. We hardly need the Bible to tell us this. We know, if we're honest, that that's how it is with us. That's why people are so hurtful: it's the way human nature works. It isn't a supernatural Devil that is the source of our troubles: the Bible is clear where evil comes from. Jesus told us that all evil comes from our hearts: it's the way our minds work, unless we do something about it:

*"What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man" (Mark 7:20-23).*

### Another Force at Work

The apostle Paul sums things up perfectly when he says:

*"I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Romans 7:21-23).*

That is a long-standing analysis of the human condition, for the prophet Jeremiah said just the same thing with his spiritual diagnosis:

*"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).*

So we have two problems, both of them desperate, and both having a common denominator:

- ✦ World evil, and
- ✦ Evil in ourselves.

### What's God's answer?

The Bible tells us that God will not put up with evil on the earth forever:

*"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9);*

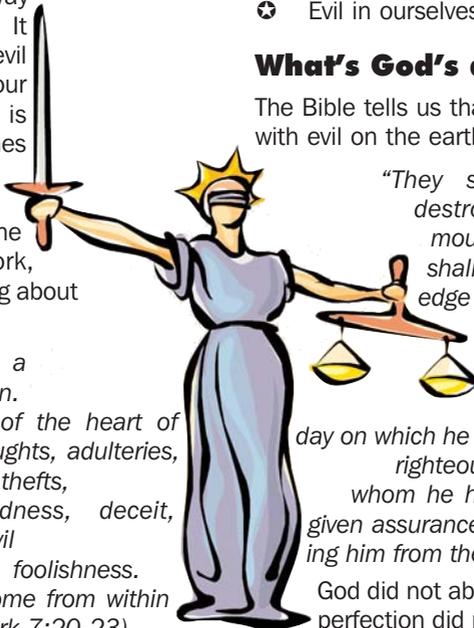
*"He has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).*

God did not abandon his plans when perfection did not take place at first.

One day this earth will be filled with his glory; it will not then be the evil, polluting world that now exists – which is full of people who have no time for Him. That can only happen when a completely different government rules the world.

The changes that will then come about are reviewed in the next article in this issue which describes a world:

- ☑ at peace,
- ☑ with righteous laws in place,
- ☑ justice administered to all,
- ☑ plenty to eat for everyone,
- ☑ sound religious instruction,
- ☑ people worshipping God in truth and happiness, and
- ☑ satisfaction and fulfilment abounding.



That's the way out of the present mud-  
dle and confusion that exists because our  
world is now overrun with evil and wicked-  
ness.

### **What about Us?**

The second big problem we identified had  
to do with our own struggle against sin, in  
ourselves. What can we do about our per-  
sonal failure to please God? When the  
apostle Paul despaired about his evil  
nature he said this:

*"O wretched man that I am! Who will  
deliver me from this body of death? I  
thank God – through Jesus Christ our  
Lord! So then, with the mind I myself  
serve the law of God, but with the flesh  
the law of sin" (Romans 7:24,25).*

It was his contact with the Lord Jesus  
that made the difference, for Paul came to  
realise that Jesus came into the world to

save sinners, and that meant that he  
could be saved (1 Timothy 1:15). Salva-  
tion is a process that requires under-  
standing, belief, baptism and a life of  
faithful obedience.

What we could not accomplish our-  
selves, God has done for us by sending  
Jesus. He lived the only perfect life that  
has ever been lived on this earth, at the  
end of which he gave himself as a sacri-  
fice for sin. From then on everybody who  
identifies with that sacrifice – by the way  
they respond to God's invitation – can be  
reckoned as "right" in God's sight.

God wants all of us – every one of us –  
to find the salvation he is offering so that  
we will no longer be Hurtful but Healed  
and Wholesome. It is only through Jesus  
that we can find that new life and make a  
new start with God.

**Joan Lewis**

## **The New Life**

Baptism is a brand new start to a wondrous life in Christ –  
The most important thing we'll ever do;  
It is a new beginning where God's values are put first,  
And we embrace things honest, pure and true.

We have God as our Father, His Son our loving Friend;  
From now on we will never be alone;  
And as we pray each day for help to walk in spiritual ways,  
Our heart will be their dwelling place – their home.

in Adam we inherit death: in Christ, the gift of life;  
When Christ returns, what blessings He will bring!  
All tears then wiped away, and we will all be blessed  
With Eternal Life on earth, with Christ our King.



