

Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1455

Take a Closer Look
– page 3

The Bible & Modern
Medicine – page 13

What Does the
Future Hold?
– page 17



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OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

121st Year

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1455

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Contents

Take a Closer Look..3
Stop and Stare5
Living by Faith7
History and the Bible
.....9
Take a Close Look at
 Yourself11
The Bible & Modern
 Medicine.....13
Jesus Christ – Saviour
 of the World.....15
What Does the Future
 Hold?17

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Take a Closer Look

Sometimes you might stumble across the most remarkable thing while just strolling along, if you are looking around you.

It may have been carefully placed to attract your attention, or something might just be there as if by chance. Either way, what matters is your reaction and response, if any.

Eye-Catching Sights

Architects sometimes design buildings in such a way that they make the passer-by take notice of their skill and flair as designers. Shopkeepers cleverly display their wares to coax pedestrians into their shops. Advertisers use huge billboards, and tiny posters, always with the same aim.

Everybody is trying to get our attention as we wander aimlessly by. But where does it all lead? Will these various attractions do us any good in the long run. The apostle John once wrote to warn Bible believers about the dangers of such worldly attractions which he summed up in one word – “*idolatry*”. This is what he said about the world in which we live:

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever” (1 John 2:15-17).



That might strike you as a bit tough or a bit extreme, at first glance. John seems to be saying that there are better things we could be thinking about and doing than just everyday things. And that is precisely his point. He clearly wanted to get the message across that God is offering us eternal life – an endless existence in a perfect world.

By comparison, everything around us is bound to fade into insignificance. John says –

- ∞ We can either live for the present, then die forever; or
- ∞ We can learn about God, take a closer look at what He has to say and live forever.

That’s the choice, which is why the apostle put things as starkly as he did. We either live for things that are “*passing away*” or we learn about that which “*abides forever*”.

Everyday Pointers

It’s a question of what you see when you look around you. As the next article in this issue explains, if we take time out to ‘stop and stare’ at the natural world we shall start to encounter the God who created everything. And once we start to think about spiritual things – which includes learning to read and understand the Bible – all sorts of things will direct us in a positive and uplifting direction.

It’s a choice between looking down into the gutter and living at that level of existence or of looking upwards and aspiring to live at a higher level. It’s just as Jesus once said:

“Look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near” (Luke 21:28).

Imagine that you were walking through a shopping centre in Derby, England, when your glance fell upon the sculpture which adorns this month’s front cover. It’s a sculpture of a Boy and a Ram which until recently stood in Castlefields shopping centre, Derby, and which is to be relocated when the new development there is completed. Cast in bronze by the sculptor Wilfred Dudeney, some forty years ago, it shows a young barefoot boy astride a sturdy ram. He is in perfect control of the situation and the ram seems quite content with the situation, perhaps because the lad is light and agile – posing no real problem as a passenger.

Is that a sculpture you would pass by without a second glance, or might you stop to take a closer look? Perhaps you would be attracted by the quality of the artistry and the masterly nature of the composition, or the casting. And maybe, if you are thinking about higher things, it might remind you of something that happened long ago.

Boy without Ram

Two men once climbed together in silent contemplation. An aged father and his young son were going to make an offering to God. The lad was carrying the wood for the sacrifice and the father was weighed down with his thoughts and concerns, when:

Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” And he said, “Look, the



fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” (Genesis 22:7).

Abraham explained that God would provide the offering, and so He did, but only after Abraham had proved that he was willing to sacrifice Isaac. Then the angel directed Abraham’s gaze:

“Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son” (22:13).

Boy with Ram

Can you imagine how Abraham felt when he brought the ram and saw it standing alongside Isaac his son, the ram now to be offered instead of his own dear son? The boy and the ram together showed that God can always make a way to spare His people from needless worry or distress, even if it costs Him dearly to do so. The time was to come when God asked His own Son to die for us, and the Lord Jesus willingly obeyed.

Like the lad astride the ram in the sculpture in Derby, Jesus was always perfectly poised, always wholly in control of the situation, until he had finished the work he had been given to do. Father and Son worked together as one to give us the hope of eternal life.

These are things that deserve more than a passing glance. As you read through this issue, take a closer look at what the Bible has to say to you. It could open your eyes!

Editor

Stop and Stare

We live in a wonderful world with so much amazing beauty all around us. But we don't always see it. There's so much else going on and we can be blinded by the headlong rush of modern living. If we can only stop from time to time and quietly look around us, we will see things that make us marvel at God's skill and power.

