

Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1478

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Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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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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The Bible: Get the Message!

There have been times in the past when nobody could get a Bible. In ancient times books were very scarce and therefore very valuable and ordinary people couldn't read.

You had to be rich before you got an education. Working class people just worked. It gave the educated a huge advantage which many were quick to exploit. They could tell the unlearned what to do, and ignorant peasants couldn't argue back. If things got desperate they could revolt; but things would have to be really bad before they would do that. They had too much to lose – their homes, families, livelihood, even their lives.

Religious Monopoly

You would have hoped that the leaders of the Christian Church would have been keen to ease their burdens. Could they have started schools and hospitals, or have begun social reforms?

There were some good and kind people, who did what they could, but the Church as a whole was very wealthy and much enjoyed its position of privilege and power. It had a religious monopoly and even conducted Church services in Latin – the language of the educated classes. It wasn't just that ordinary people couldn't get a Bible of their own; they couldn't even understand

the language being used in the Church where they worshipped.

Not in Nazareth

Have you ever compared that situation in the Middle Ages, in Britain and elsewhere, with what happened in Bible times? Jesus lived in a working class home; for thirty years he was a carpenter, or perhaps a jobbing builder (Mark 6:3). The village where he was brought up did not have a very good reputation, especially as far as the learned classes were concerned. One of them once said of the whole northern area of Israel: *"Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee"* (John 7:52, and see 1:46).

Actually he was wrong; for a couple of God's prophets had come from that area. But it shows the sort of reputation the whole area suffered. Yet Jesus could read. Even as a boy of twelve he was literate, and was to be found at the Temple in Jerusalem both asking questions about the Scriptures and

answering them! The account says that his hearers were amazed at his understanding. It's as if a peasant boy in the Middle Ages had turned up at the University shown on this month's front cover, to astound the Professors with his learning and insight. That's precisely what Jesus did.

Written Records

There's a reason for this educational difference. From the time when Israel



was formed as a nation – when God rescued them from Egyptian slavery and secured their freedom – He communicated to them in a way which required the people to learn and remember His words. From early times there is express mention of written accounts which had to be kept and consulted.

- ✍ The war against the Amalekites was to be recorded as a memorial for the future (Exodus 17:14);
- ✍ The Ten Commandments given to Moses were written down on two stone tablets (Exodus 32:15);
- ✍ The last words of Moses were written down – to form the Book of Deuteronomy – and they were to be kept in The Tabernacle (the tent where the sacred objects of Israel’s worship were stored). See Deuteronomy 31:24-26);
- ✍ The history of Israel was carefully recorded by several scribes or chroniclers (see 1 Kings 14:19).

A Book to Read

The result of this careful recording was that the Jews had written accounts of God’s Law from early on and were well aware of the need to read and understand what God had told them. There were important promises; detailed laws that affected every aspect of their life; prophecies about their national future and a full record of their national history and experience. That’s why they taught their children to read, working class or not, and talked to one another about the things which God had revealed. Their Law required them to do it.

“These words which I command you today shall be in your heart; you shall

teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up ...You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (Deuteronomy 6:6-9).

Jewish families didn’t have books or scrolls of their own. At first the copies were with their priests, and later were lodged in synagogues. But the printing press changed all that and made Bibles much more available. By now almost anyone can own his or her own Bible and read it in their own language.

Get the Message

But getting a Bible is not the same as getting its message. That takes time and requires a bit of patient endeavour. Nothing worthwhile is ever achieved immediately. The more you have to work for something, the more you appreciate it, and that’s why God has communicated to us in this remarkable way.

The Bible is a compendium of experiences, all of them historically true and accurately recorded. It’s a book to rely upon and on which to base your life, for it will never let you down. Its promises can change your life, for they give real hope and certainty in what is sometimes a hopeless and desperate world. God has a plan and purpose and He is going to rescue us from the dire straits we now face. But He can do more than that.

God can change your life and give you a purpose for living and a hope for the future. He loves us and wants us to love Him. That’s the vital message contained in the Bible. Get the Message?

Editor

Medicine in the Bible

Joseph Lister, considered by many to be the father of modern antiseptics, developed his theories whilst he worked at the University of Glasgow as a surgeon.

He realised that micro-organisms caused infection, and one of the ways of combating this was by rigorous hand washing, a technique first proposed by Ignaz Philipp Semmelweis in relation to care of women around the time of childbirth. Lister actually said *“Without Semmelweis my achievements would be nothing”*.

