

# Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1464



*How We See Ourselves – page 3*

*The Certainty of Bodily Resurrection – page 11*

*Immortal Souls in the Bible – page 17*

# Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

122nd Year

E06

1464

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

**Bible Talks, Study Classes, Sunday Schools and Youth Clubs are held regularly by Christadelphians worldwide. The address of your nearest group can be obtained from either the Distribution Secretaries or from the local agents or information addresses given above.**

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### Acknowledgements

#### Photographs:

Early morning photo call  
photos.com

#### Illustrations:

Art Today pgs 3-7,12-19; Christian  
Clipart 9,11.

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# How We See Ourselves

**Most people see themselves every day in one way or another, if not in the bathroom mirror, then somewhere else.**

There are reflective surfaces everywhere and we can often catch a glimpse of a passing stranger, only to realise that we are in fact seeing ourselves, or at least a mirror image of what we look like.

For we never really see ourselves as we really are. Have you noticed that the left hand side of the face of the man who is seen shaving on this month's front cover is, in the mirror, shown as though it were the right hand side of his face, and vice versa?



## The Real "Me"

A mirror can never show us exactly what we look like: it will always be a distorted image. But that doesn't really matter, of course; what matters is what we are really like inside. And, more especially, how does God view us and what does he see in us, whether good or bad? Those are the things that really count. The apostle James once issued a widespread challenge to people in all ages when he said:

*"If anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does" (James 1:23-25).*

Notice that James likens the Bible – the Word of God – to a mirror in which we can observe ourselves and, in the process, free ourselves from shackles and bonds that would otherwise tie us down. For the Bible is a collection of portraits – pen pictures of people through the ages who did and said various things, for good or ill. And when we read about them, and associate ourselves with them, and with their attitudes and decisions, we have a means of seeing ourselves from a quite different perspective.

For example, we might liken ourselves to Adam, when he decided he would "Do it his way, not God's!" If so, we should take note of what happened to him, and what will also happen to us if we act rebelliously and heedlessly. Or we might decide instead to choose to follow Jesus, and try to be willing and obedient, in the sure hope of a much better outcome.

## Imperfect Image

Mirrors in Bible times were a good deal less reflective than they are today. Some were made out of polished bronze, metal that could be melted down and used for something else if need be (see Exodus 38:8). Even in the first century the image you got from mirror-gazing was imperfect, as the apostle Paul comments. He was writing about our limited ability to foresee future events, when he said:

*"When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a*

child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known" (1 Corinthians 13:11,12).

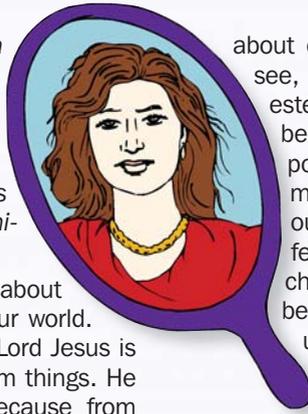
The Bible tells us a lot about what the future holds for our world. The Second Coming of the Lord Jesus is an event which will transform things. He is coming to Jerusalem because from there he will reign over the world in righteousness: God's law will be administered from there and the outcome will be a blessing to all the people who are privileged to live in that new age, mortal and immortal inhabitants alike (see, for example, Isaiah 2:1-5 and Psalm 72).

God has revealed all that to us in the Bible, but we still have difficulty in fully understanding just what it will be like to be made immortal, to meet the Lord Jesus face-to-face, and to experience a new-made society in which the glory of God is expressed as never before. Because we are imperfect now – all of us sinners in need of God's forgiveness – it is hard to envisage what a transformation awaits all those who are found right with God at the coming of Jesus. Fortunately, God is not limited by our lack of understanding. As Paul says again, God is:

*"able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21).*

## **Look and See**

No image that gazes back at us can make any difference to how we look, though it can alter the way we think



about ourselves. If we like what we see, that will improve our self-esteem; if we don't, we could become downcast and disappointed. But the Bible does more than give us glimpses into our inner self: it shows us a perfect picture of One who can change us, if we really want to be like him. When the Bible tells us about Jesus it does so because his life can have a transforming effect upon us, as indeed it has had upon countless people in the past. Here's the apostle Paul again, talking about something he has seen in the mirror of God's Word:

*"We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).*

Learning about Jesus, thinking about his words, considering his wonderful works, seeing the sort of attitudes he displayed – all these things can help us to become different people. We can learn to become like him. His example – his image, captured in the Bible – can make us reflect some elements of his life in the way we live. We can learn to become like him in some respects, so that at his Coming he can complete that transformation and make us just like him. Paul was waiting to become a citizen of God's Kingdom when he wrote:

*"Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to his glorious body, according to the working by which he is able even to subdue all things to himself" (Philippians 3:20,21).*

**Editor**

# The Walls of Jericho Did Fall Down

*In the past Bible critics have been quite vocal in questioning the authenticity of the account in the Book of Joshua which describes the invasion of the land of Canaan by Joshua and the Israelites. In particular they have challenged the incident when the walls of Jericho fell down flat, enabling the invaders to conquer the city, after which they burnt it with fire. Now there has been a major reappraisal and, as Dennis Elliott explains, there is much more willingness among scholars to accept the Bible account as true.*

The historical account of what happened in Jericho is to be found in the Book of Joshua, where we read:

*“So the people shouted when the priests blew the trumpets. And it happened when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat. Then the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city ... But they burned the city and all that was in it with fire. Only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD” (6:20,24).*

This is a clear statement of what took place at Jericho on that memorable occasion and the revealing work of archaeologists has shown the Bible record to be true and beyond dispute.