**Colleen Simons**

# Are You Watching for Jesus?

Not everybody accepts warnings when they are given – about severe weather conditions, looming dangers, potential diseases, or impending military actions.

It may be that some people prefer not to think about coming calamity in the hope that it doesn't come. But, as **Derrick Banyard** explains, there is one thing well worth waiting for which people are also ignoring – to their peril.

## Jesus is Coming

Once asked when he would return to earth to bring about the end of this age and to establish the Kingdom of God, Jesus listed a string of different events that would signal his Second Coming. You can read them in Luke chapter 21 and see at once how those things line-up with what has been happening in recent years – wars, famines, earthquakes, trouble of every sort and things getting increasingly frightening and perplexing.

Those affected by such events would of course be distressed and concerned; but those who were watching for Jesus would see things somewhat differently. For, Jesus said:

*“Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near” (Luke 21:28).*

In this article we would like to show briefly why those who have faith in this coming event earnestly desire Jesus to come again.

## Who is He?

Jesus is the Son of God. By His power, God brought forth a son to the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:26-35). To this Son, God

promised that He would give the throne of his forefather, King David of Israel (v.32), and the kingdom over which he was to reign would have no end (v.33). By way of conformation, if any was needed, the priest Zacharias was empowered by God to proclaim that Jesus had come in fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham:



*“Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets, who have been since the world began, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he swore to our father Abraham: to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life” (Luke 1:68-75).*

## Without Sin

Born of a mortal mother, Jesus himself was mortal and therefore “was in all

points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). He was and is: "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26). We



know how Jesus suffered, died and was buried, but God raised him from the grave. The apostle Peter said of him: "whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be held by it" (Acts 2:24).

Jesus submitted completely to the will of his Father, whatever that meant or required. As the apostle Paul wrote:

*"He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted him and given him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"* (Philippians 2:8-11).

## **God's Chosen King**

This exaltation to glory, because of his perfect obedience, is often referred to. The apostle Peter recognised it when he observed that Jesus was referred to in Psalm 110 and, quoting from that ancient writing, he understood that it foretold the time when Jesus would ascend to heaven to await God's favour and the end of this age:

*"This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being*

*exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he poured out this which you now see and hear. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he*

*says himself [in Psalm 110]: 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool." Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ'"* (Acts 2:32-36).

Since his sacrificial death for man and his subsequent resurrection, that is the position that Jesus now occupies. Having now "the power of an endless life" (Hebrews 7:16), Jesus is well able to help those who love and serve him. His interest in such people is real and full of compassion for our condition, as shown in his ministry. For nobody else ever spoke like this man; as he once said:

*"Come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light"* (Matthew 11:28-30).

## **Giver of Eternal Life**

Believers in Jesus hope to be made immortal at his return. They desire that "everlasting life" which some will receive; if they have died before his coming then their hope will be resurrection to eternal life (Daniel 12:2) ; if they are still alive they will hope to be changed to become like Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:50-53). Either way, they

will then be “equal to the angels ... sons of God, being sons of the resurrection” (Luke 20:36); as such they will be among those who can address Jesus the King in these terms:

*“You are worthy ...for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:9,10).*

That is the prospect for all true believ-



ers — to become immortal, infallible rulers over the whole earth, with Jesus Christ as King!

## **God’s Coming Kingdom**

We can only highlight some of the blessings which will follow the return of the Lord Jesus to reign on earth as King: It will take a thousand years, and during that time the earth will become what God has always wanted it to be like – a place where right values prevail.

### ✧ **Universal Rule**

*“He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth ... Yes, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him” (Psalm 72:8,11).*

### ✧ **Reformation**

*“When your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness” (Isaiah 26:9).*

### ✧ **No hiding place for the Criminal**

*“For evildoers shall be cut off; but those who wait on the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; Indeed, you will look diligently for his place, but it shall be no more” (Psalm 37:9,10).*

### ✧ **Just Rule**

*“He will judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice ... He will bring justice to the poor of the people; he will save the children of the needy, and will break in pieces the oppressor” (Psalm 72:2,4).*

### ✧ **Wars to Cease**

*“He shall judge between the nations, and shall rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isaiah 2:4).*

### ✧ **Enhanced Fertility & Fruitfulness**

*“There will be an abundance of grain in the earth, on the top of the mountains; its fruit shall wave like Lebanon; and those of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth” (Psalm 72:16).*