It was the poet W H Davies who wrote the now-famous lines in his poem "Leisure":

*"What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand
and stare?—*

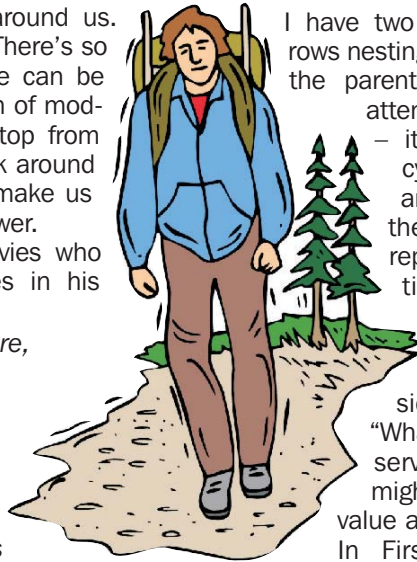
*No time to stand beneath
the boughs,
And stare as long as sheep
and cows:*

*No time to see, when woods
we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in
grass..."*

He was thinking about those things in life we can easily take for granted – things like flowers, which are so beautiful and which turn out to have such a complex biological structure when you examine them care-fully. Or birds, some of which are able to perform amazing feats. Swallows and House Martins leave the chilly UK behind them each winter and fly to Africa. It's a marvel how they go all that way and then fly back in the spring to their old nest in the very same house – mine! They don't have modern aids like Satellite Navigation: they have something far better – God-given abilities to plot their course and find their way from one continent to another.



God's Care for all



I have two families of Sparrows nesting in my garden and the parents are wonderfully attentive to their young – it's a never-ending cycle of finding food and bringing it to the chicks. This is repeated millions of times across the world by birds that many people would consider worthless. "What purpose do they serve?" someone might ask, or "What value are they?"

In First Century Israel there was a trade in small birds, some of which were then regarded as delicacies. There are many Bible references to the practise of snaring and then selling them. Jesus once asked: "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?" (Matthew 10:29), and later he observed, "Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies?" (Luke 12:6). It seems that if you bought in bulk you got the fifth bird thrown in for nothing; it was a case of "Buy Four and get One Free".

So that fifth little bird literally had no value to the seller but, said Jesus, it remained in God's care; for he added:

"Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows" (Luke 12:6,7).

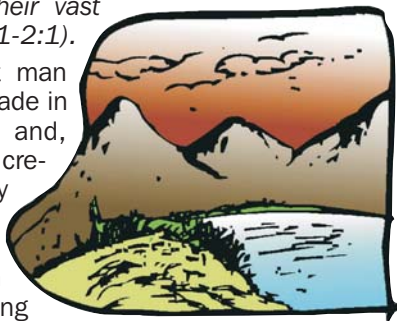
How encouraging that is for us! If God cares about that one sparrow, we can be assured that He cares even more for each one of us.

God and His World

The birds that fly around us are just one tiny reminder that God's original purpose in creating the world still holds good. God created the earth, with all its plant and animal life, and then put man on earth to govern the earth responsibly. He had made everything with such care and consideration – it was a balanced and stable environment, just as God wanted it to remain. And it was beautiful, for He is the author and creator of all that is lovely and good. That was the hallmark of everything that had been made for when the great work of Creation was being assessed this is what was recorded:

“God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array” (Genesis 1:31-2:1).

We are told that man and woman were made in God's image and, because they were created beings, they too were “very good.” Mankind was to be one with creation: all living things were meant to live in harmony with one another and with their Creator. If you ever go to a beautiful lake in an unspoilt valley and get a sense of real pleasure from all about you, you are experiencing a little of how it was meant to be – mankind rejoicing in the wonder of God's creation and giving Him thanks and praise.



Before Adam sinned and thus brought death into the world that sense of harmony and oneness was much greater. There was then no discord in the animal world; everything was in ecological balance.

It's a strange thing that many people nowadays want a better world – one which is more balanced and stable – without realising that this is what God wants too. He wants His world to become perfect and God alone has the power to achieve that. But to get the world right again, mankind has first to become right with God. And the first step towards that is to recognise that this wonderful and beautiful world was made by God.

Marvellous Designer

If we can just develop the habit of looking at the world around us, we will learn to see that the things God has made are evidences of His existence and His intentions. The earth and everything that is in it could not have happened by accident. Nor could such accident have happened over and over again.

Everything speaks of design which is perfectly fitted for a particular purpose. The things made should make us want to know about their Maker – the Planner and Designer, the Builder of such marvels – and they ought to arouse our interest.