But the idea of hand washing was not new. When we look at the laws of the Old Testament, we see that many illnesses might have been prevented if only people had listened to God! Leviticus chapter 15 tells us all about preventing the spread of “uncleanness” – verse 11 states:

“Whomever he who has the discharge touches, and has not rinsed his hands in water, he shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening”.

The Law of Moses was primarily a religious law, concerned with maintaining the Children of Israel as a “holy” (or separate) nation; nevertheless, the secondary health benefits were clear.

Health & Hygiene

Modern medicine tells us a great deal about health and hygiene, but we can still learn a lot from the Bible. One of the greatest problems we see in the

refugee camps of Africa is due to water-borne diseases, such as cholera and typhoid. These are spread by contaminated sewage getting into the water supply which is used for drinking and cooking; according to the World Health Organisation, diarrhoeal diseases are a major cause of death in low-income countries. Once again, the Bible has some useful advice –

“You shall have a place outside the camp, where you may go out; and you shall have an implement among your equipment, and when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and turn and cover your refuse” (Deuteronomy 23:12-13).

This advice prevented the mixing of fresh water and human waste, and helped to avoid the spread of these diseases. During the Middle Ages, Jewish communities often survived when around them others were dying in epidemic proportions – simply because they obeyed God’s law.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

In modern times, sexual promiscuity has become the norm – many advocate that as long as you do no-one any harm, you can live as you please, and this includes having sex with as many partners as you wish. However, the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases is rising throughout the world, in both developing and developed countries. Whilst the use of barrier contraception prevents the spread of



these diseases, the best way to prevent their spread is to follow Bible teaching, that sexual promiscuity is wrong.

The Bible teaches that sex should be within a loving, marital relationship, which lasts for life. Jesus himself taught the principle of one man and one woman (see Mark 10:2-12). In low-income countries, HIV/AIDS accounted for more than 2 million deaths in 2002 (WHO figures), it's one of the biggest killers there. Whilst HIV is no longer seen as a fatal infection due to the development of drug therapy, in the world's poorest countries, where often these drugs are unavailable, the spread of HIV would be prevented by following the moral teaching of the Bible.

Food Hygiene

Although many readers will have access to refrigeration, this was not the case when the Bible was written. During the middle ages, the spice trade flourished, not because the western diet preferred such food, but because spices were used to disguise the taste of food which was "going off"! Even food hygiene was considered in the Law of Moses. In Leviticus 19 we read:

"If you offer a sacrifice of peace offering to the LORD, you shall offer it of your own free will. It shall be eaten the same day you offer it, and on the next day. And if any remains until the third day, it shall be burned in the fire. And if it is eaten at all on the third day, it is an abomination. It shall not be accepted" (verses 5-7).

Again, whilst primarily religious, the health aspects of not eating "bad"



*The University where
Lister worked*

food is clear. This is also reflected in the Book of Numbers, where we read:

"This is the law when a man dies in a tent: All who come into the tent and all who are in the tent shall be unclean seven days; and every open vessel, which has no cover fastened on it, is unclean" (Numbers 19:14-15).

The Law even contained regulations for stored food (it helped to stop the spread of contagious diseases).

Life and Death

In this article, we've only briefly glanced at the "health" aspects of the Bible. God was, and is, concerned for his chosen people, and that is seen in these laws which we've considered, in helping to prevent disease. But, of course, the ultimate "scourge" is death itself, and the Bible also has the answer to this. It teaches that after Jesus returns to the earth, God's Kingdom will be established here. Mankind will no longer concern himself with disease, illness and death, for we are told that, in that day:

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

We can be in that Kingdom and enjoy a life free from disease and death. That's why it's so important for you to read your Bible, to find out how! The Bible has got the message we need, and we need to get it!

Drew Smith

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Finding True Knowledge

In this article **Lindsay Yuile** asks why knowledge really matters so much to people. Then he explains why the knowledge of God, and about His purpose, makes all the difference in the world.

Being Better Off

It seems that people have always had a thirst for knowledge. This has led to great discoveries in the arts or sciences. One motivating force behind this quest is the idea that we will be better off with such knowledge than those who don't know. There is a well-known saying that "Knowledge is Power", and most people like power, even if they can only get access to a little bit of it!

