

Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1460



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Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

122nd Year

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1460

A monthly magazine published by the Christadelphians (brothers and sisters 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.

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A Helping Hand

If you fall over, a helping hand is always welcome to get you back on your feet. Or if there's a major obstacle ahead, someone reaching down to help can make all the difference. In dangerous places it can be the difference between life and death.

Dangerous Times

We are living at a time when anything could go wrong to anybody, anywhere in the world. The more complex our society becomes, the more extensive are the opportunities for catastrophe on a grand scale, and the more difficult it can be to put things right.

Take global warming as an example. If scientists are right, and more than a thousand eminent ones have recently agreed on this, we are facing a global crisis. But politicians have difficulty making policies that improve the environment.

Everybody wants an improved economy. That drive to improve living standards is perfectly understandable in developing countries like India and China, where increased industrial activity and greater consumption of consumer goods is likely to make the global situation even worse than it already is.

A few years ago the United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, warned that a rise in sea level could lead to the

disappearance of much of the world's largest delta, Bangladesh. Now the polar icecaps are melting at an alarming rate and fears are growing again about rising sea levels.

Who's Helping Hand?

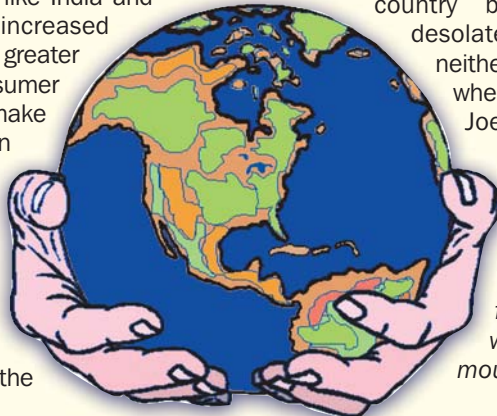
If human activity is causing the present danger, what can we do about it? In December 2005 up to a million people took to the streets of more than 100 cities in 33 countries to demand greater governmental action to prevent global warming.

They were warning about *Killer Storms*, *Rampant Disease*, *Rising Sea Levels*, *Devastated Wildlife*, *Water Shortages* and *Agricultural Turmoil*. In short, they were saying that at present mankind is destroying the earth. But what can we do about it?

There is something we can do which is much more effective than insulating our houses, switching off electrical appliances or recycling our waste. We can reach out to God for help. He is waiting for us to do just that.

There was once an occasion when Israel was devastated by a succession of catastrophes. Locusts stripped the country bare and armies desolated it. There was neither food nor freedom, whereupon the prophet Joel issued this appeal:

"Now, therefore," says the LORD, "Turn to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning." So rend



your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness (Joel 2:12,13).

God Reaches Out

God is always waiting for our response, wanting to help us out, ready to give assistance. Removed far from their land for nearly 2000 years, the nation of Israel were helped to return in spectacular fashion by their God, who had been waiting for them to ask for His help. He was ever willing to rescue them because they were the descendants of Abraham, God's friend:

"But you, Israel, are my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the descendants of Abraham my friend. You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest regions ... I have chosen you and have not cast you away: Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:8-10).

God is waiting to save the earth in much the same way, wanting people to reach out to Him and seek His help. Soon, whether people ask or not, He will intervene to save the world from coming destruction. He intends to rescue those who want to be rescued and restore the earth to a wholesome condition, as God alone can. If you want to be among that group of people who are rescued by God, here's a helping hand.

Read Yourself Rich

Included in the centre pages of this issue is a Bible reading planner. It can help you read right through the Bible to find out

about God and His gracious purpose. You can do nothing better if you want to avert the coming global catastrophe for you and your family. Human governments are too preoccupied with the need to stay in power, and keep everybody happy. They will never take the decisive action that is needed in time to rescue the position. They may talk but they will not act.

God has an action plan which was spelled out in detail long ago. You can read it for yourself by setting aside a few minutes each day and finding out about God, the Lord Jesus Christ, the coming Kingdom of God on earth, and the need to be ready for all that will happen.

The earth and its inhabitants will be called to account, and many of them will be destroyed because of their rebellion against God's master plan. Notice how relevant these words are, even though they were written over 1900 years ago:

There were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" ... The nations were angry, and your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that you should reward your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth" (Revelation 11:15-18).

But all those who have accepted the rulership of God in their lives, and who learn to live according to His ways can look forward to much better times in a much better world.

Editor



Part One

God's New Society

*If we could travel back to the first century, what would the early believers be like? Using the Scriptures as a guide, **Tom Barling** takes us on such an imaginary journey in this series, so that we can sample the new society that God was developing among early believers.*

Time Travel

Let us climb into our imaginary time machine and make a swift journey back to about the year 60 AD. We are going to visit a town in a Roman province, in what we call today Turkey, which had the name of Colossae.

It was a Sunday, then known as the first day of the week. We are paying a visit to a rich man by the name of Philemon. He possessed a spacious villa, the kind which has been found in the Italian city of Pompeii, destroyed by the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD.