Just as antique experts can see the 'signature' of the maker in the craftsmanship of a piece of furniture, so God's 'signature' is all around us.

“For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – His eternal power and divine nature – have been

clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse" (Romans 1:20).

That's how the apostle Paul put it: that through the things that we see around us, invisible aspects of God's person and purpose can be 'seen' and 'understood'.

So nature can teach us that there is a God – a powerful force that has created everything. The evidence has been put all around us: in the ever changing seasons; the flowers in our gardens; the rolling landscape; the birdsong that we hear – none of this has happened by

chance, but by design. The created world witnesses to a God of design, order and beauty and it leaves us with no excuse.

We ought to be finding out about Him. Nature helps us so far along that road, but it cannot tell us what God wants from us. That's the job of the Bible: the Bible tells us why God made the earth and why He wants to share it with us. Be sure to take a closer look at the Bible once you have stopped and stared at all the evidence in the created world.

Bible Quotations from the NIV

Living by Faith

Everyday we have faith and belief in people. You may be waiting at a bus stop expecting a bus to come along which will drive you to the destination shown on the timetable.



to love us and to be faithful to their marriage vows. It follows that the things we are most sure about in everyday life begin with a simple act of faith and trust.

Faith in God

It's much the same with faith in God. Some people may say "How can you put faith in someone you can't see?"

When it comes, you won't drive the bus yourself – you will trust the driver to get you there safely. If you stop for a meal you will believe in the ability of a chef you have never met, and probably never will meet, to prepare a meal which you can eat safely and enjoy. The only alternative would be for you to go into the kitchen and cook everything yourself!

Yet we have seen how faith exists in daily life. You probably won't know the bus driver, but he is certain to get you to your required destination.

You may not ever see the chef who cooked you that delicious meal, far away in the restaurant kitchen, but you tasted the results of his work and discovered his worth that way.

So it has always been in life. We trust teachers to properly instruct us, parents to look after us, doctors and nurses to care properly for us, husbands and wives

You may never have encountered an architect – like Sir Christopher Wren, who rebuilt much of London after the Great Fire of 1666 – but the 49 churches he designed, together with St Paul's Cathe-

dral, are a testimony to his existence and his expertise. He organised the builders, they got the materials and it was created. We can still see many of those churches today and we accept the work as his, trusting and having absolute faith that the information passed down to us from the 17th century is true and correct.

The Evidence

So it is with faith in God. We have never seen Him, but His works testify to His existence and His expertise. For the natural world around us is truly amazing.

A great oak tree can grow from a small acorn. The birth of a child is a wonderful happening. The flight of a bird is quite amazing. Properly viewed – when we take time to “stand and stare” – they are all indicators of a great designer and creator.

The natural world is governed by the ‘laws of nature’. The acorn needs soil, water, warmth and light if it is to grow, and all these things are provided. The birth and development of a child requires just the right conditions which have been provided for the egg to fertilise and the cells to grow. Birds fly right out of the nest with an uncanny ability and know-how and develop the most remarkable survival and feeding skills. This is strong evidence but there is something even stronger.

God has given us His Word the Bible in which He reveals the deepest things of life. It offers us evidence of God’s existence because it spells out God’s purpose across the generations. So the predication that the nation of Israel would become a nation of wanderers across the world, and that they would be re-gathered

to their land is a wonderful testimony to God’s knowledge of the future and His control of world events. In the same way there are many prophecies about other nations in the Middle East, many of which have already been fulfilled and others are on the point of fulfilment.

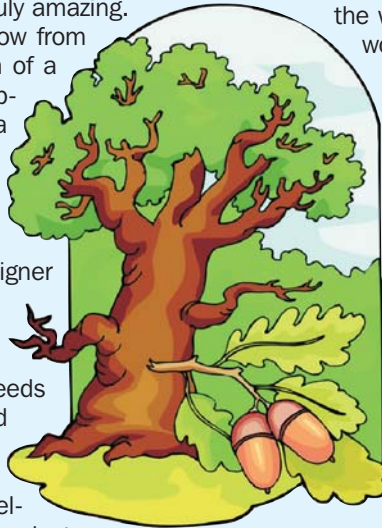
We know ourselves how difficult it is to foretell the simplest happening, for we just don’t know what tomorrow might bring. But God knows and tells, so we can look at the evidence of prophecy and marvel at this powerful testimony to the way He is working in today’s world.

The Challenge

So if you come to believe in God, what’s the next step? In the same way that you trust the unseen chef by eating the meal he has produced, the next step is to take action. In Bible language we are encouraged to:

“Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him” (Psalm 34:8).