## **John Garstang’s Excavation**

The well-known British archaeologist, John Garstang, did excavation work on the site of Biblical

Jericho during the years 1930-1936, and the striking evidence that he produced in regard to what took place there brought the story of Joshua and the Israelites to life again. His work confirmed that the city had been destroyed by fire – as the Bible affirms – at about the year 1400 B.C. In the science of archaeology, pottery fragments are regarded as fairly accurate indicators of the various time periods and so meticulous was Garstang in his work that, in 1930, he and his wife cleaned and examined something like sixty thousand pieces of pottery and forty thousand more in the following year.

These helped him reach an estimate regarding the time when Joshua and the Israelites invaded and burnt Jericho which corresponded with the time the Bible reckoned. This was a telling answer to some Bible critics who considered the Bible account just another myth to be bracketed, in their minds, with the



stories of Noah's Ark and Jonah's Great Fish that swallowed him.

## Around and Around

The Bible account leaves us in no doubt at all as to what really happened at Jericho because Joshua and the Israelites were told in advance by the angel of God what was to take place before they captured the city:

*The LORD said to Joshua: "See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valour. You shall march around the city, all you men of war; you shall go all around the city once. This you shall do six days. And seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. But the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. Then it shall come to pass, when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, that all the people shall shout with a great shout; then the wall of the city will fall down flat. And the people shall go up every man straight before him" (Joshua 6:2-5).*

John Garstang produced ample evidence from blackened pottery fragments and soil samples that Jericho had been destroyed by fire. Author, Sir Charles



Marston, in his book, "The Bible is True", writes concerning Jericho:

*"Every room in the palace area tells the same tale of walls half fallen, reddened by fire amid layers of white ashes and masses of charcoal, rising through and above the ruins" (page 165). In the 1932 and 1933 excavations, Garstang discovered that "the walls had fallen outwards quite flat in various places, particularly on the western side of the city."*

## Scientific Advances

The advances in archaeological discoveries have been incremental over the years and taught us much of events and peoples, and how they lived and worked, and we owe much to the archaeologists who labour, often in difficult and trying conditions in order to increase our knowledge of civilizations buried in antiquity, while at the same time reinforcing our belief in what the Bible record has shown to be true for so long. There have been cases where archaeologists have gone to historical sites not specifically to prove the Bible right or wrong but to promote interest in ancient history itself and, as indicated already in the foregoing, with surprising and beneficial increases in our knowledge of what has taken place in the past which has been found to be valuable in the fields of scientific investigation and in some areas of education.

There would appear to be substance in the view of Professor Garstang, set out in his book, "The Story of Jericho" (page 404), that his investigations of the remains of the walls of Jericho, which were found to be not substantially built, that they probably collapsed as the result of an earthquake when the timber props



supporting the walls caught fire. It was an amazing miracle that happened at the very moment when Joshua and the Israelites were preparing to attack the city, and this is the clear impression conveyed by the Bible account.

## Other Investigations

Further interesting archaeological data of discoveries in the Negev have been provided by Professor Rudolph Cohen who was a former Director of the Israeli Antiquities Department. Over a period of twenty-five years he undertook excavations in this desert region and found pottery fragments and discarded utensils that he clearly identified as Jewish in character, as the great multitude made their way through the Negev towards Jericho.

Professor Cohen, like John Garstang, estimated that Joshua and the Israelites invaded the city in about 1400 B.C. In the context of what is being discussed here, it is interesting to note that the Scriptures afford us internal evidence of the period when the Israelites left Egypt, for we are told the following:

*"It came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD" (1 Kings 6:1).*

It is reckoned that Solomon began to reign as King over Israel at about the year 969 B.C. making the fourth year of his reign approximately 965 B.C. Adding to this the 480 years now mentioned brings us to circa 1445 B.C. as the date for the invasion of Jericho. This is very little different from the Garstang and Cohen estimations.

## Flawed Findings

Dr. Bryant G. Wood, former lecturer at Toronto University, and Director of Associates for Biblical Research at Ephrata, Pennsylvania, did an independent examination of British archaeologist Dame Kathleen Kenyon's files relating to her work at Jericho and those of her predecessors, especially those of John Garstang. After a meticulous examination of Kenyon's and Garstang's findings, he concluded that Garstang was right, noting that he had recorded a great deal of Late Bronze Age pottery that Kenyon claimed was non-existent at Jericho.