Philemon is acting as the host to a company of local Christians who have come together to celebrate what the New Testament speaks of as “*the breaking of bread*”, a simple ceremony to commemorate the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus (see 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). It was a simple ceremony: there would be Scripture readings, prayers and hymns.

Mixed Society

There was something unusual about the people who had come together: there was Philemon, the wealthy host, and there was also one by the name of Onesimus. They both partook of the bread and the wine, as though they were equals. That in itself was very unusual in Roman society. Slaves had no rights as

such, and they were sometimes treated like cattle by a cruel and demanding master. True, there were some who were more humane who, in certain cases, gave a good slave his freedom.

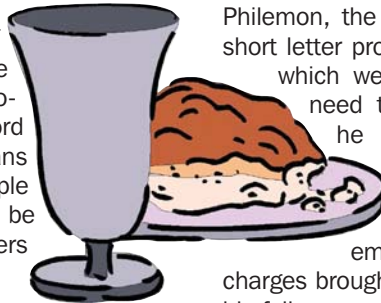
But there was one crime for which a slave could be put to death. That was when he ran away, and the offence was all the more serious if he also robbed his master. Now this was precisely what Onesimus had done. So we must ask ourselves how could so extraordinary a situation have come about?

Letter to Philemon

To get our answer we must go to a short but very precious piece of writing – a letter written by the apostle Paul to Philemon, the owner of Onesimus. This short letter provides a lot of information

which we shall use. But first you need to understand that when he wrote this letter the Apostle was a prisoner in Rome, awaiting his trial before the Roman emperor. He was to answer charges brought against him by some of his fellow countrymen.

The conditions of his imprisonment were very relaxed and he was free to preach the Gospel and to receive his friends. Somehow, in circumstances of which we know nothing about of a precise nature, Paul came in contact with Onesimus in Rome. The runaway slave must have heard about Paul, for



his master Philemon had been converted by the Apostle. He may even have known Paul was in prison in Rome and made contact with him.

Runaway Slave

What we do learn from the letter sent to Philemon is that Onesimus had run away from Colossae and was in possession of some of his master's property for, writing to Philemon, Paul uses this tactful language:

"If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me" (v.18).

After his conversion to the Christian faith and his baptism, Onesimus proved of great service to Paul and the latter would have liked to keep him by him (v.13). But Paul thought this was wrong, so he decided to send him back to Colossae, taking with him the letter Paul had written to Philemon. In that letter the apostle called on the latter to forget the past – to forgive Onesimus and to welcome him as a brother in Christ!

It is evident that this is precisely what Philemon did. It gives us a remarkable insight into the way in which the Gospel of salvation removes social barriers and was creating in the Roman world a new kind of society.

Travelling Companion

When Onesimus started out on his long journey home, from Rome to Colossae, he did not go alone. He travelled in the company of Tychicus (see Colossians 4:7-9) who was also carrying a letter – this one addressed to all the believers in Colossae (see Colossians 1:2). In such cases, it would be the practice to read

the letter to the church as it assembled for the breaking of bread, on the first day of the week. It would be a wonder if Paul did not foresee this and write something suitable to this rather special occasion.

So we can imagine Philemon and Onesimus listening with rapt attention to the reading of the letter. Chapter 3 opens by reminding believers (of all ages) that they are now leading a new life. They are told not to set their minds

on earthly things, but on things above, for, says Paul: *"you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God" (3:2-3).*

Here surely is the conception of a new society, recruited from among men and women who are called to abandon their old way of life and to live a new one in Christ Jesus. All this is pressed home later in Chapter Three:

"Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity" (Colossians 3:11-14).

As these words were read out, surely Philemon would turn to Onesimus, nodding his head with approval of what they had both heard, and with a smile of loving forgiveness on his face.

Tom Barling

All Quotations from the NIV

The New Jerusalem

The Bible has much to say about the city of Jerusalem – its past, present and its glorious future. It is from here – at the centre of the earth – that the Lord Jesus Christ will reign as King.

He is to sit on the throne of King David and from there he will rule the earth. That was what the angel Gabriel promised long ago when he said this to Mary, the mother of Jesus:

“Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:31-33).

And Jesus made it clear that he was born to be a King who would rule for God when he said to his followers, about Jerusalem:

“I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King” (Matthew 5:34,35).

Spiritual Centre

The Old Testament makes it clear that Jerusalem is to be transformed at the Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is to be a centre of worship, and the fact

that a King reigns there once again will be the cause of great joy and rejoicing. As the Psalmist said:

“Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in his holy mountain. Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great King” (Psalm 48:1,2).

But the New Testament teaching adds a further dimension by reminding us that God is not just concerned about bricks and mortar – about architecture, cities, palaces, temples and suchlike. He is concerned about people too. What sort of a place would Jerusalem be if Jesus was there by himself, with nobody else present?

New Jerusalem

There are four important passages in the New Testament all of which convey a spiritual view of Jerusalem – a view actually found in the Old Testament too. As you read them you may be thinking, *“These passages about a glorified Jerusalem aren’t about a future literal city; they’re about people.”*

That’s quite right; they are. But that doesn’t mean that the future of Jerusalem can just be spiritualised away – as some people do when they take such passages to refer to the church, and not to the actual geographical location.

