

Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1484



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The Earth: Filled with God's Glory – page 12

Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

124th Year

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1484

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 Way Ahead

You may be the sort of person who likes to strike off into the unknown without a map, a compass or an umbrella – just to see where you might end up.

There are people like that who journey just for the sheer fun of it, and there are lots more of us who like to plan where we are going, so that we don't get lost. With maps, schedules and even satellite navigational systems, nowadays you can get a lot of help if you want it.

But what about getting some help for your journey along life's highway? Who can guide you through the perplexing maze of the future? It depends where you are and what help you need, of course; but in the developed world there are a lot of people who are ready to offer you advice about anything from your health, your finances, or your lifestyle choices. They will inspect you, assess you and advise you and, as a result, you may live a bit longer and be a bit more comfortable, in one way or another.

Uncertainty Abounds

Human guidance is, however, bound to be of limited use; for all humans are fallible and all of us are limited by our inability to foresee what might happen in our uncertain lives. A wise man once conducted an in-depth review of the human condition and his findings were published in what is now known as



"The Book of Ecclesiastes". His interim findings were that time passes so quickly; and that nobody can tell where one's life is leading. But he made an important observation, one which is sometimes obscured by the way the Hebrew text is translated. Here it is in a modern version of the Bible, which says about God that He:

"...has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end" (Ecclesiastes 3:11 New International Version).

Full of Guidance

This is an information-packed verse, for it tells us three important things:

- ✓ God has a plan for mankind which will remove all ugliness and imperfection, and make *"everything beautiful"*, but He will only do that when the time is right;
- ✓ Mankind has that sense of 'something else' which is deep-rooted within him. How many times have you been to the funeral of someone who gave God no thought all through life, where there is now a real expectation that his or her life has transferred elsewhere, to some 'better place'. It is the sense of eternity that we all possess, and which has been expressed in different ways by many different civilisations over the years;

✓ Yet, try as we might, we cannot work out what will happen next. There are plenty of people who pretend they can – by reading tea leaves, entrails, crystal balls, Tarot cards, and suchlike. The reality is that the future is a closed book and God alone can open it and reveal those secrets to us.

The Future Foretold

Long ago the prophets of God authenticated their calling by foretelling the future: it was the guarantee that they were true and not false:

“If you say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?’ – When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him” (Deuteronomy 18:21,22).

Short-term predictions which came to pass guaranteed that the long-range predictions would also be precisely fulfilled. And the Bible is full of long-term forecasts, some of which only came true after hundreds and hundreds of years. To take just one example:

- ★ God’s prophets foretold that the nation of Israel would cease for a long time and that its inhabitants would be dispersed throughout the whole earth, where they would be bitterly persecuted and killed;
- ★ Meanwhile, their ancient land would become waste and desolate, producing little that was worthwhile or meaningful;
- ★ Then, when the time was right, the dispersed Jewish people would be regathered from their dispersion

and be resettled in the land, which would become fertile again, and which they would occupy and settle;

- ★ But the return of the Jews would provoke anger from their neighbours and from the wider world community, eventually resulting in a war which will herald the return of the Lord Jesus, to Jerusalem, where he will reign as King.

Privileged Onlookers

When those predictions were made, often to a people dwelling in the land and still part of the nation in situ, it must have been hard for them to believe, even with short-term confirmations from the various prophets. But, with the benefit of hindsight, we can see that step-by-step these various pieces of the prophetic jigsaw have fitted into place. So, the scene is set for the return of Jesus to rescue a distressed Jewish people from a foretold national calamity. This confirmation through events should give us tremendous confidence in the message of the Bible and should make us want to read it carefully every day.

This issue includes a *Bible Reading Table* (on pages 10 and 11) which will, if you follow it carefully, enable you to read through the whole Bible during the course of the year. If you want to have some spiritual help along life’s journey, given by Someone who knows all about what is going to happen next, why not see what God has to say by reading His Word every day? You can start that experience at any time, but there is no better time than today. Who knows what tomorrow might bring? God does!

Editor

What will 2008 bring for You?