Wood, acknowledged as a leading authority in the world on pottery dating, was of the view that Kenyon's strata dating was flawed, and that she had compressed twenty separate phases into a much too abbreviated time scale of 100 years, while Garstang had discovered a continuous sequence of Egyptian scarabs at the site depicting active use till about 1400 B.C. Wood makes the clear statement:

*"Despite the fact that the area where the upper wall once stood is gone, there is evidence, incredible as it may seem, that this wall came tumbling down and, in the words of the Bible account in Joshua, fell down flat."*

He concludes his report in the respected *"Biblical Archaeological Review"*, March/April 1990, pages 54,57, by pointing out that the pottery, stratigraphical factors, scarab data and a Carbon-14 date all indicate that Jericho was invaded and destroyed by Joshua and the Israelites round about the year 1400 B.C.

So, once again, the Bible has been shown to be true and completely dependable.

**Dennis Elliott**



## Growth of the Gospel – 16

# More about the First Missionary Journey

Paul and Barnabas had set out on a mission to preach the gospel in Asia Minor and had achieved remarkable success in Cyprus, with God's blessing and help. The Roman Procurator on the island, named Sergius Paulus, had



asked to see them and they had both preached to him and shown him evidence of God's power at work. So he had become a believer, which was a remarkable outcome. But now, as John Hellawell explains, they were to take the message of salvation across the Mediterranean to Asia.

### Mainland of Asia Minor

Paul and his companions now left Cyprus. They sailed from Paphos to the mainland of Asia Minor (modern Turkey) and probably landed at Attalia (modern Antalya, which is still a port), since it is from this harbour they returned to Antioch (Acts 14:26). They then went inland about 14 miles to Perga.

For some unknown reason, John Mark left the party at this point, returning to Jerusalem. Later, this incident became the cause of a serious rift between Paul and Barnabas (15:36-40). Amongst the various explanations for his behaviour, it has been suggested that Mark was reluctant to preach to Gentiles or that the potentially open-ended commitment troubled him. In comparison with Cyprus, the Roman province of Asia Minor was immense.

The next place they visited was Antioch in Pisidia (so-called to distinguish it from the Syrian Antioch). This was a Roman colony; in effect, an outpost Rome with Roman (Latin) administration. It seems that the move to Antioch was, in part,

a result of Paul's illness (Galatians 4:13,14). The city was quite elevated and may have been more pleasant than Perga, which was close to sea level.

On the Sabbath day they attended the synagogue to take part in the service. Paul and Barnabas were recognised as Rabbis and were invited to speak. Paul accepted the invitation.

### Paul's Exhortation

The greater part of the remainder of the chapter is taken up with an outline of the message which Paul gave. His theme would appear to have been "God has sent the Messiah – and, as always, His people were unprepared". His audience was made up of Jews and also some Gentiles ("those that fear God"). The latter group were Gentiles who were associated with the synagogue, appreciating the spiritual quality of Judaism, in comparison with Greek and Roman idolatry, but who did not wish to become full proselytes.

Paul began with a review of God's dealings with his people, Israel. He described the birth of the nation at the Exodus and reminded them that, having

brought His people out of Egypt and into the wilderness, God tolerated their infidelity for 40 years. They would probably recall that the majority of those who left Egypt died in the wilderness as a result of their unbelief.

God destroyed the seven nations who were the original inhabitants of the Promised Land and instituted Judges, ending with Samuel, the last judge and a prophet.

Desiring a king, God gave them Saul the son of Kish, who reigned for 40 years, but he was not a success. They wanted a king like those of other nations, not after God's pattern in Deuteronomy 17:15-20, and that is what they received. Saul was replaced by David – a “man after God's heart” – who received the promise that the Saviour, the Messiah, would be his descendant.

Paul continued with a quotation which merges together parts of Psalm 89 and 1 Samuel 13, interpreting rather than quoting the last part of the second reference.

*“I have found my servant David; With my holy oil I have anointed him ...”* (Psalm 89:20).

*“But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought for himself a man after his own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be a commander over his people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you”* (1 Samuel 13:14)

Paul's audience would be familiar with the promises God had made to David, which Paul declared had been fulfilled in Jesus.