You can’t be true to God’s Word and jettison the huge amount of Bible teaching about God’s coming Kingdom



on earth and Christ's personal return to rule over it. How can you abandon God's covenant with David (which was confirmed with an oath, remember) and its confirmation by the angel Gabriel?

As we have just seen, he promised Mary in the clearest possible terms that Jesus will occupy King David's ancient throne, which was in Jerusalem.

Things to Read

Here's a summary of the four New Testament passages about the New Jerusalem, and you might like to look them up and read them in full:

Galatians 4:24-26

Jerusalem as it then existed is described by the apostle Paul as a place that represented the bondage of the old covenant. Jerusalem "which is above" represents the freedom of the new covenant in Christ.

Hebrews 12:22-24

Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem represents those who truly belong to Jesus Christ – the mediator of the new covenant – and to his Father in heaven.

Revelation 3:12

New Jerusalem, the city of God, will descend from heaven and then the name of God, Christ's new name and the name of God's city, New Jerusalem, will be written upon those who are deemed righteous.

Revelation chapter 21

This chapter describes the newly created Jerusalem as a place of great joy. The holy city, New Jerusalem, will descend from God as a bride. God will then dwell with His people. They will

experience no more death, pain or sorrow. They are the Lamb's wife.

In this detailed symbolic description, the holy city Jerusalem is seen to be illuminated by the glory of God and the Lamb and is adorned with precious stones. It is described as a gigantic cube measuring 12,000 stadia or about 2200 km in all three dimensions – length, width and height. The cube, like the Holy of Holies in the Old Testament tabernacle and temple, represents the place where God will dwell in a holy relationship with His people. There are other details in the chapter about New Jerusalem that help to make it clear that this is a symbolic city. After all, Revelation is a book of symbols.

Redeemed People

All these passages present spiritual ideas about what the new city Jerusalem will be like when it is inhabited by righteous people who have been redeemed by the saving work of Jesus. They don't cancel out what the Old Testament says about the city's glorious future, the topographical changes that will occur, the ways its people will be rescued from near disaster and the rebuilding that will then take place.

The New Testament teaches the same things, as we would expect. It doesn't replace the teaching of the Old, it adds to it. Its particular emphasis is upon the change that will occur to the people who are to inhabit that new world. Here's the apostle Paul again, quoting from the Old Testament and then explaining how those promises will come about:

"So all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'The Deliverer will come out of

Zion, and he will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins' ... For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, even so these also (the Jewish people) have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. For God has committed them all to disobedience, that he might have mercy on all" (Romans 11:26-27,30-32).

The first two verses cited by the apostle are certainly about the nation of Israel – described as “Jacob” – and the city Jerusalem, termed “Zion”, its alternative name. They are cited from Isaiah chapter 59, and the “Deliverer” who turns away Jacob’s ungodliness is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

Literal and Spiritual

Paul brings together both literal and spiritual ideas about Jerusalem. To the picture painted in the Old Testament he adds a new dimension, portraying Jews and Gentiles together, as one people who have been redeemed by

the saving work of God in Christ. He is thus making two powerful points.

1. The city is to be revived and reformed, to become the most joyful and glorious place on earth, when its King has come. In other words, Jerusalem’s future glory will be real, literal, substantial, magnificent and peaceful!

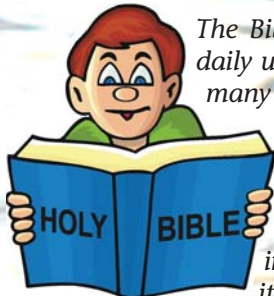
2. Jerusalem is also the symbol of a perfect future relationship between God and His people.

God will rescue and redeem a people from all nations who will live in His kingdom and work alongside His King, until at last all the earth is subject to Divine rule, and everything gives God the glory that is His due.

What steps are you going to take to try to ensure that you see and experience Jerusalem’s glorious future and become part of that perfect relationship with God? This is the greatest, finest and truest opportunity you could ever hope to have. Don’t allow it to slip from your grasp.

Mark Sawyer

Bible Companion



The Bible Reading Tables on pages 10 and 11 of this issue are in daily use by Christadelphians all over the world, and have been for many years – since they were compiled by Robert Roberts in about 1853. Read the specified chapters every day and you will have read the Old Testament once and the New Testament twice during the course of this coming year.

There is nothing more beneficial than exercising your mind in the Word of God. It will be a blessing to you every day and it will help you in all that you do. God is offering to help.

Reach out and get that helping hand!