### ✧ **Godly Teachers**

*“Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left” (Isaiah 30:21).*

## ✧ Long Life

*"They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of my people, and my elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands" (Isaiah 65:22).*

## ✧ People United in Language and Religion

*"Then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they all may call on the name of the LORD, to serve him with one accord" (Zechariah 3:9).*

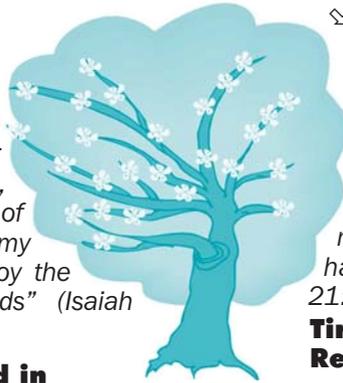
## ✧ The Millennium

### The World's Reformation Period

*"I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4).*

### Resurrection & Reward

*"I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books" (Revelation 20:12)*



*"... as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of my people"*

## ✧ The Outcome –

### All the Earth's Inhabitants Immortal

*"God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4).*

### Tireless Energy for the Redeemed

*"Those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).*

### Fulfilment

*"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9);*

*"The LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be – "the LORD is one," and his name one" (Zechariah 14:9);*

*"Truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD" (Numbers 14:21).*

In view of this coming transformation, can you wonder that the believer in the Bible's "Glad Tidings of the Kingdom of God" longs for the Return of Jesus and watches earnestly for the signs of his Coming? Are You Watching for Jesus and Preparing for that Coming Age?

**Derrick Banyard**



## Bible Line

Telephone message for UK readers

Ring 08457-660668

# More about Saul's Conversion

*Tracing the work of the Risen Christ in the Acts of the Apostles, John Hellowell has described how Saul the Pharisee was stopped just outside Damascus by a vision of the Lord in glory – “brighter than the sun”. That vision changed his life, for Saul was blinded and entered Damascus in a very different frame of mind from the way he had left Jerusalem.*

### Ananias Baptizes Saul

Saul was not the only one who had received a vision. The Lord Jesus also appeared in a vision to one of those whom Saul intended to track down and arrest – a highly respected disciple called Ananias. He was instructed to go to the house of Judas, which was in the famous ‘Straight Street’ in Damascus, and there ask for Saul of Tarsus.

The Lord informed him that at that very moment Saul was praying. He told him that Saul had seen a further vision in which a man named Ananias had entered the house and, laying his hands on him, had restored his sight.

Naturally, Ananias was reluctant to visit Saul, for he was fully aware of what Saul had done in the past and why he had come to Damascus. The Lord Jesus assured him that he was in no danger, for the Lord had selected him as his emissary to the Gentiles – he was to go before rulers and also to the Jews as an ambassador for Christ. He added a comment to

indicate that now the table had been turned: it would be revealed to Saul that he must suffer many things for the name of Jesus.



Despite his initial reluctance, Ananias obediently did as he was instructed and, by laying his hands on Saul, he restored his sight and also imparted the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17). Immediately Saul was able to see and his first reaction was to be baptized. This is highly significant. Saul had not eaten or had anything to drink for three days; he had received the Holy Spirit; yet the first action he took was to submit to baptism.

The importance of baptism has been a recurring theme in Acts so far (2:38-41; 8:13, 16, 36-38) and that continues throughout (see 10:47; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5). The correct form of baptism was evident from the previous article in this series – in connection with the Ethiopian eunuch who was baptised by Philip, where total immersion was practised (Acts 8: 38, 39).

## Saul begins to Preach

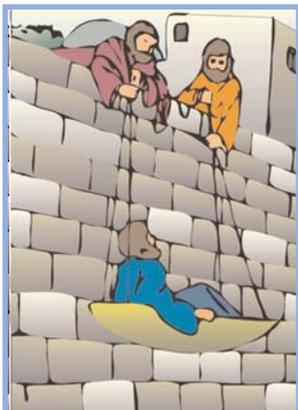
After his baptism, Saul broke his fast and was able to spend some time with the disciples in Damascus. Fired by his new-found faith, naturally he wanted to convert his fellow-Jews and so he preached in the synagogues in Damascus. His audience was perplexed. The man who was famous for his persecution of believers was now endorsing them! Not only that, but his listeners could not resist his arguments. This was no doubt a result of the Holy Spirit, but even on a natural plane a 'poacher turned gamekeeper' has the advantage of knowing where the weaknesses are in arguments that he had previously deployed.