However, the Bible has some interesting things to say about knowledge and not all of them are complimentary! One very well-educated man wrote dismissively about people who thought they knew everything but actually knew nothing that really mattered. His advice was to avoid, "the profane and vain babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge" (1 Timothy 6:20). There is a deep-seated reason why such a warning was given. The quest for knowledge is not always a good thing



Knowing Good and Evil

The first recorded message from God to man concerned knowledge:

"Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you

shall surely die" (Genesis 2:16,17).

Despite the dire warning from their Creator about the desire to know the difference between good and evil proved too great. They disobeyed God and ate of the fruit of the forbidden tree, notwithstanding that they could have eaten from every other tree. We are still experiencing the after-effects of that act of disobedience in that we are all now subject to death just as they were, because of their disobedience.

So why did Adam and Eve eat of the fruit of that particular tree? We don't have to speculate, for the answer is given in the Genesis account, and it had to do with knowledge:

"When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate" (Genesis 3:6).

They ate partly because they wanted to be wise. This ancient account shows us that knowledge and wisdom do not always bring happiness and contentment.

Do we know Better?

Since that time, men and women have often failed to acknowledge that God knows much more than we can ever

learn. Men and women often behave as if they know better than God. Many supposedly learned people do not even acknowledge His existence believing instead that everything has just happened by accident.

It would be a mistake to think that the Bible discourages the quest for knowledge. It most certainly does not, for knowledge is the key to a better, a happier and more fulfilling life. But it has to be the right sort of knowledge. Here are some beautiful words from the Book of Proverbs regarding wisdom.

“Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding; for her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, and her gain than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things you may desire cannot compare with her” (3:13-15).

But, make no mistake, this wisdom is God’s wisdom, not that which is falsely so-called. For Solomon also said:

“My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands; for length of days and long life and peace they will add to you. Let not mercy and truth forsake you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, and so find favour and high esteem in the sight of God and man” (3:1-4)

The challenge in life is to place our reliance completely on God, and not to trust in our own cleverness or ingenuity. If we let God’s Word rule our lives, by getting to know the message of the Bible and following it, there is a very good outcome:

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understand-

ing; in all your ways acknowledge him, and He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones” (3:5-8).

Weak or Strong?

It takes real courage to put our entire confidence in God, but it really makes sense. God wants people who put aside their prejudices and give His Word a chance in their lives. It can make even the weakest of us into a stronger and better person, just as God intends should happen. For this is what the apostle Paul said:

“The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty ... that no flesh should glory in his presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God” (1 Corinthians 1:25-30).

The important lesson for us is that all the wisdom in all the universities of the world is nothing compared to the wisdom of God. The Bible tells us that God is offering us the gift of eternal life in a world that will be filled with peace and happiness; where the suffering of this present age will be ended. Where else can you find such an offer? What other book, except the Bible, can make you “wise unto salvation”?

Lindsay Yuile

Mankind is to Blame

We've been through some hard times. There must have been periods in the long and blood-stained history of the human race when life seemed barely worth living.

Sometimes the problems were nobody's fault in particular – imagine living in the Middle Ages, when maybe half the population of Europe died from 'the plague', and think of the fear that must have hung over peoples' lives. More often individuals were to blame. History is marked by the deeds of tyrants who brought death and misery not just to their enemies but to their own people as well.

Now, it seems, there is something new. For the first time in human existence we face not just one but many problems which are the fault not of an individual but of us all. It seems that we have collectively acted in a way that threatens the future of Planet Earth.

Climate Change

"I think a cold shiver runs down your back because you begin to understand that for the first time in the history of human existence we have fundamentally affected systems that determine life on the planet as a whole. That is a frightening prospect."

The words are those of Achim

Steiner, spokesman for the UN Environment Program, at the announcement, on February 2nd 2007, of the report of the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change.

The shiver may be cold, but everything else is getting warmer. One thing that is certain is that the earth is heating up at an alarming rate. The IPCC Report¹ concluded, among other things, that

- ✘ Warming of the climate system is unequivocal.
- ✘ Most of the increase in global temperatures since the mid-20th century is very likely due to the increase in greenhouse gas concentrations as a result of human activity.
- ✘ World temperatures could rise by between 1.1 and 6.4°C (1.98 and 11.52°F) during the 21st century
- ✘ Sea levels will probably rise by 18 to 59 cm (7.08 to 23.22 inches).