The Bible is a book full of the life stories of people who have done just that, so we can learn from their experiences and follow their lead. If you’re coming new to the Bible, or just want a refresher course in what faith means in action, read Hebrews chapter 11, which is crammed full of details about men and women who had strong faith and trust in God. They were confident in His existence, His power and His promises. Their faith meant something to them and as a result they did what was right. They never got what was promised, but died believing it will yet happen:



“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Hebrews 11:13)

They were absolutely convinced that what God said was true, so much so that it affected their whole lives and their entire pattern of behaviour. Thus it was that:

Abraham abandoned a settled life and went off into the wilderness in search of a land he had never seen before, not knowing exactly where he was going. Why was Abraham so sure about the unknown land? Because he was utterly sure about the unseen God.

Noah was asked to build a huge Ark in the middle of the dry land and did so because he was persuaded that the flood

God had warned him about would come.

Moses had a promising career in prosperous Egypt but abandoned it all to share in the afflictions of the people of God – the infant nation of Israel, which he led for forty years of wandering in the wilderness.

These were not easy things to do, but they were done because of their absolute faith and belief in God. Abraham, Noah and Moses were ordinary people like us, but they did extraordinary things because of their absolute faith in God. That’s what faith can do. It can give us an absolute assurance about the existence, the purpose and the promises of God. It can change our lives for the better and give us a real and living hope. Surely these things deserve a closer look!

Marcus & Rachel Goodwin

History and the Bible

*You might be put off from reading the Bible because you think it is all about history, and ancient history at that! But it’s not. It’s mainly about people and the way they lived, thought and felt – many of them people who were just like us, but living in earlier times. As these people lived so long ago, the more investigations there are into past times, the more light is thrown onto the remarkable historical accuracy of the Bible, as **Jessica Ellis** now explains.*

Israel in Egypt

The people of Israel were chosen by God to be His representatives on earth and through them He revealed His purpose for all nations. They didn’t always live in Israel and started off their national life in slavery in Egypt where they lived for some 400 years – from the time of Joseph to the time of Moses, their Deliverer. The Bible record explains how Joseph’s family came to live in Egypt and where they lived:

“Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, saying, “Your father and your brothers have come to you. The land of Egypt is before you. Have your father and brothers dwell in the best of the land; let them dwell in the land of Goshen. And if you know any competent men among them, then make them chief herdsmen over my livestock” (Genesis 47:5,6).

Goshen is an area in the North of Egypt, also known as Gessen, Kos or Kus. Situated very close to the Nile

floodplains, it is very fertile – just the place for a large family with herds and flocks to settle. But can we be sure this is really what happened, or is it just myth and fancy? And is there any proof that the much enlarged family – four hundred years later – actually made a rapid retreat or “exodus”, as the Bible says they did?

Artefacts – jars and bowls – and graves have now been found in the Goshen area, which indicate both the existence there and the hasty exit of a Semitic people. Many of the graves were of small children, mainly boys under two years old, which indicates the truth in the decree of Pharaoh in the time of Moses:

“When you do the duties of a midwife for the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstools, if it is a son, then you shall kill him; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live” (Exodus 1:16).

The number of adult graves – three men to every five women – reinforces this as something that actually happened. Pharaoh’s plan was to reduce the number of Israelite men and, on the evidence found in Goshen, he was successful.

Joseph’s Residence?

A large house has also been discovered in Goshen; the oldest house in the region. It is built in the style of Haran, a people who were known for their stylish and grand houses. In Genesis 11:31 we are told Abraham settled in Haran, so the architectural influences are characteristic of Israelite buildings. This house had 12 pillars outside, two identical bedrooms, and 12 graves in the courtyard. The most impressive of these graves is a pyramid, and near it was a statue of someone with red hair, wearing multicoloured robes – all this being

symbolic of royalty but also of a foreigner.

Some Egyptologists think this to be the grave of Joseph who, as Pharaoh’s viceroy in Egypt, had near royal status. His faith in God was such that when he died in Egypt he left a commandment that when his extended family left, to go to the land that God had promised them, they were to take his body with them and bury him in the land of promise:

“By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones” (Hebrews 11:22).

It may well be significant that the grave in Egypt is empty, for when the children of Israel left Egypt, as God had said they would, they took Joseph’s bones with them (Genesis 50:25 and Exodus 13:19).