Fifteen years ago, the historian Paul Kennedy wrote a book called, "Preparing for the Twenty First Century".

It was actually published in 1994 and I remember reading it with great interest. The writer was not a religious man; his book was an analysis of trends in the world and a consideration of what they meant for the 21st Century. The trends he analysed were those to be seen in all areas of human activity including pressures on the environment.

- ✚ The world was witnessing a demographic explosion as its population was soaring to ever higher levels with increasing saturation of space and resources, creating increasing danger for our natural environment.
- ✚ A dramatic expansion of communication was unfolding and we were starting to talk of 'the global village'. The Internet revolution was about to begin, but it does not get a mention in his book. There was no idea then of the enormous impact it would have.
- ✚ World finances were interlocking as never before; countries were heavily dependent, financially, on one another; multinational trade and corporations dominated the financial landscape. There was a new industrial revolution with China and India and other Asian nations emerging as potential powerhouses, with the ability to influence

or even dominate the world economy.

- ✚ It was then unpredictable how the collapse of world communism would change the world political scene. The European Union seemed to be in a comfortably stable situation and it was not then clear how the reunification of Germany would work and whether former Communist countries would want to become part of this Union.

Prepared or Unprepared?

Commentators said about Professor Kennedy's book that it was not so much about preparing for the 21st century as a description of the extent to which the world was unprepared for it! Events in the 15 years since then have borne out this remark to the full. Things have happened so rapidly in the last decade that the developments he could see looming on the horizon confronted us with unnerving speed. And events he did not foresee have shocked us to the core!

- ✘ He made no reference to the word, "Terrorism"!
- ✘ He had no expectation of the Chinese manufacturing and trade juggernaut that has now developed; indeed, writing soon after the Tiananmen Square clampdown, Kennedy observed that "*with one part of the Chinese economy resembling Bulgaria and the other looking increasingly like Taiwan, it is not surprising that foreign compa-*

nies are bewildered and reluctant to invest further”.

The book notes that there was potential for climate change in the 21st Century. The comments are tentative and, while global warming is discussed, it is addressed as a possibility and not seen as a looming major problem. I quote, *“If for example, the continued abuse of the developing world’s environment leads to global warming ... everyone will suffer in various ways.”*

As he was writing the argument between scientists was developing and the scientific community was uncertain, and he wrote: *“These uncertainties encouraged a wide range of opinions on the subject of global warming ... much of the literature upon the greenhouse effect has therefore become very ideological, as each side denounces the other’s ‘special agenda’”.*

Forward Look

That last comment pinpoints the fact that no human being has been a big enough, or great enough, statesman to rise above their own limited ‘special agenda’. Each individual is unable to fairly weigh things up, with totally unbiased thinking, and then map out the most sensible way forward to a solution for the world as a whole. Indeed, some political leaders seem to have been extremely narrowly focused in their “vision” (or lack of it) for the future, gathering around them advisers who are similarly focused. There has been a corporate ‘tunnel vision’, a total focus on the country’s own agenda, regardless of the wider



picture.

The book highlights the extremely limited vision of all human beings; their inability to see the wisest way ahead for their own nation, let alone the world – be they politicians, economists or scientists. The weakness of democracy is evident: all politicians seek to stay in power, and therefore focus on policies which will benefit the financial well-being of the majority, all other considerations being secondary.

As a result, the way ahead is shrouded in darkness – and yet, to listen to most politicians, they can confidently see the way ahead and the best policies to follow that will lead to a better future! But what kind of ‘a better future’ are they offering? Better in what way? One is reminded of the confidence of those who launched the liner ‘Titanic’ and how it sped confidently through the dangerous darkness of the northern Atlantic nearly 100 years ago – until disaster struck!

Can We Know?

If asked *“What will 2008 bring for you and for the world”*, what will you say? Many will answer, *“It is impossible to know, but the future does not look good. So, let’s eat and drink and be merry for tomorrow we may die”*. And those who take this attitude and utter similar words are saying virtually the words found in some parts of the Bible, such as 1 Corinthians 15:32 and Isaiah 22:13. They were sentiments expressed by those people,

or about those people, who have no belief in the purpose of God in their lives or in God’s involvement in the

future of the world.