The report went on to warn of rising sea levels, droughts, tropical cyclones and extreme high tides which can have devastating effects. A UK Government review of 'The Economics of Climate Change' had previously warned that rising sea levels would result in 'tens to hundreds of millions' more people



being flooded each year, with coastal cities including London, New York, Miami, Tokyo, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Calcutta and St Petersburg 'at serious risk'.

Who is to Blame?

Most sobering of all, in its way, was the IPCC Report's conclusion as expressed by the BBC's Environment Correspondent, David Shukman: *'...the scientists are 90% sure mankind is to blame'*. Not only has mankind been the cause of the climate change we are observing, but we are 'to blame'. It is our fault, and we should have known better.

For nearly a century, but particularly in the last 30-40 years, we have enjoyed a glut of cheap fuel which has enabled our generation to travel the world, to heat our homes and offices, to transport goods around the world, and to do all these things so cheaply that we have enjoyed a lifestyle which previous generations could not have imagined. We should have known better; but like a child with a packet of sweets, we have been unable to constrain our behaviour. It's all been too much fun.

Yet while some countries are beginning to realise the potential impact of climate change – though one could question their commitment to serious change - others are only just beginning to emulate the lifestyle that we have enjoyed for so long. On 24th April 2007 Dr Fatih Birol, the chief Economist of the International Energy Agency, issued a statement² about developments in China, to the effect that:

- ▶▶▶ In 2007 China will emit more CO₂ than the USA
- ▶▶▶ In the next 8 years China will install more energy generating plant than is currently operating in the whole European Union (25 countries)
- ▶▶▶ *"Cuts by developed countries will have a minimal effect on the future CO₂ position compared to Chinese growth"*

Yet Climate Change is only one of many environmental threats that the planet faces.

Land Use

A recent report³ by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) gave details of a study into our use of the Earth's surface. Everything we do uses land in some way, and the more affluent our lifestyle the more of the earth we use. The WWF Study showed that if everyone on earth lived as the average citizen of the USA, we would need over five planets to support us all; if everyone behaved like a typical Briton we would need over three planets.



It is clear that we are living beyond our means, that we have enjoyed the benefits of our communal wealth while turning a blind eye to the implications. Our wealth has brought us comfort and privilege – but at the expense of others on the planet, and to the detriment of the planet as a whole.

And it's our fault. There is nobody

else to blame.

Bio-Diversity

The same report looked at the other creatures that share the planet with us. In the seas around the world, the population of living creatures had declined by over a quarter since 1970. The WWF identified the causes as human activity: over-fishing and the destruction of habitat like the mangroves that grow along much of the tropical shoreline.

In rivers and lakes the population of fish and other freshwater species had declined by around a half in the same period, but again it was human activity at work – mankind polluting rivers, draining water systems for irrigation and industry, building dams to collect water and generate hydro-electricity. As a race we have been breathtakingly irresponsible in the way we have treated God's creation.

On the land the same pattern emerged. There has been a 30% decline in land-based creatures, mostly caused by the increased use of land for farming and by the destruction of the rain-forests which provided a home for so many creatures.

And that's not all

There is no space here to consider in any detail the other man-made threats to our future on this small sphere, but:

- * Fifty years ago there was one nuclear power, with weapons that were feeble compared with their modern counterparts. Today there are eight, with weapons that make the first atomic



bombs look ineffective by comparison. Not only that, but North Korea, probably Iran, and possibly up to 20 other nations have programmes that could lead them to join this dangerous club. Who is there to blame but the human race?

- * Terrorism around the world has become, within a few years, a major concern and, although they would perhaps be slow to admit it, it is something that really influences the policies of governments around the world.
- * Nature has an amazing God-given ability to deal with waste matter, but in recent years the pattern has changed. The human race not only produces large volumes of waste, but much of it is not biodegradable, and in many cases is poisonous. We are slowly but surely turning the planet into an enormous waste tip.

'Mankind is to blame'

There's a pattern emerging isn't there? These things are our fault. We should have been more responsible in our stewardship of God's creation, rather than exploiting it for our own pleasure and convenience. That, after all, is what we were put here to do. God's words in the beginning were clear:

"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth'" (Genesis 1:26 ESV).

Mankind was to rule over

God's creation, but the human race was also intended to be in the image of God; to act as He would have done; to look after the planet and its inhabitants with the same loving care as the One who made them in the first place.