Time and Again

Discoveries relating to the ancient past demonstrate the truth and accuracy of the Bible time and time again. Compared with other ancient records and the writings of secular historians it can be seen to be a work of solid and well established fact. Just one situation has been considered in this article, but there are many others which could be explored. There once was a time when people poured scorn on the things recorded in the Bible but many of those voices have been silenced as further discoveries establish that the Bible is indeed what it claims to be – a message from God, which deserves our careful and thoughtful consideration.

Jessica Ellis

Take a Close Look at Yourself

When you look in a mirror what do you see? Beauty, Success or Wisdom? What do you want to see? Perhaps that depends on age, circumstance, personal self-image and probably many other factors which are at work in our lives. But it comes down to one simple question – “What do we want out of life?”



Self Worth

As human beings we are in constant need of reassurance that we are doing well – that we are worth something to someone – that we have not wasted our life. Most of our concerns stem from a worry that we may be failing in this way. We need to mean something to others; to feel it has all been worthwhile; to have made something of our lives; to show a measure of success before we die. But is that really all there is to it? So far as they go those are honourable ideals, but none of them extend beyond this life.

This magazine tries to help people who are willing and open-minded to consider what God can do for them, and to think through the possibility that He has something to offer mankind. Every month we look at the message He has left us in His Word, the Bible, and consider a different approach to life. For there is something dif-

ferent on offer, something which can give us the greatest possible feeling of worth.

The Bible offers true riches to those who seek them out – wealth of a lasting kind, which God alone can give.

Higher Intelligence

Something might strike you as odd about that last statement. We are so accustomed to thinking that we have the answers and that mankind knows best, that we hardly ever contemplate the existence of something or Someone above and beyond us. Let that thought creep into your mind, however – the possibility that God might have something to offer mankind.

We have persuaded ourselves as human beings that human enterprise is the highest order of effort and intelligence on this planet. And from where we stand this sometimes seems to be true. What if it isn't? What if there is Someone who is so great compared with us that we are to Him as the smallest insect appears to us?

The very idea might fill us with trepidation, for we know only too well how we treat small insects – flick them away or squash them. For, compared to us, they are worth little. So we might easily conclude that such a greater Being would treat us with the same contempt. Indeed, by the despicable way in which we behave, He would have every right to. If we saw a group of tiny insects behaving badly and unsociably toward each other, we would feel fully justified in eradicating them from the earth. So what is the case with God?

The Almighty

One of God's prophets once wrote about the almightiness of God and compared His existence with the frailty and morality of mankind. Read Isaiah chapter 40 for the full comparison which includes the observation:

"All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted by him less than nothing and worthless ... It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers" (40:17,22).

God is immortal: man is mortal. God is sinless and altogether holy: mankind is sinful. Ever since Adam made that fatal decision in the Garden of Eden, to eat the forbidden fruit, we have lived with the consequences. The punishment was death – a punishment we have suffered ever since – and however hard we try, we now find ourselves unable to achieve a state of perfection or sinlessness. Yet only sinlessness will suffice if we are to avoid death, for: *"the wages of sin is death"* (Romans 6:23). We all sin so we all die.

Man is Mortal

It was one of the great truths that Isaiah declared when he was writing about the almighty power of God, that:

"All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever" (Isaiah 40:6-8).

We may well argue that men have made great

achievements, and so indeed they have. But death ends everything and nobody has come near to finding an answer to that. However great we may think ourselves to be, death is the great leveller! It comes to all of us sooner or later. It brings us all down to earth. But it doesn't have to be the end. God offers us immortality if we are humble enough to seek for it and discover how we can get it – this is the wealth of a lasting kind, which God alone can give. It's a stark choice: do we want to remain mortal or do we want to become immortal?

Chance of a Lifetime

The great God, who created all things, has, in His love, offered us a part in His eternal plan and purpose with this Earth. He means to fill the earth with His glory, which means that He wants it inhabited by men and women who share His values and who follow His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. For when we could not become sinless, Jesus came and lived a sinless life on earth. The righteousness he achieved can become ours when we repent of our sins, are baptised into his saving name, and learn to follow him. These are amazing promises and this is an outstanding offer from God:

"The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2:14);

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9);

*"For the wages of sin is death, but **the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord**" (Romans 6:23).*



The Bible and Modern Medicine

*In this article **Paul Weston-Smith** asks whether we get a happier or a healthier life if we choose to follow Jesus and to live by faith. He concludes that nothing happens automatically, but that there are real benefits which follow from a proper understanding of what the Bible teaches.*

The Body a Temple

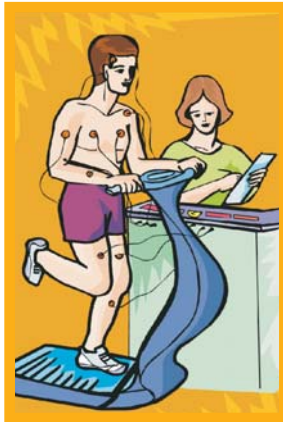
We can do a great deal to reduce risks to our health by following the apostle Paul's advice that we should 'treat our body as a temple of the Holy Spirit' – regard our bodies as something that God has given us which should be treated with proper respect.