In Australia, where I live, the majority of the people do not believe that there is any God at all. And most of those who believe that there must have been a Creator, do not believe they can have any personal relationship with Him – because they think He is impersonal and unknowable. This attitude is tragic – and yet it is exactly what God’s Word predicted would be the world situation in that time which the Bible describes as “the last days”.

Coming Event

The Lord Jesus Christ predicted, nearly 2000 years ago, that the time would come when:

“... there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory” (Luke 21:25-27).

So the answer to the question “What will 2008 bring for the world?” is that the coming year will bring more traumas, greater fears and uncertainties. It may even bring the Return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth, an event referred to in the Bible no less than 300 times. This great event will be provoked by mankind because, as Jesus said, the situation would be such that if God did not intervene in the affairs of men, life would not continue on earth. Here is another of the Lord’s predictions:

“... then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened” (Matthew 24:21,22).

What about You?

So, what will 2008 bring for you personally? The answer to that is in your hands, but did you take note of the end of that last Scripture we quoted? For the sake of God’s chosen – His elect – that final time of the greatest trouble ever will be cut short! That means there is still time to become one of God’s chosen – someone who believes that the Bible really is the Word of God and who follows its direction. Sadly, this message from God has been seriously misunderstood by most people who claim to be Christians, and much of what most churches teach is not found in the Bible.

I know that is a bold statement to make, but regular readers will know that we have demonstrated that over and over again. The actual message of the Bible still challenges us all today and there is no reason why those who diligently read it should not correctly understand it. One of its major messages is that God’s Kingdom is to come on this earth, when the Lord Jesus will reign over all nations, and thus introduce world Government.

Do not leave it too late. Let 2008 be the year that changes your life. Find out what God wants you to do so you can be ready for the Coming King.

David Caudery



A Companion for Adam

As **Dudley Fiffeld** has shown, in this consideration of the Book of Genesis, everything that happened then was full of meaning for the future. So the creation of Eve pointed forward to the sort of relationship God intended between man and woman, within the God-given institution of marriage.

❶ The creation of Eve is recorded in Genesis chapter 2, verses 18 to 24. It commences with the words: *“the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him’”*.

Literally the Hebrew words translated *“a helper comparable to him”* mean *“answering to his face, that is, resembling him”*. One commentator states that Eve was to be *“his reflected image, a helper similar to him”*.

❷ The record tells how Adam developed a relationship with all other living creatures. By observing the habits and characteristics of the animals, he gave them names that were appropriate to their special features (2:19,20). The last sentence of verse 20 is very poignant:

“But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him”.

Here, for the first time, *‘Adam’* is used as a proper name. Previously the name has been used with the definite article and was translated as *‘the man’*. Now he is called *‘Adam’*, as if to emphasize his unique place in the purpose of God, his own special characteristic of personality and his ability to appreciate spiritual and moral values. Yet among all the animal creation there was none found to whom Adam could relate, who answered to his deepest needs. In all these relationships, the man could not find the

intimacy of association that his nature required, if he was to find fulfilment in life.

❸ God recognised that: *“It is not good that man should be alone”* (2:18), for without a companion he was incomplete. When Eve was created, they complemented each other and satisfied each other’s needs. This is reflected in the words of Adam when God presented to him the woman, whom he had created from his rib: *“This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man”* (2:23).

Taken out of man, she was part of his very self. Adam calls her *“woman”* (Heb. *Ishah*). The word means simply *‘being’*, and perhaps in this way Adam was recognising that he only possessed a consciousness of his own existence and he recognised in her the female counterpart of himself.

Later he was to call her *“Eve”* (Genesis 3:20), because she was *‘the mother of all living’*, showing his further insight into the nature of their relationship and the manner in which God intended, through procreation, to maintain human life upon earth.

❹ Here is the foundation of marriage as a divine institution. For, God said:

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife,

and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). Each complemented the other. They had different roles to play yet would find happiness in fulfilling their respective parts and would experience joy and satisfaction in their association with one another.