This we have failed to do – and God holds us responsible. The words of judgment in the book of Revelation are sobering.

“The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth” (Revelation 11:18, ESV).

It has been estimated that species are becoming extinct on the earth at the rate of over two a day. If only the human race became extinct, however, all the other problems would be solved!

We should be grateful that the Lord God has other plans.

Can we Save the Planet?

Since all the challenges we have considered are the result of human

activity, it seems clear that we are hardly in a position to save the planet we have so misused. Deep down, the real problem is human nature – the sort of people we are, our motives and inner desires.

To save the planet requires not a change in government policies and laws, not agreements between nations – although those might help. What is really needed is a fundamental change in human nature. Without that the answer is clear: Can we Save the Planet? No.

We can just be glad that although we cannot save the Planet, God will. But that is for next month.

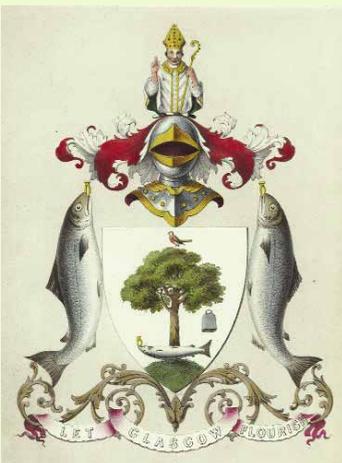
Andrew J Walker

1 *The Physical Science Basis of Climate Change, Summary for Policymakers (SPM) produced by Working Group 1 of the IPCC, published on 2nd February 2007 and revised on 5th February 2007*

(www.ipcc.ch/SPM2feb07.pdf)

2 *Reported in The Independent, 25th April 2007, and many other newspapers*

3 *Available at http://assets.panda.org/downloads/living_planet_report.pdf*



“Let Glasgow Flourish”

The city motto – “Let Glasgow Flourish” – is a curtailment of the full motto “Lord, let Glasgow flourish through the preaching of Thy word and praising Thy name.” Praise rises spontaneously from the basic mood of joy which marks the life of a people who are growing vigorously or flourishing. Opportunity can be found every day, in circumstances great or small, to praise God and He takes delight and pleasure in preaching and in the joy of praise. The coming of the Kingdom of God, which is the message of the Bible, will restore joy and praise to the earth and to the people of God. What does God require of us? “To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8)

Margaret O’Neill

Who Am I?



As a child I remember from time to time asking myself these questions. Why had I been born into my particular family? Who am I really? Wouldn't it have been much better to have been part of another family, whose life seemed to be more exciting and richer than mine?

Such questions don't really get us anywhere, of course. But when we come to consider the Lord Jesus Christ this problem just did not exist for him. He seems to have known who he was from a very early age – and to have accepted it. The problem was getting others to accept it, even when it was clearly true.

Twelve Year Old

From as early as twelve Jesus was able to say to his parents: *“Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?”* (Luke 2:49). He wasn't talking about Joseph's carpentry business, although Joseph was his guardian. Initially it must have been his mother – Mary – who taught him all that the angel had told her.

Do you recall the words from Luke's gospel, that Jesus would be called the Son of God and that his destiny was to be the king of Israel being in the royal line of David? (If not, read Luke chapter 1.) From just that happening, Jesus would have known that God was his Father and that God had a very special role for His Son to fulfil.

Not yet King

Jesus has never yet reigned as king to fulfil those angelic promises. That is something that is still awaited. During his life on earth



Jesus identified totally with the men and women he had come to save. His favourite way of referring to himself was as the Son of Man. But if you trace his saying through, and listen to his voice, you will find that he said this about his work and destiny:

- ✓ *He could forgive sins (Luke 5:24)*
- ✓ *He was Lord of the Sabbath (Luke 6:5)*
- ✓ *He would suffer, be rejected and slain. (Luke 9:22)*
- ✓ *He would be raised from the dead.*
- ✓ *He will return from heaven (Luke 21:27)*
- ✓ *He will be king and judge (Luke 21:36)*

His life experience was to be one of humility, suffering and death. He knew that from the Scriptures that spoke of what he was to achieve, and he accepted it without quibble. Ultimately, however, he knew it would lead to a great victory over the grave, and over death itself.