There is a great deal of emphasis nowadays on keeping physically fit; it is an obsession with some people! But the foundations of healthy living go right back to First Century Christianity and, even further back, to the Law of Moses in the Old Testament.

Community Health

We know only too well how quickly an epidemic can sweep through refugee camps or a village packed tight with houses. But did you know that when the nation of Israel lived like that, God gave them instructions about community health which were the forerunner of today's public health systems?

The Laws that God gave acted as a guide for the Israelites after they left Egypt to spend forty years living in the desert. Afterwards they stood them in good stead when they lived as a nation in the land of Israel. These God-given Laws set them apart from the surrounding nations and were not



derived from existing practices. Far from it! They restricted the spread of infectious disease (especially skin diseases), laid down rules for the proper selection of food, correct sewage disposal, the supply of clean water, and hygiene matters generally.

For example, one simple instruction on the disposal of human waste (Deuteronomy 23:13) advised that excreta should be buried away from the area in which the people

were living. This alone would have had a significant effect on the reduction of gastrointestinal infections. Yet, curiously, it was a lesson that was ignored in many countries until medieval times, for waste in those times was often thrown into the street, and thus became a real source of infection and illness.

Personal Health

The law of God recognised that diseases could be passed from person to person and that the isolation of an infected individual would reduce the spread of disease.

The law also listed foods that were regarded as either "clean" or "unclean". These may have appeared arbitrary restrictions at the time but by not eating pork, for example, they avoided a range of diseases that can be acquired from eating pig meat.

These include the pig tapeworm (*Taenia soillum*) and the pig roundworm (*Trichinella spiralis*), both of which can give rise to serious and potentially fatal diseases. Modern farming techniques and proper food preparation make these diseases rare nowadays, but they would have been a severe health hazard at the time.

Beware Addiction

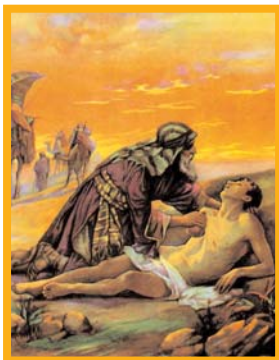
Addiction to alcohol, tobacco and non-medical drugs is a major cause of illness in our society. Drugs and tobacco are a relatively modern phenomenon but the common factor is addiction, and addiction to alcohol was a problem in Biblical times as now. For a good description of a hangover and the damaging effects of alcohol read Proverbs 23:29-35. The passage ends with the drunkard pleading: *“When will I wake up so I can find another drink?”*

Drinking too much alcohol can poison or damage the liver, brain and heart. It also creates a dependency, which is the problem common to drugs and tobacco. Just as the Old Testament warns against excess leading to addiction, so the New Testament writers encourage us to keep control over our bodies and minds at all times. Whilst recognising that wine could sometimes help digestive problems (1Timothy 5:23), the apostle Paul advocated something better:

“Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18).

Care and Support

Whilst Biblical descriptions of the management of physical illness reflect the limited knowledge of the time, the principle of caring for and supporting the sick and their families is built into the Law. It is also



reflected in the healing miracles of Jesus.

The parable of the Good Samaritan is a good example of the way the Lord Jesus set a standard of care and concern which should act as a model for our own response to those in need. For the Samaritan took the wounded man to an inn to provide aftercare, having first given some immediate help by

pouring in oil and wine to ease his immediate distress.

Modern medicine has conquered or made manageable most major illnesses and disorders, at least from the First World War onwards. There is a huge potential to extend that knowledge world-wide but this process of sharing and learning is too often limited by political considerations and by individual greed, for which there is no immediate human solution.

But God has a plan to completely heal the ills of men and women. He is sending back to earth the Lord Jesus – once called “The Good Physician” – and he will bring the care and support our world now urgently needs. He is coming, as the Bible promises, in this way:

“To you who fear my name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings” (Malachi 4:2).

If we want a happy and healthy life, we can do no better than pay full attention to the teaching and example of the Lord Jesus. He can make us both happy and spiritually healthy, and you can't say better than that!