It was to this context that the Lord Jesus Christ referred, to establish his own teaching on marriage and divorce:

He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made

them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’

and said, ‘For this reason a man shall

leave his father and mother and be joined

to his wife, and the two shall become one

flesh’? So then, they are no longer two

but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matthew 19:4-6).

Literally the Greek for “male and female” says “one man and one woman”. With these words the Lord Jesus stamps his authority on the Genesis record of a special creation, and also, in the creation of one man and one woman, we see the basis for the permanence of the marriage bond. It was intended to be for life.

In Eve, God provided everything that was necessary for Adam and, in his response, Adam accepted her as such. Theirs was to be a life-long union and so it should be with us for, as Jesus said: “a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined (Greek: ‘Be glued to’) to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh” and “what God has joined together, let not man separate”.

⑤ How highly God regards the marriage state could not have been emphasised more powerfully than by the manner in which God has chosen this institution to represent the bond that exists between the Lord Jesus Christ and his church (Ecclesia), (see Ephesians 5:22-33.)

In Ephesians we are presented with a tremendous thought. Speaking of the greatness of the Lord Jesus, the Apostle writes that God has:

“... put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:22,23).

The suggestion is that, like Adam, the Lord Jesus was, in a sense, incomplete while he dwelt alone. He is made full, by his body, the church. This is an amazing paradox and the basis of our understanding is to be found in Genesis: that the Lord and his bride complement each other.

Marriage Supper

Thus it will be in the grand consummation of the purpose of God, in the marriage supper of the lamb (Revelation 19:7-9). The bride (God’s people from all ages) will have made herself ready. He will look upon her, conformed to his image, and see in her the reflection of himself: all the attributes of his own moral excellence. The Lord Jesus will recognise her and they will be one – united in that glorious relationship that was so beautifully portrayed in Genesis and which is, in part at least, reflected (if imperfectly) in the marriages of God’s servants down through the ages.

Dudley Fifield

Bible Reading

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

MAY

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

JUNE

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

OCTOBER

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

NOVEMBER

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

DECEMBER

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

By courtesy of The Christadelphian

The Earth: Filled With God's Glory

*We read a lot about the present problems facing the earth, many of them relating to global warming, but the Bible has a clear forecast for the future destiny of God's earth. It is to be the place which the meek inherit and where the Kingdom of God is to be established. In his last article in "Glad Tidings", **Tom Barling** said that when the earth is filled with the glory of God it will be the consummation of God's purpose. But what exactly does that involve?*

Coming King

While the return of the Lord Jesus to the earth to bring peace to mankind will be an important landmark in God's purpose, this will not be the total consummation of God's purpose. When the Lord Jesus brings together the members of God's society, what will they do together once they have been united? The question is important and if we draw on relevant material from both Old and New Testaments, we may well be surprised at the results.

Let us take the Apostle Paul as our first guide. 1 Corinthians Chapter 15 is one of the best known chapters in the collection of his letters, where he makes a robust defence of the historical character of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The chapter makes it evident that early in the development of the Christian faith there were some in Corinth who were calling in question the future resurrection of dead believers. For the Apostle, the unassailable nature of the evidence for the Lord's rising from the dead was the guarantee of the resurrection of his followers:

"For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost" (15:16-18).

However, the contrary was the case:

"But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (15:20).

Coming Kingdom

The Lord Jesus Christ will return to the earth, not merely to raise his disciples from the dead, but also to reign. The section of 1 Corinthians 15 which now follows is highly significant and goes to the very heart of the hope for mankind. For, says the apostle:

"He must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death" (15:25,26).

Finally, when death itself has ceased, the Son will hand over a regenerated earth to his Father, "so that God may be all in all" (v.28).

Paul thus, in a few words, indicates a period after the Lord's return when there will be enemies; and all these will finally be subdued until, ultimately, death itself will be abolished. This, surely, is a remarkable programme. In days of astonishing human achievement, when men have landed on the moon and are talking of establishing themselves in some other part of the solar system, what are commonly called 'advanced societies' are charac-

terized by social and moral problems. As for human mortality, while through the impressive advances of medical care and surgery, many more are living longer, especially in the western world, death is an enemy which can only be postponed, but not abolished.