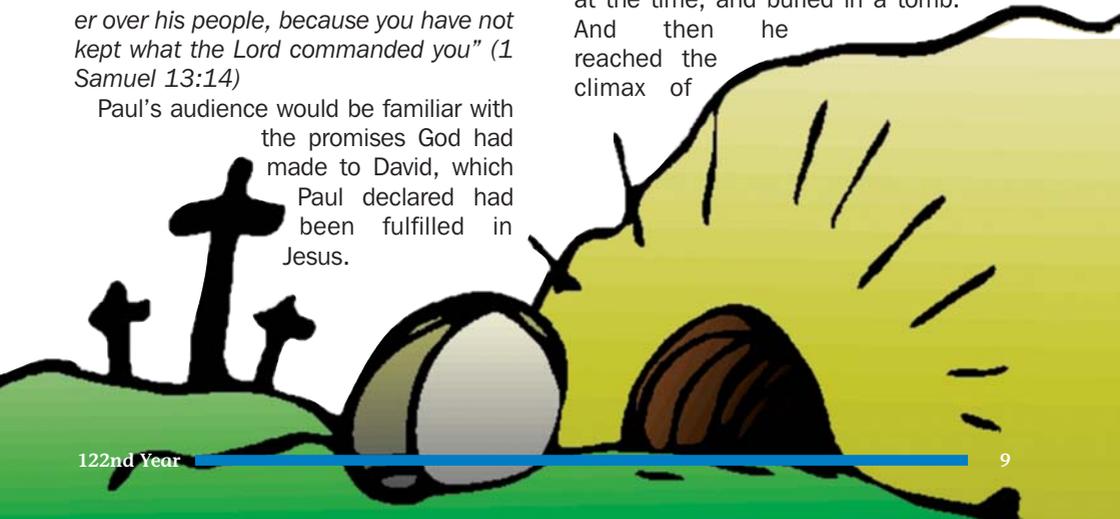
Having set out the Old Testament background, Paul now moved forward to the recent work of John the Baptist and cited John's testimony regarding the Lord Jesus. It may have been that Paul's audience were aware that two of John's disciples (one of whom was Andrew, the other is unnamed but is probably John, the author of the Gospel) had transferred their allegiance to the Lord after John had pointed him out to them (John 1:35-42).

## **The Application**

Although the Jews, and especially their rulers, had not recognised Jesus, in condemning him they were, said Paul, fulfilling the very prophetic word that formed part of the Sabbath readings for that day! He would, no doubt, have reviewed other appropriate Old Testament passages that confirmed this. Then he explained that although the trial of Jesus was totally illegal, for it had established his innocence, yet the Jewish rulers had persuaded Pilate to execute him. Again, he stressed, these events fulfilled the prophecies and almost certainly he would have quoted more appropriate Old Testament passages.

On removing the Lord's body from the cross, said the apostle, it was treated respectfully, contrary to normal practice at the time, and buried in a tomb.

And then he reached the climax of



the story: *“But God raised him from the dead”!* What is more, there were witnesses of this event who were now declaring this to the Jewish people. Paul’s task was to bring this good news to them. What God had promised to their fathers, he had fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus. This event demonstrated that he was indeed the promised Messiah.

Then Paul gave a series of quotations from Psalm 2:7, Isaiah 55:3 and Psalm 16:10, to demonstrate that, although David was a man after God’s own heart, these words were not applicable to him. After David died, he was buried and his body decayed like any other. But the body of Jesus did not. God raised him from death. Therefore, it followed that he must be the Holy One of whom God spoke through David.

Paul now revealed that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins was being preached and by him all that believe are “justified” (a word that means to be ‘reckoned righteous’), something which the Law of Moses could not do. Again, we may imagine that Paul expanded this point by appropriate citations, as he would do later in his letter to the Romans.

## **Paul’s Challenge**

He concluded his address with a warning that they should beware of fulfilling prophecy by their rejection of what he said, as the rulers and Jews in Jerusalem had done, citing the prophet Habakkuk:

*“Look among the nations and watch - be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days, which you will not believe, though it were told you” (Habakkuk 1:5).*

The passage is particularly appropriate in addressing those “among the nations”, that is of the Dispersion, a situation which arose from their former dis-

obedience! The next Sabbath “almost the whole city” came to hear them. It is difficult to imagine that the synagogue would hold all these, so perhaps the meeting was held outside. In the intervening week Paul’s discourse was probably the main topic of conversation in Antioch. Some Jews had now, no doubt, marshalled their counter-arguments. When they saw the crowds, presumably containing Gentiles also, “they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul”.

Nevertheless, Paul and Barnabas spoke boldly, emphasising that they had brought the word to the Jews first of all, as was appropriate. But, since they had judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life, that is, they had wilfully rejected the Gospel, it would now be offered to the Gentiles, as the Lord had commanded. Paul cited Isaiah 49:6 in defence of his actions:

*“... I will also give you as a light to the Gentiles; that you should be my salvation to the ends of the earth” (Acts 13:47,48).* The Gentiles were delighted with this message and: *“as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed”.*

The word was published throughout the region but, as was to happen repeatedly, the Jews channelled their hostility through *“devout and honourable women and the chief man of the city”*. The result was that Paul and Barnabas were persecuted and expelled from Antioch and the region. So, faithful to the Lord’s command, Paul and Barnabas *‘shook off the dust from their feet’* and went on to Iconium (modern Konya), leaving behind the disciples who rejoiced in their new-found faith.

**John Hellowell**

# The Certainty of Bodily Resurrection

*A long time ago a man who was on trial for his life asked a question which could equally be asked today, for there are still people who remain unconvinced and who need to examine the evidence. The question was: "Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?" (Acts 26:8). The questioner was the apostle Paul and in this article **Trevor Pritchard** examines some of the evidence that had convinced Paul that Jesus was alive, a conviction that entirely changed his life.*

## Logic and Reason

It is the apostle Paul who states the certainty of bodily resurrection in his letter to the Corinthians. You might want to read an extract of his careful reasoning for yourself, in which case look at 1 Corinthians 15:12-17. Paul is uncompromising. The whole structure of the Christian religion, he argues, stands or falls by the resurrection from the dead of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So let it be affirmed at the outset that either Jesus Christ rose from the dead in a bodily form, ascended into heaven in a bodily form, is alive today, and is about to return to this earth in a bodily form, or he is dead. The alternatives are that stark. And if Jesus is dead we can relegate him to the status of another of the world's great teachers – someone who had something worthwhile

to say, but who couldn't deliver the goods when it really mattered.