Saul soon knew how it felt to be persecuted for, unable to counter his arguments, the Jews resorted to their favourite tactic – to eliminate the troublemaker. A plot was hatched to kill Saul as he left the city, so the gates were watched day and night. Saul was, however, aware of their intentions and escaped by being lowered through the wall in a basket. The memory remained with him for he recalled in his second Corinthian letter:

*“In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to apprehend me; but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands” (2 Corinthians 11:32,33).*

## Return to Jerusalem

After leaving Damascus and spending time elsewhere, no doubt in deep contemplation, Saul returned to Jerusalem



where he sought to join the disciples. But they were understandably suspicious at first, perhaps suspecting that all this was an elaborate ploy to infiltrate the community and thereby be better able to destroy it. However Barnabas came to Saul's rescue and introduced him to the Apostles, which enabled Saul to explain how his conversion had come about and also to describe his experiences in Damascus.

As a result, Saul was accepted and then, once again, he attempted to convert his former colleagues. These were almost certainly those members of the Hellenistic synagogue where Stephen had preached, as a result of which he had been stoned to death (Acts 6:6,9;7:59). Once more Saul experienced what was to become the typical Jewish response – he became the subject of death-threats. So, upon discovering this plot, the disciples took Saul to the port of Caesarea and sent him home to Tarsus.

From this time, with Saul no longer organising means to destroy the community of believers and with their erstwhile adversary now at home and well away from the scene, a measure of calm descended upon the early believers and their number began to increase.

## Miracles Abound

The narrative of Acts now returns to the activities of Peter, who, travelling through the country came to Lydda (modern Lod, the site of the airport for Tel Aviv). Here Peter healed a man named Aeneas who had been paralysed for eight years. Just as his Lord had done to others in the past, Peter commanded the man to rise from his bed and so he did! The effect of this

miracle was to convert many in the area and, we may reasonably assume, Aeneas himself.

Nearby, in the coastal port of Joppa (modern Jaffa) lived a disciple named Tabitha (in Aramaic) and Dorcas (in Greek), both names meaning “gazelle” in their respective languages. She was a very caring disciple: *‘full of good works and charitable deeds’*. Sadly, she became ill and died.

As Peter was known to be nearby – Lydda was only about 9 or 10 miles away – two messengers were despatched to urge him to come to help. On his arrival, Peter was confronted with a group of weeping widows who showed Peter the clothes Dorcas had made. It is said that the text implies the clothes were being worn by these widows and this would explain why they, and not married women, were present – Dorcas had clothed them in their need.

Peter cleared the room, as the Lord Jesus had done in the case of Jairus’ daughter (Mark 5:40) and prayed. Then he addressed the body: *“Tabitha arise!”* She opened her eyes and seeing Peter she sat up. One can imagine her initial consternation at finding herself alone with a strange man but Peter helped her up and called everyone back into the room.

As the news spread, so the effect was to ensure that many were converted. Peter stayed on in Joppa, living with Simon, a tanner. We shall see that this, apparently incidental detail about where he was staying, is a gentle pointer towards a character change that was also taking place in the apostle Peter. The gospel is turning out to be a powerful force in changing the lives of men and women and it can have the same effect in our lives too, if we will let it!

**John Hellowell**

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## Part Two

# Three Steps to a Happier Life

**Some might argue that it is over-simplifying matters to suggest that just three steps are necessary to achieve a happier and more fulfilled life but the message of the Bible is very clear.**

God offers us purpose and inner peace in this life and per-



manent and everlasting happiness in the life to come.

Just three things are necessary if we are to find that better way of life. We must:

**B**elieve the True Gospel;

**B**e Baptised, and then

**B**ehave

So the message is simple and powerful – just three “Bs”.