Destruction by Fire

On this important subject, the interim period between the return of the Lord to the earth, and the final and total consummation of God's purpose with mankind, there is a surprising amount of material in both Old and New Testaments. We focus first on 2 Peter Chapter 3. It may be a matter of surprise, but as early as the apostle's time there was for some, probably for most believers, an apparent delay in Christ's return and the establishment of the Kingdom. There is no delay, declares Peter: "With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day" (3:8). Then he goes on to speak of widespread destruction, brought about by fire:

"...as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat" (3:12).

The language is obviously figurative, for he goes on to say:

"But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness" (3:13).

Judgement by Fire

Before we turn to the Old Testament passage to which the apostle is here referring, we note this idea of "fire", which is associated with the return of the Lord Jesus and the judgements to

be visited upon a corrupt world. Paul, too, associates these judgements with fire, for he comforts the persecuted believers in Thessalonica, with the declaration that the Lord will execute judgement upon their persecutors:

"This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8).

This may well be an aspect of the work of the Lord Jesus which surprises us. However, if we pause for a moment and think of the efforts exerted to subdue forces in Iraq and in Afghanistan, and then think of the trade in drugs and the various aspects of the trafficking in sex, the spectacle is frightening and may well fill us with despair.

However, we must remember that modern means of communication do acquaint us with events as they are happening, whilst in earlier times happenings in other parts of the world might have remained unknown, or only became known long afterwards. Moreover, sometimes, as in Northern Ireland, a long period of violence may end by the opposing parties coming to their senses, and relinquishing violence. But if people do not accept the rulership of the Lord Jesus when he comes, they will be removed, together with their evil works.

Human Rebellion

We should never forget the vast amount of charitable work that is carried out to try to alleviate all the suffering in the world. But, when all this is said, we should also remember that increasingly God is being forgotten; His very existence is denied. The full con-

sequences of atheism are yet to be experienced. Atheism itself is not an unknown phenomenon, for the psalmist recorded long ago: *"The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God'"* (Ps.14:1 and Ps.53:1), and it is clear that this rebellious attitude would be long-standing. The Lord Jesus, speaking about the time of his return, declared: *"when the Son of Man comes, will he find [the] faith on the earth?"* (Luke 18:8).

When he returns as King, we can hardly expect the vested interests to surrender meekly. There is a psalm which speaks in simple terms of the opposition the Lord will encounter and the way this will be subdued. The psalmist first asks a question and then supplies the heavenly reply:

"Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One. 'Let us break their chains,' they say, 'and throw off their fetters.' The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, 'I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill'" (Psalm 2:1-6).

Righteous Reign

Once the forces of evil have been subdued and the Lord Jesus reigns in righteousness, the great task of educating mankind and bringing enduring peace, will start. It will obviously take time, and it is here that Isaiah Chapter 65 provides insight into the conditions which will prevail on the earth. This scripture is all the more valuable because it is the very passage the apostle Peter had in mind, when he wrote in his Second Letter: "But in

keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness". Especially noteworthy are his words: *"in keeping with his promise"*; for here he is referring to this very prophecy in Isaiah:

Every detail in this passage needs to

"Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands. They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them. Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain", says the LORD" (Isaiah 65:17-25).

be read, reflected upon, and accepted in faith; for it describes in brief the benefits the Lord Jesus will bring to mankind after his return.

Jerusalem: World Capital

The prophecy focuses on the blessings to be brought to Jerusalem and its people (verse 18). Any government needs to have a headquarters from which it operates. It may be a matter of surprise to many that the government the Lord Jesus will establish will be at Jerusalem, but there are many scriptures which declare as much; to quote just one which portrays the blessings of the future: *“Many peoples will come and say, ‘Come. Let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.’ The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem”* (Isaiah 2:3).