Bible Reading

Old Testament Once - New Testament twice each year - Reading Plan

JANUARY

1	Gen. 1, 2	Psa. 1, 2	Matt. 1, 2
2	... 3, 4	... 3, 5	... 3, 4
3	... 5, 6	... 6, 8	... 5
4	... 7, 8	... 9, 10	... 6
5	... 9, 10	... 11, 13	... 7
6	... 11, 12	... 14, 16	... 8
7	... 13, 14	... 17	... 9
8	... 15, 16	... 18	... 10
9	... 17, 18	... 19, 21	... 11
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25	... 41	... 45	... 27
26	... 42, 43	... 46, 48	... 28
27	... 44, 45	... 49	Rom. 1, 2
28	... 46, 47	... 50	... 3, 4
29	... 48, 50	... 51, 52	... 5, 6
30	Exod. 1, 2	... 53, 55	... 7, 8
31	... 3, 4	... 56, 57	... 9

FEBRUARY

1	Exod. 5, 6	Psa. 58, 59	Rom. 10, 11
2	... 7, 8	... 60, 61	... 12
3	... 9	... 62, 63	... 13, 14
4	... 10	... 64, 65	... 15, 16
5	... 11, 12	... 66, 67	Mark 1
6	... 13, 14	... 68	... 2
7	... 15	... 69	... 3
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19	... 30	... 87, 88	... 15, 16
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25	... 38	100, 101	... 8, 9
26	... 39, 40	... 102	... 10
27	Lev. 1, 2	... 103	... 11
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8	... 15	117, 118	... 10, 11
9	... 16	119, v. 40	... 12, 13
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15	... 29, 30	... 5	... 16
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17	2 Sam. 1	... 7	... 18
18	... 2	... 8	... 19
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27	... 10	... 23	... 20
28	... 11	... 24	... 21
29	... 12	... 25	... 22
30	... 13, 14	... 26	... 23

g Tables

Read God's Word every day and prosper



APRIL

1	Num.	15	Prov.	11	Luke	24
2	...	16	...	12	Gal.	1, 2
3	...	17, 18	...	13	...	3, 4
4	...	19	...	14	...	5, 6
5	...	20, 21	...	15	Eph.	1, 2
6	...	22, 23	...	16	...	3, 4
7	...	24, 25	...	17	...	5, 6
8	...	26	...	18	Phil.	1, 2
9	...	27	...	19	...	3, 4
10	...	28	...	20	John	1
11	...	29, 30	...	21	...	2, 3
12	...	31	...	22	...	4
13	...	32	...	23	...	5
14	...	33	...	24	...	6
15	...	34	...	25	...	7
16	...	35	...	26	...	8
17	...	36	...	27	...	9, 10
18	Deut.	1	...	28	...	11
19	...	2	...	29	...	12
20	...	3	...	30	...	13, 14
21	...	4	...	31	...	15, 16
22	...	5	Eccl.	1	...	17, 18
23	...	6, 7	...	2	...	19
24	...	8, 9	...	3	...	20, 21
25	...	10, 11	...	4	Acts	1
26	...	12	...	5	...	2
27	...	13, 14	...	6	...	3, 4
28	...	15	...	7	...	5, 6
29	...	16	...	8	...	7
30	...	17	...	9	...	8

MAY

1	Deut.	18	Eccl.	10	Acts	9
2	...	19	...	11	...	10
3	...	20	...	12	...	11, 12
4	...	21	Song	1	...	13
5	...	22	...	2	...	14, 15
6	...	23	...	3	...	16, 17
7	...	24	...	4	...	18, 19
8	...	25	...	5	...	20
9	...	26	...	6	...	21, 22
10	...	27	...	7	...	23, 24
11	...	28	...	8	...	25, 26
12	...	29	Isaiah	1	...	27
13	...	30	...	2	...	28
14	...	31	...	3, 4	Col.	1
15	...	32	...	5	...	2
16	...	33, 34	...	6	...	3, 4
17	Joshua	1	...	7	1 Thes.	1, 2
18	...	2	...	8	...	3, 4
19	...	3, 4	...	9	...	5
20	...	5, 6	...	10	2 Thes.	1, 2
21	...	7	...	11	...	3
22	...	8	...	12	1 Tim.	1, 2, 3
23	...	9	...	13	...	4, 5
24	...	10	...	14	...	6
25	...	11	...	15	2 Tim.	1
26	...	12	...	16	...	2
27	...	13	...	17, 18	...	3, 4
28	...	14	...	19	Titus	1, 2, 3
29	...	15	...	20, 21	Philemon	1
30	...	16	...	22	Heb.	1, 2
31	...	17	...	23	...	3, 4, 5

JUNE

1	Joshua	18	Isaiah	24	Heb.	6, 7
2	...	19	...	25	...	8, 9
3	...	20, 21	...	26, 27	...	10
4	...	22	...	28	...	11
5	...	23, 24	...	29	...	12
6	Judges	1	...	30	...	13
7	...	2, 3	...	31	James	1
8	...	4, 5	...	32	...	2
9	...	6	...	33	...	3, 4
10	...	7, 8	...	34	...	5
11	...	9	...	35	1 Peter	1
12	...	10, 11	...	36	...	2
13	...	12, 13	...	37	...	3, 4, 5
14	...	14, 15	...	38	2 Pet.	1, 2
15	...	16	...	39	...	3, 4
16	...	17, 18	...	40	1 John	1, 2
17	...	19	...	41	...	3, 4
18	...	20	...	42	...	5
19	...	21	...	43	2 & 3 John	1
20	Ruth	1, 2	...	44	Jude	1, 2
21	...	3, 4	...	45	Rev.	1, 2
22	1 Sam.	1	...	46, 47	...	3, 4
23	...	2	...	48	...	5, 6
24	...	3	...	49	...	7, 8, 9
25	...	4	...	50	...	10, 11
26	...	5, 6	...	51	...	12, 13
27	...	7, 8	...	52	...	14
28	...	9	...	53	...	15, 16
29	...	10	...	54	...	17, 18
30	...	11, 12	...	55	...	19, 20