Like Us

The emphasis in the gospel accounts is that Jesus shared our common experience of life with its disappointments, its frustrations and its challenges. During his 3 year ministry, whilst he

shared the hospitality of many homes, he was actually homeless (Luke 9:58). Hated by the religious establishment, who later contrived to have him executed, Jesus was indeed the suffering servant portrayed by the prophets of old. He was also Mary's child. Why do we need to emphasise that? By the things that he did, he showed us the love of God in such a way that we would be convinced of the need for his death and for the wonderful hope which it has brought us. The writer to the Hebrews says this:

"We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that he, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone" (Hebrews 2:9)

Sin Destroyed!

Clearly this cannot mean that Jesus has tasted death instead of everyone. If he had, we would not have to die; but we do! What it does mean is that Jesus shared in our common experience, so that he could destroy the power of sin and give us a hope of everlasting life. For the writer continues:

"Inasmuch then as the children (people like you and me) have partaken of flesh and blood, he, himself, likewise shared in the same, that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that it the devil" (Hebrews 2:14).

Notice how closely the Lord Jesus is said to have been related to us. We are creatures of flesh and blood; there is no doubt about it. We live with that fact every day of our lives. Jesus did too. He, himself, likewise shared our

nature. Then we are told that, by this means, he destroyed the devil. Again, if this 'devil' was an actual being then the death of Jesus was ineffective, for there continues to be so much trouble in our world. What it actually means is that the term 'devil' is a way of personifying or picturing 'sin' in its many forms. By his death as a sacrifice, Jesus dealt sin a death blow: he rendered it powerless and he made it possible to:

"... release those who through fear of death were all their life time subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:15).

What about Us?

We started thinking about who Jesus was. But now the question is who and what are we? Jesus, by his death, has brought us "release".

He overcame his own human nature, put it to death every day, by the life which he lived, and then he laid down his life upon the cross. Jesus gained a great victory by never once succumbing to his own human nature. He has therefore provided a way by which we have the opportunity to share in that victory.

We can be saved from the fear of death, which blights the lives of many people, because through Jesus Christ we have the hope of everlasting life. So, instead of most of our lives being concerned with self-preservation - looking after Number One - we should be thinking about identifying with Jesus and trying to live with him and for him. For he now lives in heaven to make it possible for us to become like him. That's what the writer to the Hebrews



goes on to say:

"Therefore, in all things he had to be made like his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself has suffered, being tempted, he is able to aid those who are tempted" (Hebrews 2:17,18).

High Priest

Jesus is our High Priest; the only priest we need. He is a mediator - a go-between, someone who enables people like you and me to establish a close relationship with God. His Father can become 'Our Father'. "Propitiation" means that Jesus has provided a place where we may come and have our sins forgiven. Sin separates us

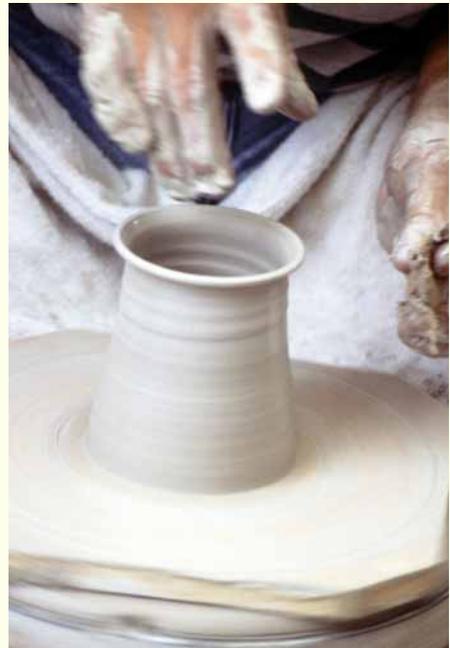
from God, but Jesus has gained forgiveness for us. He is able to bring help to us who constantly battle with sin and with the failures of life.

Jesus is the Helper, the Saviour, the Mediator whom God has provided for us. The whole of his life and especially his death was dedicated to doing all that God required to bring us "good news"; the good news that God knows our weakness, and wants to forgive our sin. He has made the provision that is required to change us from failures to successes. So as God has provided such a Saviour and such salvation, surely we should listen to him when he speaks.