There are two interlocking prophecies which demonstrate decisively the intimate connection between Jerusalem and the Lord Jesus. It was from the Mount of Olives, near to Jerusalem, that the Lord ascended to heaven in the sight of his apostles; as they saw the disappearing form of their Lord, the apostles were given this clear message: *“This same Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven”* (Acts 1:11).

New Society: New People

Briefly, then, we can conclude in the light of a number of Scriptures in both Old and New Testaments that God’s new society will comprise those people

who will assist the Lord Jesus in the great work of subduing the forces of evil, so that justice will prevail throughout the earth and there will be gradual recognition of the one and only true God: the One who made the heavens and the earth. Peace will prevail among the nations and the colossal sums now spent on armaments will be used for creative ends, bringing untold blessings to mankind. Finally, as already stated, sin will be eradicated and with it death, which is the wages of sin (Romans 6:23).

Those who form God’s new society will be those men and women, of all ages and all nations, who during their lifetime will, in humility, have endeavoured to live in harmony with God’s will. Their social background will have little relevance. In the time of the Lord Jesus, few of the higher reaches of society accepted him. Indeed, the leaders crucified the Lord of glory. It was the fishermen of Galilee, Peter, Andrew, James and John, who with other apostles first accepted and then preached the gospel, and with what success! Their message has survived until our day so that it can enlighten us.

The time will come when, in fulfillment of God’s sure promise, the earth will indeed be filled with His glory (see Numbers 14:21). As Paul said to his son in the faith, Timothy: *“If we endure, we will also reign with him”* (2 Timothy 2:12).

Tom Barling

All Quotations from the NIV



Part Two

Is there a God of Evil?

In the first part of this series David Caudery showed that Almighty God is supreme and unique. There is nobody to rival or challenge Him and there is no supernatural devil. Instead we are tempted when we are drawn away of our own desires and we sin when we give in to them. But that conclusion leads to an important question.

Devil and Satan

This brings us to consider the words “devil” and “Satan” as they are used in the Bible. What do these words really mean? To understand what the Bible means by these words can be made more difficult in some translations of the Bible. Versions in languages like Tamil and Telegu use a word which, in the local language, means an Evil God or evil spirit. However, when we look into the language in which the Bible was originally written, the words *devil* and *Satan* do not carry any such meaning.

The word devil does not occur at all in the Old Testament – and the word Satan, which does not necessarily mean the same thing, is a translation of the word *sathan*, which has the primary meaning of “an adversary”. When the Bible was first translated into English 700 years ago, belief in a supernatural evil power was widespread, and the translators identified in *sathan*, a word which they thought could refer to such a power.

Satan Adversaries

→ Old Testament

Fourteen times in the Old Testament the word *sathan* is translated into English as *adversary* and not Satan, because it was obvious from the context that that was it’s meaning. To

illustrate this, let’s look at some examples:

David was fleeing for his life from jealous King Saul and, although he had previously killed their champion Goliath, his plight was so desperate that he and his men took refuge among the Philistines, at Gath. Naturally, some of the Philistines distrusted him, and when war broke out with the Israelites they complained to the Philistine chief that it would not be wise for him to come and fight with them in case he turned traitor. They said: “*Make this fellow return, that he may go back to the place which you have appointed for him, and do not let him go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he become our adversary*” (1 Samuel 29:4). The word translated “adversary” is the Hebrew word *sathan*.

The very first reference to *sathan* in the Old Testament refers to that time when an angel from God was an adversary to Balaam, the false prophet. The angel was sent by God to prevent Balaam from acting in a way that was contrary to God’s will. He stood in the way to prevent Balaam passing and only Balaam’s ass saw him, for the prophet was blind to everything he didn’t want to see.

Believers in Satan as an evil God can be perplexed by the reference to Satan in the first chapter of Job. The *sathan*

in question comes into the presence of God and reasons with Him, and God agrees to allow Satan (or adversary) to test Job to see what his faith is really like. All through the book, Job knows however that the action is the action of God, who is master-minding the test, not of some evil force. And the book ends with this assurance:

“Then all his brothers, all his sisters, and all those who had been his acquaintances before, came to him and ate food with him in his house; and they consoled him and comforted him for all the adversity that the LORD had brought upon him” (Job 42:11).