In fact we can go further than that – if

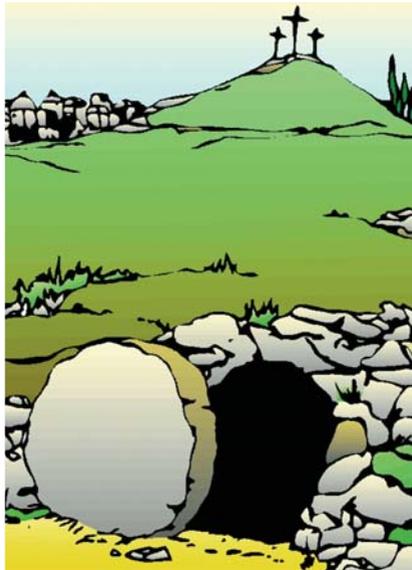
Jesus is dead we can forget about him altogether. For he claimed to be someone other than he was, if he is dead. He claimed to be such an extraordinary person — the Light of the World, the Good Shepherd, the True and living Way, the True Vine, the Resurrection and the Life.

So, either he is now alive for evermore or he is a fraud. You must make up your own minds about that, but don't dodge the issue.

Mind you, in making

up your own minds, you are not 'proving' whether he rose from the dead or not: you are merely coming to terms with the facts. That was what the apostle Paul had done for himself, which is why he saw everything with such clarity and conviction, when he wrote these words:

*"And if Christ is not risen, your faith is*



*futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead ...” (1 Corinthians 15:17-20).*

## Considering the Evidence

Christadelphians are convinced of the truth of bodily resurrection. What about yourself? Have you ever tried to come to terms with at least some of the evidence? It’s as well to be clear about one thing as we begin. Irrefutable factual evidence, as distinct from personal testimony, can only come from writings, books and archaeological work.

This is of the very nature of history itself. For some people the fact that some of those books are in the Bible seems of itself to discredit such evidence. Yet, let’s face it. If we want evidence of the words and writings of, say, one of the Greek philosophers, then we have to make do with copies of their writings dated almost a thousand years after their words were first written.

But all the books of the New Testament were written within the first century of the Christian era and some copies still exist which were written within 150 years of the death of Jesus. The New Testament is textually far better attested than, for instance, any ancient Greek author.

Relatively recently in history one Englishman, who did not believe in the resurrection of Jesus, set himself the task of establishing once and for all that Jesus was dead. Quoting from the preface of

the resulting book – “*Who Moved the Stone*” – we read:

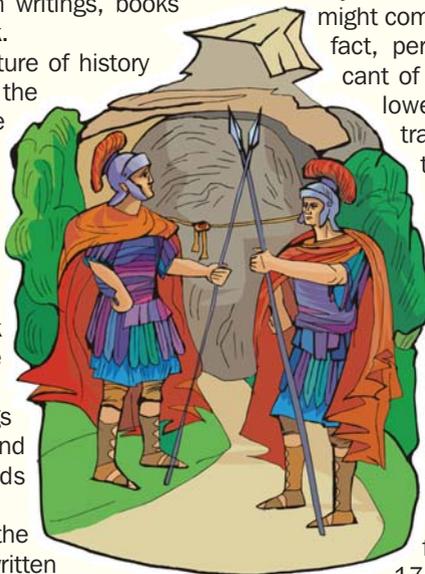
*“This book is essentially a confession, the inner story of a man who set out to write one kind of book and found himself compelled by the sheer force of circumstances, to write another”.*

Frank Morrison, the author, studied the evidence and came to believe the exact opposite of what he had set out to prove. And here we are at the beginning of the third millennium still facing the same question.

## New-made Men

Any conclusions to which we might come must account for this fact, perhaps the most significant of all. The immediate followers of Jesus were transformed by their certainty that he had risen from the dead. Their world was turned upside down by his death but they themselves were then turned upside down by his resurrection, and went on to preach that message with such conviction that people said of them that they were overturning the first century world (Acts 17:5,6).

These disciples were men who, because of the betrayal by Judas and the rough way in which Jesus was treated by the Jewish authorities, literally ran away and deserted their Master. Even Peter, the most outspoken of them, denied his Lord (Luke 22: 54-62). They were scared stiff and their hopes had been completely dashed. Two of Jesus’ followers were heard to say, no doubt in a tone of despair: “We were hoping that it was he



who was going to redeem Israel” (Luke 24:21). Now all their hopes had gone for ever, or so they thought!

And let us not forget that two of the gospel writers were eye-witnesses of these events. Matthew and John, paint themselves and their fellow disciples in a very bad light as deserters. Yet only seven weeks later, when Jerusalem was again packed with visitors, these very followers confronted those who had been instrumental in bringing about the death of Jesus and challenged their actions (Acts 4:13-21).