OCTOBER

1	1 Chron.	15	Ezek.	27	Luke	24
2	...	16	...	28	Gal.	1, 2
3	...	17	...	29	...	3, 4
4	...	18, 19	...	30	...	5, 6
5	...	20, 21	...	31	Eph.	1, 2
6	...	22	...	32	...	3, 4
7	...	23	...	33	...	5, 6
8	...	24, 25	...	34	Phil.	1, 2
9	...	26	...	35	...	3, 4
10	...	27	...	36	John	1
11	...	28	...	37	...	2, 3
12	...	29	...	38	...	4
13	2 Chron.	1, 2	...	39	...	5
14	...	3, 4	...	40	...	6
15	...	5, 6	...	41	...	7
16	...	7	...	42	...	8
17	...	8	...	43	...	9, 10
18	...	9	...	44	...	11
19	...	10, 11	...	45	...	12
20	...	12, 13	...	46	...	13, 14
21	...	14, 15	...	47	...	15, 16
22	...	16, 17	...	48	...	17, 18
23	...	18, 19	Daniel	1	...	19
24	...	20	...	2	...	20, 21
25	...	21, 22	...	3	Acts	1
26	...	23	...	4	...	2
27	...	24	...	5	...	3, 4
28	...	25	...	6	...	5, 6
29	...	26, 27	...	7	...	7
30	...	28	...	8	...	8
31	...	29	...	9	...	9

NOVEMBER

1	2 Chron.	30	Dan.	10	Acts	10
2	...	31	...	11	...	11, 12
3	...	32	...	12	...	13
4	...	33	Hosea	1	...	14, 15
5	...	34	...	2	...	16, 17
6	...	35	...	3	...	18, 19
7	...	36	...	4	...	20
8	Exra	1, 2	...	5	...	21, 22
9	...	3, 4	...	6	...	23, 24
10	...	5, 6	...	7	...	25, 26
11	...	7	...	8	...	27
12	...	8	...	9	...	28
13	...	9	...	10	Colos.	1
14	...	10	...	11	...	2
15	Neh.	1, 2	...	12	...	3, 4
16	...	3	...	13	1 Thes.	1, 2
17	...	4	...	14	...	3, 4
18	...	5, 6	Joel	1	...	5
19	...	7	...	2	2 Thes.	1, 2
20	...	8	...	3	...	3
21	...	9	Amos.	1	1 Tim.	1, 2, 3
22	...	10	...	2	...	4, 5
23	...	11	...	3	...	6
24	...	12	...	4	2 Tim.	1
25	...	13	...	5	...	2
26	Esther	1	...	6	...	3, 4
27	...	2	...	7	Titus	1, 2, 3
28	...	3, 4	...	8	Philemon	1
29	...	5, 6	...	9	Heb.	1, 2
30	...	7, 8	Obadiah	1	...	3, 4, 5

DECEMBER

1	Esth.	9, 10	Jonah	1	Heb.	6, 7
2	Job	1, 2	...	2, 3	...	8, 9
3	...	3, 4	...	4	...	10
4	...	5	Micah	1	...	11
5	...	6, 7	...	2	...	12
6	...	8	...	3, 4	...	13
7	...	9	...	5	James	1
8	...	10	...	6	...	2
9	...	11	...	7	...	3, 4
10	...	12	Nahum	1, 2	...	5
11	...	13	...	3	1 Peter	1
12	...	14	Hab.	1	...	2
13	...	15	...	2	...	3, 4, 5
14	...	16, 17	...	3	2 Pet.	1, 2
15	...	18, 19	Zeph.	1	...	3
16	...	20	...	2	1 John	1, 2
17	...	21	...	3	...	3, 4
18	...	22	Hag.	1, 2	...	5
19	...	23, 24	Zech.	1	2 & 3 John	1
20	...	25, 27	...	2, 3	Jude	1
21	...	28	...	4, 5	Rev.	1, 2
22	...	29, 30	...	6, 7	...	3, 4
23	...	31, 32	...	8	...	5, 6
24	...	33	...	9	...	7, 8, 9
25	...	34	...	10	...	10, 11
26	...	35, 36	...	11	...	12, 13
27	...	37	...	12	...	14
28	...	38	...	13, 14	...	15, 16
29	...	39	Malachi	1	...	17, 18
30	...	40	...	2	...	19, 20
31	...	41, 42	...	3, 4	...	21, 22

By courtesy of The Christadelphian

The Riches of the Gospel

Jesus once said: “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!” then he immediately gave an illustration.