## Believe the True Gospel

To find true happiness, we must do what Jesus commanded – we must believe the gospel:

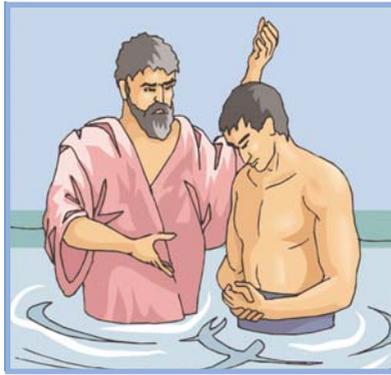
*“Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and*

*saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:14-15).*

But what exactly is the gospel or “good news”? It can be summarised like this:

- ❖ *There is only one God who is the Creator of the entire world.*
- ❖ *The Bible is totally inspired by Him, and is His only message to us.*
- ❖ *God’s plan for the world is to put an end to suffering, evil and death; and to establish an everlasting kingdom of peace and righteousness on earth. He has already started this process by providing his Son, the Lord Jesus, who died as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind.*
- ❖ *Sin is the problem that confronts us all, as does its consequence – death. When we die, we are dead – totally unconscious and in a state of decay – until the Second Coming of Jesus.*
- ❖ *Sin does not stem from a supernatural devil that is tempting us to sin. Sin – expressed in greed, wars, theft, murders, anger and violence – comes from human beings, for we all have sinful natures.*
- ❖ *The Bible word “Satan” simply means ‘Adversary’ – not a supernatural devil. The word “devil” is used to personify sin, or sinful systems which oppose God.*
- ❖ *Jesus is God’s only begotten Son and he is the only One who has the power to save us from death.*
- ❖ *The Holy Spirit is God’s power by which He:*
  - ◆ *created the world;*
  - ◆ *sustains all life; and*
  - ◆ *governs world affairs and believers’ lives today.*
- ❖ *Jesus will come back to set up God’s kingdom on earth. The Kingdom will last for a thousand years and God’s rulership will then be endless.*
- ❖ *The nation of Israel has an important part to play in God’s plan. The historical and current events which surround Israel provide convincing proof that God exists, that the Bible is true, and that Jesus will return soon.*
- ❖ *When he returns, Jesus will rule the world from Jerusalem – to fulfil God’s promises made to Abraham, David and Mary.*
- ❖ *He will start this wonderful era by raising and judging the dead. Those who have been faithful will be granted immortality; those who have been unfaithful will be returned to the grave.*
- ❖ *When Jesus reigns as king of the world, he will solve all world problems – pollution, wars, violence and all other difficulties – ultimately abolishing death itself.*
- ❖ *Jesus will also resolve all our personal problems; but there is something we must do once we come to believe all these things.*
- ❖ *He said that in order to be saved, we must be baptised by being totally immersed in water, and then*
- ❖ *We must live in a way which is appropriate to those who seek to follow him in their daily lives.*

Biblical baptism is part of a process of belief and repentance, and must therefore be an adult decision. A baby has nothing to repent of, and a young child is not mature enough to decide whether he or she wants to follow the Lord Jesus. First we must understand the gospel, then we must be baptised.



The Bible often summarises the gospel in these two ways:

**The kingdom of God;**  
and  
**The name of Jesus Christ.**

Jesus died for our sins and, by being baptized into his death, we come to share in the promise of the gospel – that we can have a

place in God’s everlasting Kingdom on earth. But we must take active steps to believe and find out what the gospel is really about. Don’t just leave it to reading your *Glad Tidings* magazine every month, or even attending Christadelphian meetings once or twice a week.

### “Gospel of the Kingdom”

Mark calls the gospel that he wrote “the gospel of the kingdom of God” (Mark 1:14). Do you understand and believe that gospel, as outlined above?

If you do it may well be time to get baptised. Don’t put it off by thinking that you don’t know enough. There are Correspondence Courses available, booklets on all different Bible subjects, helpful websites for those of you with access to the internet, and maybe someone can come and see you at home if you want to know more. Write to the appropriate address on the back cover and we can put you in touch with someone who will help you.

The gospel isn’t complicated. In one passage the New Testament sums it up like this:

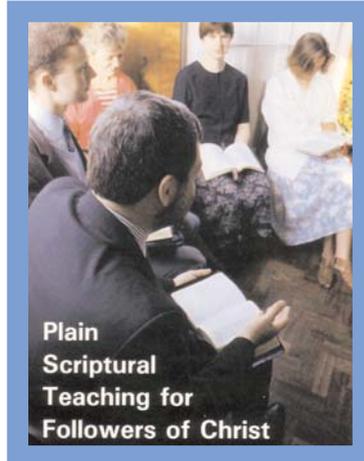
*“When they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized”* (Acts 8:12).