Could the change in these men be accounted for by a hoax? Can the loyalty of the first century Christians to their risen Lord, often under the real threat of torture and death, be accounted for by an intrigue to put about a rumour? We think not.

## **The Empty Tomb**

Another astounding fact is that the tomb was empty. Over the years a number of theories have been propounded to explain how this might have come about, the first being put about by the Jewish authorities that the disciples had stolen the body (Matthew 28:11-15). That only goes to show that the body was missing and that they could not produce the bruised and battered corpse, to put an end to the message that was then being preached – that Jesus had risen from the dead. That early lie does nothing to establish what had happened, but just consider some of these issues for a moment.



## **❖ Stolen?**

Could a sad and dispirited collection of leaderless men, like the disciples, have possibly planned the stealing of the body of Jesus? The idea is ludicrous – much more difficult to believe than what we believe to be the truth. Such men could never have kept up the fraud for long; nor would they have proclaimed the gospel message with such conviction, as detailed in

the account in Acts, if they really knew that Jesus had actually died. And what would they have wanted with the body? Where else would they have buried it, when a rich follower had just come forward to provide a dignified and suitable resting place?

## **❖ Swooned?**

How could these same followers have been so convincing if they knew that Jesus had merely swooned, not died, and that he had staggered out of the tomb, to go and die again somewhere else? It just isn't feasible that the coolness of the tomb would have revived Him. A person in such a condition would need warm blankets and hot sweet tea to restore him to consciousness. Anyway he was, by that time, imprisoned in a cocoon of bandage-like cloths, impregnated with a large quantity of ointments, used in those days for embalming.

Could a person in such a condition have removed the stone which had been rolled to the door of the tomb from the inside, avoid the guard, and then convince his disciples that he was alive, well and happy? I think not.

## ❖ **Mistaken?**

Again, there are those who believe that the women, in their tearful distress, who went to the tomb early on the Sunday morning, in fact went to the wrong tomb. But surely then the Pharisees and Sadducees, the Jewish religious leaders, would have been the very first to have gloatingly pointed out the right one. Never once is there any hint anywhere that the Jewish authorities found a body – and you can rest assured they would have looked and looked and looked. And they would not have been alone. Many of those who heard the apostles preach the resurrection would have wanted to go and check things out for themselves, for they were boldly proclaiming that Jesus had died and risen again in the very city where all these events had taken place, and to many people who would have witnessed his cruel and public death by crucifixion.

## **Face the Facts!**

We put it to you that there is only one satisfactory reason for the facts and it is that outlined by the apostle Paul in that chapter (1 Corinthians 15: 1-8). He himself was, at the first, determined to stamp out this new religion but his experiences on the Road to Damascus changed all that — he too saw the Risen Lord.

Thus we are led to a point unique in our relations with the men and women of history. No other character of history can move us to such a degree. The example of a great Pharaoh like Akhenaton; a profound thinker like Socrates; or a capable politician like Sir Thomas Moore might inspire us, but none could bring about such an honest revolution in our lives. Great men they undoubtedly were, but they have one thing in common. They are all dead. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is alive for ever more.

This reality has immense implications for the likes of you and me. The apostle Paul when speaking in the Athens agora proclaimed this great truth:

*“Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising. Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because he has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising him from the dead” (Acts 17: 29-31). Jesus the Christ is to return to raise from the dead those who know about his teaching (1 Corinthians 15: 20-23).*

His bodily resurrection is not only the guarantee of his return, but he himself is the firstfruits of the harvest of the dead (1 Corinthians 15: 35 & 40-45).

Oh yes, Jesus was real enough after His resurrection (Luke 24: 36-43). In fact, He is now much more real than we are.

- We have a natural body; he has a spiritual body;
- We will perish, but Jesus is immortal;
- His faithful followers are promised that they too will partake of his spiritual nature (1 Corinthians 15: 44-45).
- The resurrected Christ is indeed a life-giving spirit.

We urge you then to look for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven: to come to understand the will of the Creator, to await the great day of resurrection and the establishment of God’s Kingdom here on this earth (1 Corinthians 15: 51-57).

**Trevor A. Pritchard**

## Part Five

# God's New Society

In the last article in this series **Tom Barling** explained how the separate revelations to Cornelius, the Roman officer, and the apostle Peter who was then at Joppa, had brought them together in the officer's home in Caesarea. A Jew and a Gentile met in what was to be an historic moment in the life of the early church, for the very first Gentile was about to become a baptised follower of Jesus Christ. Things would never be the same again.