“It is easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” (Luke 18:24,25).

It was a very dramatic way of saying that the things that are impossible for man are possible with God. And Jesus was teaching that the possession of riches in this life can make it harder to obtain the true riches of the gospel. Now why would that be?

Material Riches

There are quite a lot of people who feature in the Bible who were decidedly rich in material things. Those people are not regarded as hopeless cases: many of them are described as faithful and well-pleasing to God – people like Abraham and David in the Old Testament, for example. When the words of Jesus are recorded in Mark’s account, there is an interesting extra piece of information:

“Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God!” (10:24).

That’s the real point! The danger is not about having riches, but trusting in them, rather than in God! Again, to quote another well-known, but frequently

misquoted verse from the writings of Paul the apostle:

“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Timothy 6:10).

He had just been warning Timothy about those: *“who desire to be rich (who) fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts” (6:9).*

It’s the love of, or desire for, riches that leads people into disaster and deadly danger, so far as their spiritual lives are concerned. That’s as true today as when the apostle wrote. Think of the number of people who go weekly to gamble in one way or another, because they want to be rich! Desire can produce more desire, and selfishness can lead to crime. History is full of such unhappy developments.

That’s Mine!

There’s a story in the New Testament about a young man who went to Jesus, apparently anxious to obtain eternal life, but went away sorrowful when Jesus put him to the test. He had asked what he could do to earn eternal life and Jesus told him the price that had to be paid if he was to earn it:

Jesus said to him, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in



heaven; and come, follow me.” But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions (Matthew 19:21,22).

Although he had kept God’s law from his youth, this good young man didn’t want to lose the things he thought were his — his possessions. It seems he trusted in them! Knowing God’s law he should have trusted in God. He showed a similar lack of faith in God as did Adam and Eve in the Garden — they were not content with what God had given them, they desired more and desire led to sin.

Return to Dust

We get used to the things we call our own, whether we live in luxury or poverty – in a big house or a little shack. But we should never forget where we are heading and how we are destined to end up. Here’s the gospel truth about our situation:

“Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content” (1 Timothy 6:6-8).

This means that we are all really poor, for there are no pockets in a shroud! We can take nothing with us when we go, for everything we are and have is going to dust. It was what God said in the Garden of Eden, when he explained what death really is. God said to Adam:

“In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19).

The fact is that we have to work if we

want to eat but when our work is over we will cease to exist, unless God takes action on our behalf. Death is an unconscious state – a process of decay and destruction in the grave. But God, and God alone, can reverse that process and raise us from the dead by His power and restore our consciousness. He can bring us back to life by resurrection, but if he doesn’t we will be gone for good!

God-Dependence

It follows that in this life we are wholly dependant upon God for all we need. He gives us life and all things. The sad thing is that so many people nowadays hardly believe in Him; they think they are masters of their own destiny.

They talk a lot about their “rights”, but never about their responsibilities to God. Death comes to everyone: there is no escape.

So if we do not think about God in this life, why should He think about us in the life to come, when Jesus returns to raise the dead? What should we do, to make sure that we get hold of the true riches – a commodity that will last forever?

First of all, let God speak to you from His Word, the Bible, and listen to what He has to say. God is calling to you through your reading of His Word. Are you ready to hear? Here’s just one example of God speaking to us in the Bible and encouraging us to take notice:

“Hear this, all you peoples; Give ear, all you inhabitants of the world, both low and high, rich and poor together. My mouth shall speak wisdom, and the meditation of my heart shall bring understanding” (Psalm 49:1-3).



Gifts from God

Life is a gift from God which we should use properly. We are meant to enjoy it, but it is primarily an opportunity for us to get to know God and His purpose, so we can find out about His offer of eternal life. It was the wise man Solomon, writing about the marvel of God's creation, and all the work that God has done to make it such a wonderful world who said: *"every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labour – it is the gift of God"* (Ecclesiastes 3:13).

What wonderful things there are in God's world – the songs of birds, the wonders of the sunset, the colours of the flowers, to name but a few. These are rich gifts, to be appreciated to the full. As the apostle Paul said in the passage we have considered several times already:

"Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17).

But those things are not given us so that we can live heedlessly and selfishly. Paul was writing to people who had already committed themselves to God through baptism into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were followers of Jesus, as you might want to be also. So Paul could remind them of their responsibilities to God and went on to say:

"Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Timothy 6:18,19).

What a contrast between the uncertainty of riches and the certainty of the existence of Almighty God; and what a promise for those who were faithful and obedient! These faithful believers are being promised exactly what the rich young man had been seeking – eternal life.

Eternal Life

The first thing to understand is that "eternal life" (or immortality) is not ours by right. We are born mortal, and so far as immortality is concerned we are destitute! The Bible does not entertain for one minute that we have an immortal

soul as part of our makeup. The Bible says man was made a living soul, not a never-ending one. Sooner or later we become a dead soul. The Bible doesn't mince matters about the reason: we die because of sin – *"For the wages of sin is death ..."* (Romans 6:23).