### Read the Bible Every Day

Get searching your Bible every day. To help you, why not send off for a copy of the booklet being advertised on the back of this month’s issue and then follow-up the Scriptural references to check out for yourself what the Bible teaches – this month about “*The Cross of Christ*”.

But it’s not just a matter of reading and thinking. The three “Bs” – *Belief, Baptism and Behaviour* all call for action. In the next article in this series, God willing, we will think in more detail about *Baptism* – the second step to happiness.

**Sarah & Andy Joiner**



# Abraham's Seed

**One of the most important Israeli stamps ever designed shows an old man in the wilderness looking upwards into a starlit sky. Lovers of the Bible will not need to be reminded of its significance.**

Abraham and his nephew Lot were traveling north from Egypt into the land of Canaan with their large flocks and herds when disagreement broke out between their herdsmen. Abraham suggested that they should separate and, although he was the elder, he generously offered Lot the first choice of land. So we read that:

*“Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where ... even as the garden of the LORD ... Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other” (Genesis 13:10,11).*

## Foundation Promise

God then told Abraham:

*“Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever” (Genesis 13:14,15).*

Later God invited Abraham outside of his tent and said to him:

*“Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be” (Genesis 15:5).*

Abraham believed that this promise would be fulfilled, but it was not until he was 100 years old, and his wife Sarah well past normal childbearing age, that the promised child – Isaac – was born. From Isaac and his son Jacob the whole Jewish nation was descended.

## Not Yet Fulfilled

Although the Jews subsequently dwelt in the land of Canaan for about 1000 years (until they were driven out by the Romans in 70 A.D.), Abraham himself never inherited the land he was promised. In his famous speech, Stephen – the first Christian

martyr – drew attention to this significant fact when he said:

*“(God) gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child” (Acts 7:5).*

It follows that for God's promise to Abraham to be fulfilled Abraham will need to be raised from the dead. But it is not just about Abraham; these promises were made for us as well.



## Abraham's Descendants

The apostle Paul reveals further important truths about Abraham's seed in his letter to the Galatians:

*"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Galatians 3:16).*

The promise to Abraham about his "seed" is thus shown to have had an extended meaning. Paul says that first it referred to the Lord Jesus Christ. Then he adds a further point, extending the meaning of 'seed' even further, to include all those who belong to the Lord.

Incidentally, this shows the benefit of a translation which uses a word like "seed" (King James Version) or "offspring" (English Standard Version), rather than "descendant" or "descendants", which is used by some modern versions. For the original Hebrew word "zera", like the first two words – "seed" or "offspring" can be either singular or plural. Paul has just said that the One special descendant who was promised to Abraham was the Lord Jesus. Now he explains that, through Jesus, there would be many descendants – a multitude of people who could rightly be called "Abraham's seed".

*"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:28-29).*

This profound statement has far-reaching implications. It tells us that

Jesus Christ and those who belong to him will inherit the promises God made to Abraham. Bearing in mind that those promises included possession of the land of Israel, this means that the land of Israel belongs to Jesus Christ. Further, this means that he must return to earth if he is to take possession of it.



*Abraham had such faith in God that he was willing to sacrifice the promised "seed" Isaac, when God asked.*

## Conflicting Claims

We now have the Bible answer to the existing and conflicting claims to the land of Israel. It belongs neither to the Arabs nor to the Jews. The land belongs to Abraham and his "seed" – which we

now know means Jesus Christ and all who belong to him, whether they are Jews, Arabs or any other nationality. So, neither the Jews nor the Arabs who occupy the land of Israel today can have any long-term security unless they acknowledge Jesus Christ as their Messiah.

The present political turmoil in the Middle East, which is causing so much fear, is one of the signs that we are living in the last days, before the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. When he comes he will take possession of the land of Israel and sit on the throne of David – in Jerusalem – from where he will rule the world in righteousness.

Like Abraham, now that we see these things beginning we should: "look up, and lift up (our) heads; for (our) redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28). Will we be ready for his Coming? We make the answer now by declaring our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and being baptized into his saving name.

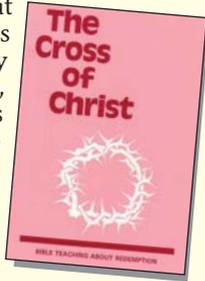
**Margaret Fowler**

*Quotations from the King James Version*

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**Peter Watkins**

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