David Nightingale

Transformation

The conclusion of the matter
To mould the perfect man
Is "Fear God, keep His commandments"
According to God's plan:
Sin at first had been established
Within the human mind
When God's Law had been forsaken,
And it still is, we find.
To create man in God's image
Man must be like God's son:
As Christ always did God's bidding
In purpose they were one.
Sinful man's mind needs transforming:
Rebelliousness within
Needs replacing with obedience –
A Christ-like mind to win.
Oh, the joy that lies before us
When minds have been renewed,
And the spirit of rebellion
At last has been subdued.



Gwen Marley

“The Dear Green Place”

A hymn writer once painted a graphic picture when he penned the words “There is a green hill far away, outside a city wall”. He was writing about the death of Jesus on the cross and, because of that hymn, which was based on nothing more than the writer’s imagination, readers might think that this “dear green place” is about just that. But, as **Bob Watt** explains, he has a very different place in mind.

Glasgow the Green

The Scottish city of Glasgow, situated on that part of the River Clyde which is starting to broaden into the estuary which leads into the Atlantic Ocean, may not be known readily around the world. But it is a place which has had a disproportionately big effect on the world stage. For many Scots, at home and abroad, it is remembered affectionately as “the dear green place”, for that is what “Glasgow” means when translated from the Gaelic language.

There was once a fortified prehistoric village on the site, but the development of what is now the largest city in Scotland is recognised as starting with the establishment of a Christian community about 550 AD by a man named Kentigern, better known in Scotland as Mungo. He is now the patron saint of Glasgow, and the Cathedral was dedicated to him in 1136 in the presence of King David. (Yes – we had one here too!)

Transformation

Whatever Glasgow was like before Mungo, his Message gave them new aspirations, as it does to all who hear and receive God’s Word. For wherever



the Word of God is preached and received it brings a potential that is capable of transforming peoples’ lives.

It was like that in the ancient world when the apostles preached the gospel. Arriving in Antioch in Pisidia (in what is now the Turkish Lake District), the apostle Paul went into the Jewish synagogue to explain about Jesus and the gospel of salvation, and that had a huge

impact on the lives of certain people who lived there. For the account continues that “the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God” (Acts 13:44). In the same way the arrival of Christianity in Glasgow caused the city to mature and develop so that by the 12th Century, when the city received its Burgh Charter, it had become a place where people of knowledge and ability could be found, and consequently where things could be done.

Worldwide Influence

When the 20th Century dawned, Glasgow was a major centre of the Industrial Revolution. The city benefited from proximity to coal and iron ore; her citizens had deepened the Clyde to

enable big ships to come right up to the city, and the towns along the river became the launching points for thousands of ships. By that time, when more than half of the ocean-going tonnage was produced in the United Kingdom, at least one-third came from the river, and “Clyde-built” was a guarantee of first-class workmanship. Some of these ships in turn played



their part in moving the thousands of railway locomotives constructed in Glasgow and exported to countries all over the world.

The apostle Paul could have done with some Clyde-built ships when, responding to the Lord's Great Commission, he attempted to preach the gospel to every creature. In 25 packed years of preaching he had undertaken several sea journeys across the Mediterranean, at the time when voyages were dangerous and shipwrecks common. Writing to believers in Corinth at that time, he listed among his various problems that: “*three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep*”, but he still pressed on to ensure that as many people as possible got to hear about God's offer of salvation. He wanted to be sure that they got the message that could change their lives.

All Change!

Things have changed a lot since the First Century. Corinth is a very different place, and so is Glasgow. There is little in the way of heavy industry there now. Glasgow is still ‘alive and kicking’, but to the beat of a different drum. However, some very important things

have not changed.

The Word of God and the message of the gospel which came to the city all those years ago remains steadfast and true. It never changes and its offer of salvation is still open. But, in a changing society, where human values and preferences alter radically year by year, we may need to change and be changed if we are to take advantage of what God offers. This

was how the apostle Peter referred to the transformation that he had witnessed in Bible times:

“Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because ‘All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever.’ Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you” (1 Peter 1:22-25).

Understand the message of the Bible and you will be able to see just what God wants to do for you. He is offering eternal life in a perfect world which will be transformed by the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a ‘dear green place’ the world will be, when waters break out in the desert and wheat grows on the highest hills. Don't miss out on a wonderful future for all those who get the message and make it their own.

Bob Watt

Cornelius

I am a tough Roman soldier, a centurion and because I'm a member of a prime regiment we always get tough postings. Judea is known to be the hottest spot in the whole Roman Empire, that's why we are here.