But, you might ask, if that is so, why talk

about "eternal life" at all? Here's the complete quotation:

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

This free gift on offer from God is at the centre of the gospel message. It's a gift; we can never earn it, which is what the rich young man had to learn. It is the result of the grace of God: we do not merit it of ourselves. It's possible of course to refuse God's gift, but we hope you will think carefully about it. The first step is to realize we are no better than our fellows, rich or poor. We must see



ourselves as helpless, having nothing. Any treasures we have heaped up in this life will be of no help. That's why Jesus said:

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19-21).

Instead, said Jesus, "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (6:33).

Our Real Need

If we let the Bible speak to us we shall see the need to confess our poverty and to accept the covering for our sins,

provided in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. We will come to understand that we need to be baptised in water, which symbolizes for each one a new birth. It's the God-given way of making a new start in life, of symbolically dying with Christ, so that we can live with him in God's Coming Kingdom for evermore:

"Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him" (Romans 6:8).

It's no wonder that the apostle Paul prayed to the Father that believers would come to this realisation:

"That you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (Ephesians 1:18).

Roy Waddoup

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The Failure of Humanism - 3

Problems Galore

*If mankind exists as the pinnacle of an evolutionary process which has happened by chance, then there is no God to put things right. Man has to solve his own problems unaided and make sure that society improves and develops so that everything gets better and better. In this series **Malcolm Edwards** is examining whether or not there are such signs of improvement.*

Crime Abounding

It is difficult to know how growing crime and violence in Society can be reduced, or indeed removed. For deadlocks, steel-mesh doors, burglar alarms, and suchlike, are selling more briskly than ever before.

Our local newspaper recently reported over one hundred burglaries in our housing estate over a period of several months, and our own home suffered five attacks of theft and petty vandalism in a similar period. Local police admitted that as they are always understaffed, there is little they can do to reduce such activity.

It is no secret that many police officers have left the Force in disgust, deploring the increasing leniency of the judiciary towards felons convicted after months of hard police work. The leniency of judges may be connected with the fact that prisons are full and overflowing as the crime rate climbs, but it doesn't end there. Violence and rape are prevalent in most large cities, and the press report at least a murder a day, and usually far more than that if we survey the situation internationally.

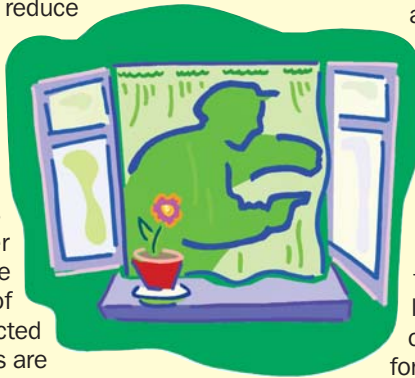
There is also increasing corruption and dishonesty in both business and political

circles; especially the latter, causing the public to be openly cynical about politicians and statesmen in general. There have been some very public trials of well known political figures in many countries, and some lengthy imprisonments. But it seems that every day there is another embarrassment along similar lines.

Relationships Failing

The marriage scene is no more encouraging. In so-called liberated countries where religion has been largely rejected, more people are now just living together as a matter of course than those who are getting married. Marital unfaithfulness has become commonplace; divorce is increasing and more and more unmarried mothers seem content to depend on society to look after them and their children, it being difficult for them to get work when child care is so expensive.

The outcome of all this is the havoc created in family life, and the children are always the sufferers. There is a downward spiral here – with diminished parental control, and increasing vandalism and petty crime among the young. This is often complicated by drug and alcohol addiction. All of which is



symptomatic of a society that has morally lost its way, and which doggedly goes on treating the effects and not the cause.

Who's to Blame?

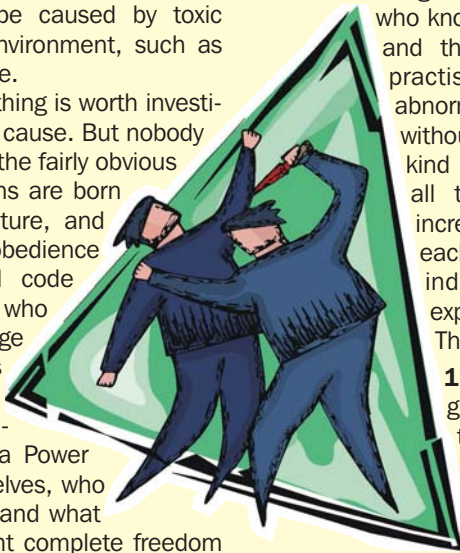
Sociologists and psychologists are in perpetual disagreement as to why these problems persist in our so-called 'enlightened' society. They appear desperate to find possible solutions. There was once a serious debate on Australian TV between two American scientists – Prof Roger Masters and Dr Peter Breggin – on whether the rising crime rate might be caused by toxic chemicals in the environment, such as lead and manganese.