## Peter with Cornelius

We can understand the eagerness with which Cornelius and his circle would listen to what the apostle Peter had to say. The apostle's words are to be found in Acts 10:34-43. These verses contain a delightful summary of the Lord's ministry. They begin with Peter declaring that God shows no favouritism:

*"but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right" (10:35).*

What we must notice here is the expression "every nation". This was to be the great feature of the new society God was creating; all its members were accepting "the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all". In his next words Peter calls attention to an interesting fact, one which might escape our notice. He says to his audience:

*"You know the message God sent to the people of Israel" (10:36).*

From this it is clear Cornelius and the others were already familiar with the basic facts about the Lord's ministry. Then Peter reminds them of what

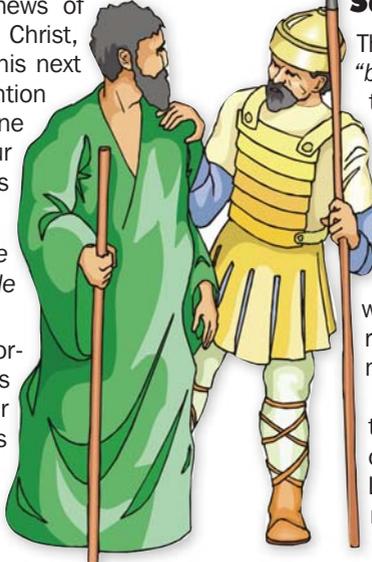
they already knew: the work of John the Baptist, the anointing of Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit, and suchlike. While the apostle is rehearsing the main facts of the ministry, he emphasizes the importance of his own witness and that of the other apostles. They were called upon "to testify that he (Jesus) is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead". Moreover the ancient prophets had all witnessed to the great truth:

*"that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name" (10:43).*

## Saving Faith

The all-important word here is "believes", or has faith. This is the great distinguishing feature of God's message of salvation in the Lord Jesus: to benefit from it a man or woman must have faith in that message – total faith. It is evident that all who were listening to Peter, were responding in their hearts and minds.

They were not being told that they needed to be circumcised and then keep the Law of Moses. What was required of them was the



acceptance of the Lord Jesus, who was Lord of all. They were showing by the looks on their faces and their words of approval that they were accepting Peter's testimony.



Gospel had so far been restricted to Jews. Now there was a major breakthrough, and Peter's bold words reveal as much:

*"Can anyone keep these people from being baptised with water? They have received the Holy*

*Spirit just as we have" (Acts 10:47).*

Then something happened which was destined to change the course of history: these men at Caesarea who were responding to the words of the apostle, with implicit faith received the Holy Spirit:

*"While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles" (Acts 10:44,45).*

It was not surprising that Peter's companions, all of them Christians but also circumcised Jews, were truly astounded that the Holy Spirit had been bestowed "even on the Gentiles". "They heard them speaking in tongues and praising God", that being one of the gifts available in the early church that helped the preaching of the gospel at a time when many different languages and dialects were in common use, apart from Greek.

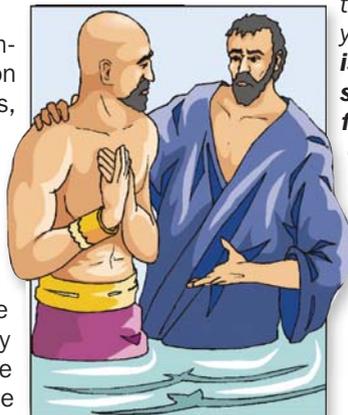
So these Gentiles were baptised in the name of Jesus Christ and thus were the very first uncircumcised Gentiles to become part of God's new society. What is also remarkable is that the main character here featured was a Roman officer, a representative of the power odious to most Jews. It may have been thought that Rome had triumphed over Christianity when a Roman procurator ordered the death of Jesus. But now it was evident that Christianity was destined to emerge the victor and that, in God's good time, men and women from all nations would come to acknowledge and follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

A little later, the apostle Paul would endorse the action of Peter by saying this about the opportunities for salvation that now exist:

*"You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. **There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.** If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:26-29)*

## Proof Positive

For Peter this last phenomenon was the culmination of a whole series of events, which at first had taken him completely by surprise. But by now he was convinced that God was at work and that Gentiles could be admitted to the early church. Repentance and baptism were already established features of the Gospel of salvation but the



**Tom Barling**

# Immortal Souls in the Bible

**This is a true story about a little boy called John. He went to a Christadelphian Sunday School and always, on Sunday evenings, used to go with his father and mother to hear Talks on the truths of the Bible.**

Although he was not very old, John used to listen very carefully to what was said. One Sunday night the speaker was talking about “immortal souls”. He said that some people believed that when they died their “soul” would leave the body and go to heaven where it would live for ever.

“That is quite wrong” the speaker said. “The Bible teaches something quite different. It teaches that when Jesus comes back to earth those who have followed his commandments will be raised from the dead. Their bodies will come out of the graves, and they will then be made to live for ever.”

To assure the audience that this was the truth, the speaker offered to give £1000 to anyone who could show him that the Bible teaches us to believe in an immortal soul. John pricked up his ears when he heard this because he remembered something in his Bible about immortal souls and began to look through its pages as fast as he could. Sure enough, he soon found it.

There was no doubt about it, he thought. The picture at the back of his Bible showed a ‘soul,’ either just leaving

or just returning to the dead body. He thought this a great discovery and began to think of all the nice things he would buy with all that money!