Paul Weston-Smith

References: “Modern Medicine and the Bible” by Alan W Fowler; The New Bible Dictionary, Inter-Varsity Press

Jesus Christ – Saviour of the World

Call his name “Jesus”, Mary and Joseph were told, “for he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). Sin was the problem Jesus came to solve, and a huge problem it has proved to be.

Ever since Adam broke God’s law mankind has suffered the fatal consequences. Everyone has died, sooner or later, and there once seemed no way out. God had passed a Law that sin meant death and everybody sinned, so everybody died. The situation was hopeless.

So God came to the rescue just as the prophets said He would. Six hundred years before Jesus was born, one prophet foretold his birth in these words:

“He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore his own arm brought salvation for him; and his own righteousness, it sustained him” (Isaiah 59:16).

God’s Own Son

Read through the whole of Isaiah and you will



discover a great deal about the way that Jesus was to be born and the work he would come to do. Here’s just a sample:

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14);

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder. And his name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over his kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (9:6,7);

“He is despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was despised, and we did not esteem him. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (53:3-6).

Saviour and King

We have looked at just three passages but already we can see why Jesus is so

special. He would be born of the virgin Mary, and God would be his Father (Luke 1:34,35). This has never happened before or since, that God caused a son to be born on earth, one who was made of a woman (Galatians 4:4), who was constituted just like us (Hebrews 2:14), tempted just like us (4:15), mortal just like us (5:7), but who never once sinned (1 Peter 2:22).

Thus it was that Jesus could voluntarily lay down his life for our sakes as a sacrifice for sin, just as Isaiah had predicted, to enable us to be forgiven, healed and have “*peace with God*” (Isaiah 53:5; Romans 5:1). No wonder God highly exalted His Son and gave him “*a name above every name*” (Philippians 2:9).

Isaiah describes the titles that God conferred upon the Lord Jesus – “*Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*” (9:6). They do not signify, as some people wrongly think, that Jesus was one and the same as his heavenly Father. He was always most careful to make it clear that he and his Father were distinct and different, as are any father and son (see, for example, John 10:29; 14:28). But they do express the wonderful position that Jesus now possesses in heaven, where he sits in glory at his Father’s right hand.

Peace with God

By his sinless death Jesus made it possible for us to be forgiven. Although tempted like us, he overcame where Adam had failed. Then he died, as Adam had also, but not now through failure. Jesus submitted completely to his Father’s will and his death was an act of perfect obedience:

“Being found in appearance as a

man, he humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:8).

Jesus took our sin upon himself and endured the punishment we deserve – death and separation from God. He thus made it possible for us to receive his righteousness and be reconciled to God.

“For he (God) made him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

So Jesus made peace with God through the blood of the cross (Ephesians 2:14) and he will come again to reign on earth when he will establish political peace, and rule for God on David’s ancient throne in Jerusalem (Isaiah 9:7; Luke 1:26-33).

Fought and Won

There are many battles that lie ahead before the world will become subject to God and His King – the Lord Jesus Christ. But the greatest has already been fought and won. When Jesus was crucified on the cross, he won the battle against sin. Sin overreached itself on the cross. Man’s hideous injustice that crucified Jesus became the means that opened the way for man to become free.

Sin’s masterpiece of shame and hate became God’s masterpiece of mercy and forgiveness. Through the death of Jesus upon the cross, sin itself was crucified for those who believe. Jesus died and rose again. He proved the truth of all God’s promises to man.

We have already seen that “*the wages of sin is death*” (Romans 6:23). Jesus had not sinned,



yet he had died. Such is the righteousness of God, Jesus could not remain dead. So God raised him up, *“having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be held by it”* (Acts 2:24). He raised him to glory and honour at His right hand so that he can now intercede for all those who want to come to God through him.

Be assured that the battle against Sin has been fought and won for all those who want to belong to Jesus Christ. We do that by belief and baptism – believers’ baptism, when we affirm that we believe in Jesus and pledge to live with him, and

for him, to the glory of God.

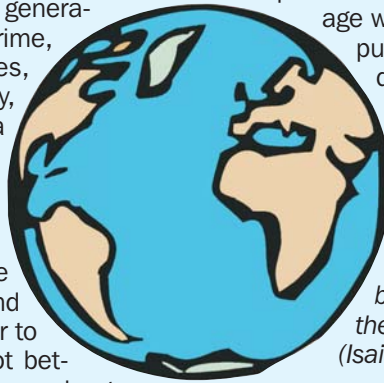
The imminent return of Jesus to earth means for the believer that death isn’t a vast ending of nothingness and grief. For those who have placed their faith in Jesus his Coming will be a great and glad reunion of joy and laughter. Although we are sorrowful and grieve in the face of death, we can have an unmistakable and unshakable hope in the life to come. Make it your sure foundation for a better life. There is nothing better!