It seems that anything is worth investigating as a possible cause. But nobody wants to face up to the fairly obvious cause – that humans are born with a perverse nature, and need to be taught obedience to a higher moral code early in life. People who will not acknowledge that God exists don't want to consider the possibility that there is a Power greater than themselves, who can tell them what and what not to do. They want complete freedom of action.

Helpless Humanism

The very nature of humanism demands a trial and error code of morals which advocates the freedom of the individual to do whatever feels good, provided it does not harm others. The morality of the Bible has to be discarded by such people, since it appeals to a higher authority who lays down inflexible rules for daily living, and which work well provided every one obeys them.

- Humanism can never openly condemn sexual activity outside marriage, by consenting adults, whether heterosexual or homosexual.
- Since the freedom of the individual must always be paramount, even incest, must go uncondemned.
- It was inevitable that prostitution and pornography would eventually be legalised, and today no film maker dare depict gay-lesbianism as immoral.



A generation has now arrived who know little of Biblical ethics and they are largely free to practise whatever sexual abnormality they may please, without censure. There is a kind of helplessness behind all this as self-indulgence increases on all fronts as each successive generation indulgently explores and exploits the new morality. The questions to ask are –

1. Do you think Society is gradually improving under the guidance of people who believe that everything is acceptable provided it does no harm to anybody?

2. Or do you think that mankind needs the guidance and help that God offers, and His rescue plan, which alone can save us from ourselves?

The Bible contains that offer for all right-minded individuals, and there God promises to put everything right when the Lord Jesus comes to establish a new and better world.

Malcolm Edwards

Have You Read?

The Book of Jonah

What is it about?



God sent Jonah the prophet from Israel to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, 1000 miles away, to tell its inhabitants '*Repent or be destroyed*'. Unwilling to go to this violent nation that had long oppressed his own people, Jonah took a sea voyage in the opposite direction! God sent a violent storm causing Jonah to admit his disobedience. The sailors threw him overboard and the sea calmed. A huge fish swallowed the prophet, spewing him ashore after three days. Chastened, Jonah went to Nineveh and preached to the people. They repented, much to Jonah's regret.

What was life like in Israel at that time?



Israel's 41 year rule by Jeroboam II (BC 825-784) was the most prosperous it had yet known. With all this outward prosperity, however, iniquity widely prevailed in the land (see Amos 2:6-8;4:1;6:6 and Hosea 4:12-14).

Assyria, was the super-power at that time and it was always a threat. Nineveh, its capital city is described by a historian as having walls 100' high with 1500 towers each 200' high.

When did this happen?

Probably 8th c BC.

How many chapters?

Four short chapters: 48 verses in all.

Where will I find it?

Among the minor prophets: the eighth from last book in the Old Testament.

What should I look out for?



- ✦ Jonah is no mythical figure (2 Kings 14:25)
- ✦ His effective preaching – note the change from the mariners’ paganism (Jon. 1:5) to their prayer to “the God of Israel” (Jonah 1:14)
- ✦ Why did the heathen Ninevites repent so quickly? Was it because Jonah had been bleached by the fish’s digestive juices, or had the account gone before him of a man swallowed whole in the ocean?
- ✦ The humility of the heathen Ninevites who believed God (3:5), whose king humbled himself (3:6) and proclaimed a national fast (3:7-9)
- ✦ Jonah’s wonderful prayer (2:1-9) that goes from despair to confidence in God’s salvation
- ✦ The portrayal of God’s character. He is patient, the Creator (1:9); hears prayer (2:2); saves (2:9); relents (3:9-10, 4:2); is gracious, merciful, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness (4:2)

Jonah’s similarities to Christ:

- ❖ Jonah willingly accepted his fate, and acknowledged his sin (Jonah 1:12). Jesus was sinless, but he too accepted his death willingly (Isaiah 53:7; Matthew 20:28)
- ❖ Jonah was saved from corruption (2:6), just as Jesus’ body was saved from corruption by His resurrection (Psalm 16:10)
- ❖ By the sacrifice of one man (Jonah in 1:12) many were saved; by the death of Jesus, many were saved (Romans 5:19)
- ❖ Jesus mentions Jonah as a sign of his own death and resurrection (Matthew 12:38-41; 16:4; Luke 11:29-32) while Jonah’s preaching is compared to that of Jesus’ (Matthew 12:41).

What does it mean for me?

- ⌘ God is everywhere; we cannot run away from Him.
- ⌘ His compassion is for all people, everywhere. He wants them to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4) whether a failing Israelite prophet or heathen gentiles.
- ⌘ Sometimes humility must come before a servant of God can be effective. Instead of standing before the King of Nineveh, Jonah found himself being challenged by the ship’s captain and the other mariners (1:10).
- ⌘ Admitting wrongdoing is not enough. Something must be done about sin. After Jonah’s confession the sea continued to rage (1:11,13). Calm came once Jonah was thrown into it (1:15).
- ⌘ Prayer reaches God from anywhere, even from the prison of a fish’s belly. Jonah repented then got on with the job God called him to. God will always give a second chance.

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