## **Disappointment**

When the meeting was over, John, feeling a bit nervous and a bit excited, went to show the speaker the picture in his Bible and to claim the £1000. But he didn’t get it. Instead the speaker smiled and thumbed back a few pages to the last chapter of the Book of Revelation. He pointed to the words: “THE END” and then explained to

John that the pictures at the back of his Bible weren’t really part of the Bible at all.

They were “*Bible Illustrations*” and this particular one was to show what the Ancient Egyptians believed about life after death. This, he said, was where wrong ideas about the soul had first come from and those ideas had confused people as to what the Bible really teaches. Just as the picture had misled John that night, the Egyptian teachings had misled lots of people over the years.

So John missed out on the £1000, but learned a valuable lesson about the need to read the Bible carefully and not to be confused by ideas that come from other religious systems or from wishful thinking. He also now knew why bodily resurrection from the dead was such a key Bible teaching.

**Harry Whittaker**



## Have You Read?

# About Judas Iscariot

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## What is it about?



Judas Iscariot was chosen to be a disciple of Jesus, travelling and working with him and the eleven. Towards the end of his ministry the religious leaders wanted to get rid of Jesus. Judas made an offer to help them arrest him away from public gaze. A price having been agreed, Judas took them to the garden of Gethsemane where Jesus was arrested. His trial and execution followed. Filled with remorse, Judas returned his payment and hanged himself.

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## Why did it happen then?

Jerusalem was filled with pilgrims for Passover, (the feast celebrating the Hebrews' deliverance from Egypt – see Exodus chapter 12). The governing Roman authorities feared trouble that could reflect badly on them in Rome; the religious rulers were jealous as people left them to follow Jesus (Luke 22:2; John 12:9-11).

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## When did it happen?

Sometime between 29 and 33 A.D. The chronology at the time of Jesus is not entirely clear as the Calendar got a little mixed up when trying to state exactly when Jesus was born.

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## Where will I find it?



**The anointing at Bethany:** *Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8*

**The plot:** *Matthew 26:14-16; Mark 14:10-21; Luke 22:1-5*

**The last supper:** *Matthew 26:17-25; John 13:1-30*

**The betrayal:** *Matthew 26: 47-50; Mark 14:43-46; Luke 22:47-48*

**His remorse:** *Matthew 27:1-9*

# What should I look out for?



## Judas:

- ❖ was chosen by Jesus after much prayer (Luke 6:12-16) and was given power to heal and preach like the other disciples (Matthew 10:1; Mark 3:13-14; Acts 1:15-17)
- ❖ loved money and was probably good at handling it. He held the communal cash box (John 13: 29) and helped himself to it (John 12:5-6).
- ❖ betrayed Jesus just after he had been rebuked by him over Mary's perfumed anointing (John 12:7). Rather than congratulating him for his supposed money sense (John 12:4-5), Jesus praised the insight and thoughtfulness of a lowly woman (Mark 14:6-9). Perhaps it was his hurt and anger at Jesus' reaction that turned Judas towards the chief priests.
- ❖ was hit by remorse (Matthew 27:3-6) when he heard of Jesus' death sentence.
- ❖ was paid 30 silver pieces for his betrayal. Was this a down payment (Matthew 26:15), perhaps with the promise of more on completion? (Mark 14:11)

## Jesus:

- ❖ was in no doubt of Judas' state of mind (John 6:70-71)
- ❖ aware of Judas' plans, he kept the venue of the Last Supper secret from him, (Matthew 26:17-18), thus ensuring it would not be interrupted.
- ❖ said beforehand that he would be betrayed (Matthew 26:24; John 13:10-11, 18, 21-26) and that it was predicted (Psalm 41:9; Matthew 26:54, 56; 27:9; Acts 1:16). Scripture is clear that Judas' betrayal and all surrounding events were with God's set purpose and foreknowledge (Acts 2:23, NIV.)

## What does it mean for me?

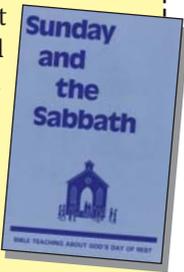
- ❖ Jesus never gave up on Judas, loving him to the bitter end by washing his feet (John 13:2-5) and offering a token of fellowship. Jesus will not give up on us either.
- ❖ We are all sometimes betrayed (and sometimes betray others.) Christ's followers must try to follow his example of forgiveness and ask for it too.
- ❖ Judas acted first then thought afterwards. Do we always consider how our actions affect others, especially when done in anger or hurt?
- ❖ Repentance can mean a new start for anybody. Both Peter (John 13:37-38; Matthew 26:33-35, 72) and Judas let Jesus down but, because he repented, Peter went from despair to become a leader of the early church. Judas' name, though, is now a byword for betrayal.
- ❖ Although in close contact with Jesus for so long, Judas never let his words touch his heart. It is up to us to make sure that contact with God's Word changes us.

**Joan Lewis**

## Two Free Offers

### Christian Conscience

Though worship on the first day of the week had become part of the pattern of the early Christian congregations, the restrictions of the sabbath had not simply been transferred from Saturday to Sunday. There are no instructions in the New Testament commanding believers to rest from their daily work. The individual has to order his own life as he sees fit.



**Michael Ashton**

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