Laura Burdekin

What Does the Future Hold?

Today we live in a world that is more scientifically and technologically advanced than ever before. Even so, the world today is faced with huge problems.

These are the same problems that have affected all generations – violence, crime, wars, diseases, famines and poverty, to mention just a few. Yet, despite all its know-how and expertise, mankind seems unable to deal with these issues effectively. And the problems appear to be getting worse not better. So people worry about what the future holds and wonder whether these problems will ever be



resolved.

Abiding Hope

The good news explained in the Bible is that God made the world to last, not to be burned up, or frozen solid. He made it to be inhabited and means it to be a permanent inheritance for His people, age without end. He has a plan and purpose. Here’s some of the evidence:

“This is what the LORD says – he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited – he says: “I am the LORD, and there is no other” (Isaiah 45:18).

“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5).

But when such promises are made, it

is not envisaged that the earth will carry on as it is at present, beset with problems and difficulties. God intends to take charge of world affairs and to establish a better society, with the Lord Jesus – His Son – as King of the entire world.

God's Kingdom

Mankind was given that opportunity – to rule for God on more than one occasion. First Adam and Eve had the chance to take control, to exercise dominion:

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (Genesis 1:28).

But they lost control of themselves and of the earth. Then God found a faithful and obedient man called Abram and promised to make of him a great nation and, through his seed, to bless all nations of the earth:

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing" (Gen 12:1,2).

Abraham's descendants grew into the nation of Israel and were God's special people, but they too lost control and, because of their persistent faithlessness and sin, God put an end to the Kingdom of God that had existed for a few hundred years when kings reigned on "the throne of the LORD" (1 Chronicles 29:23).

But the Kingdom has not been lost forever. King David was promised that one day his descendant would reign from Jerusalem over a worldwide Kingdom:

"When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son ... Your house and

your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever" (2 Samuel 7:12-16)

Kingdom Restored

Jesus preached to the Jews about this kingdom, telling them that as he had come the Kingdom was now at hand (Mark 1:15). The coming of this Kingdom was something the followers of Jesus eagerly anticipated, for after the Lord had been crucified and then raised to life again by his Father, they asked him when this kingdom would be, when peace and righteousness would be established:

"Lord", they asked, "will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6).

Jesus told them that first they had to preach the "good news" of the kingdom to all nations, teach them that they needed to repent of their sins and be baptised in order to be granted the opportunity to be in God's kingdom.



Then Jesus ascended to his Father in heaven where he lives now, awaiting the time when God will send him back to earth to establish this kingdom.

The Future Kingdom

What will this kingdom be like? The prophet Isaiah in the Old Testament paints a wonderful picture of this future kingdom age.

“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat; the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them... 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 11:6-9)

Unlike the political rulers of today Jesus:

“shall not judge by the sight of his eyes, nor decide by the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth ... Righteousness shall be the belt of his loins, and faithfulness the belt of his waist” (Isaiah 11:3-5).

Jesus will rule as King in God’s kingdom until death itself has been destroyed, and with this accomplished will hand over all things to his Father, “that God may be all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:28).

Time of the End

God has left us many pointers in his Word to help us understand the time when Jesus will return. The many problems we now see in the world are precisely what God said would happen.

They are serious and grievous problems, but they can encourage us at the same time when we realise that they are signposts to the nearness of the Coming of Jesus Christ to reign as King. It now looks as if that Coming will be very soon indeed.

God in His mercy has given us this opportunity now to change the way we live our lives and follow him so that when Jesus does return we, through his grace, may be found worthy of a place in his glorious kingdom.

Make no mistake, when Jesus comes the world will be totally transformed: it will be the world in which you and yours will want to inhabit, given the chance:

“I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, God himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:3,4).

The key to our entry to that wonderful world to come is in our hands now. The Bible is a guidebook both for this life and the life to come. It contains God’s promises and they are absolutely guaranteed. And it tells us what we have to do: there is no other way.

God asks us to believe Him and to trust implicitly in Him. He wants us to follow the example Jesus has given and to commit our lives in faith, so that we can prepare now for the wonderful changes due to occur when Jesus returns.

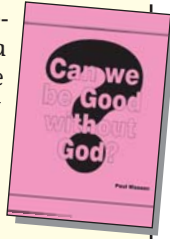
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