Caesarea

As it happens this posting has turned out well. I moved my wife and family to the Roman town of Caesarea, bought a big house here with a good plot of land and settled to a new, albeit very different, way of life.

As I became familiar with the customs of the country, it became clear that the whole society was based on religion. It regulates everything with the Jews, from food to government. They worship just one God – their God, not ours. In other countries, there are usually as many gods as people and we Romans have our fair share. They have just One!

Slowly I learned about this God and His ways. The powers He claimed made a lot of sense when I looked at the natural world around me and the history of this independent and, sometimes stubborn people was certainly centred about Him and His commandments. I could also recognise that the health and dietary laws they followed had made this country one of the most comfortable societies in which to live.

Eventually I began to study the Torah – the Jewish Law – for myself and came to appreciate what God had

promised, not just to the Jews but to everybody. I was amazed at the promises He made to Abraham and David. And he had also promised a Messiah – a Jewish Saviour – who would bring freedom and salvation from sin. I wanted to be part of it. So, doing the best I could, I adopted the Jewish way of worship and was loyally committed in temple worship, prayer and care for others. Yahweh became my God too, and I kept to His ways as much as was humanly possible.

What about Jesus?

Then Jesus of Nazareth appeared on the scene. He did some very spectacular things, by all accounts – like healing and feeding people and even raised to life someone who had died. The Jewish leaders got him crucified for treason, but there have been strange rumours and some crowd trouble in Jerusalem recently, with some people claiming that he is alive again. Fortunately, I am not in Jerusalem very often.

Being a military man, routine and orderliness are very important to me. I have regular times for the study of the Torah and for prayer. One afternoon a few weeks ago I was surprised by something that happened. I'm not a fanciful person and I don't have a vivid imagination: I'm a soldier! So I thought, at first, that I was hallucinating.

A man appeared and said he was an angel from God. I was terrified! But I was reassured when he told me that God had recognised and accepted



what I had tried to do for Him and for others. I was told to send for someone called Simon Peter who was staying at Joppa and he would tell me what else God required.

Contingent to Joppa

I despatched some men immediately and waited impatiently for the days to pass. I hoped the man would not be too frightened. After all, Romans banging on your door out of the blue and demanding to take you away would be very worrying for most Jews. Also I wondered if he would consent to come, without being arrested. It was religiously illegal for Jews to mix socially with Gentiles and we Romans were regarded by most Jews as the worst kind of Gentile and were hated as the occupiers of 'their land'.

While the men were gone I gave orders to organise a hospitable welcome for him, made sure that as many of my family and friends who could would join me to hear God's message and spent many hours in prayer and study. After all, if this man came directly from God with a message it was vitally important that we were in a position to understand and respond to it.

The clatter of horse's hooves and the buzz of voices told me that the messengers had returned safely and they were successful in bringing Simon Peter. I hurried to meet him, falling on my knees in recognition of his authority as a messenger from God. He pulled me up saying that he was just a man like the rest of us.

Jew and Gentile

He wanted to know why I had sent for him, particularly as it was unusual for a Jew to visit a Gentile. I explained about the vision and with less than my

usual authority said that we were all present to hear God's message. Peter replied that he too had seen in a vision that God wanted to work with all people, no longer just Jews. That was why he had come. It seems that we were both in touch with the Divine.

He preached a new gospel to us about Jesus and demonstrated, during a long discussion based on the Torah, that all I had heard about him being God's Son and the Messiah was true. Peter even told us about his work with Jesus. I concluded that his message was right. After all, it had come at the direct intervention of God. You don't get that twice in a lifetime!

It was then that we all got the biggest surprise. We were suddenly speaking in foreign languages: ones we could nevertheless understand and we praised God for this wonderful gift of his Holy Spirit. It was only later that we learned that we were the first Gentiles blessed by God in this way.

Peter and the other Christians were equally astonished, but realised that God was demonstrating in this way that all people now have an opportunity for salvation in the name of the Lord Jesus – even Roman Soldiers! Peter ordered our baptisms, a process we gladly undertook, and he stayed for several days explaining matters in detail that had not been possible during those first hours of his visit.

My life has utterly changed. I now have a wonderful hope. Those promises to Abraham and David I learned about when I first came to Judea are now just waiting to be fulfilled. I never had the chance to meet Jesus in the flesh, but I can't wait for the time when he will return to set up God's Kingdom on earth.

Cynthia Miles

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