→ New Testament

In the New Testament we read how Peter, the leading disciple of the Lord Jesus, tried to persuade his Master not to go to Jerusalem after Jesus had told him that he was going, that he would be arrested and that he would be killed there. Jesus saw Peter at that moment as an adversary – someone who was trying to prevent God’s will being fulfilled, so he called him “Satan” and then defined the source of the evil influence:

“He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are an offence to me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men’ (Matthew 16:23).

Peter was motivated by human thinking and that had led him astray. Nobody had put those ideas into his head: his own human nature had prompted him to encourage Jesus to avoid the cross, if he could.

New Testament Devils

It’s only in the New Testament that we encounter the word *devil*, and this word is usually a translation of the Greek word *diabolos*. It is usually translated “*devil*”, but not always. Paul used the word in his letters to Timothy and Titus, where it is twice translated “*false accusers*”, and once “*slanders*” (see 1 Timothy 3:11; 2 Timothy 3:3; Titus 2:3). In one case the aged women in the church are urged not to be slanderers, in another the wives of deacons are urged not to be false accusers. There are many other passages where *diabolos* occurs and where it would be much more meaningful to translate it into one or other of these words.

In one passage the disciple who betrayed Jesus – Judas Iscariot – is described by him as a devil, when Jesus says: “*Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?*” (John 6:70). It is evident that the mind of Judas was base in its thinking; maybe

he thought he could make money out of the Pharisees and expected Jesus to miraculously escape from them.

What about Demons?

The older translations of the Bible also translated another Greek word as “*devil*” or “*devils*”. Modern translations render this Hebrew word as demons. It has no relationship to the word *diabolos*. Throughout the Old Testament there is no indication of any belief in demons. But, in the time of Christ, many people had come to imagine that lunatics or mad-men had some kind of supernatural possession over their minds which caused their madness.

When we go to Greek literature we



find abundant references to their belief in demons, they used the word *daimonia*, and believed that these were the human spirits of departed people. But the Bible teaches that death is a sleep until the resurrection; there is no conscious existence after death until that resurrection takes place. However, the Greeks imagined that these *daimonia* existed, to the extent that they could even possess the lifeless idols that they worshipped.

Thus human imagination set to work, so that people who evidently had some form of mental sickness, such as an epileptic fit as we would know it to be today, were thought to be possessed by these demons. Tragically, this belief still exists in some churches today, as demonstrated by attempts to exorcise a supposed evil spirit.

In the days of Jesus, such was their opposition to him, born out of jealousy, that they even accused him of having a demon. There was a big dispute among people over this, and some people said *“these are not the words of him who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”* You can read of that in John chapter 10 from verse 20 onwards.

Once, when they brought a man to Jesus who was both blind and dumb, they even said he was possessed by a demon: *“Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw”* (Matthew 12: 22). The man was both blind and dumb, but because he looked alright from the outside, the people concluded he must be possessed by someone or something.

Jesus Destroyed the Devil

There’s an intriguing passage in the Letter to the Hebrews that deserves

some careful thought. It both tells us what the devil is and what Jesus did to destroy its power. Here it is:

“Inasmuch then as the children 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 is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14).

Note what it says: Jesus destroyed that which has the power of death. If you ask why people die, the answer has to be because they are mortal and that has come about because of sin. So here (as elsewhere in Scripture) the word *“devil”* is being used as a synonym (as a similar word) for sin. As Paul says elsewhere: *“the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 6:23).

Putting this as simply as possible, what we are being told is that every human being is a sinner and so we all deserve death. Jesus came to destroy sin, that is, to make sin powerless to destroy us. Jesus did this by dying as an offering for sin – for our sins – but in doing that he took away the power of sin – our adversary – to destroy us.

All who come to Jesus, knowing they are sinners, dedicating their lives in service to him, start by being baptized. They realize that that which once had the power to destroy them eternally, no longer has that power. Through him, they have the promise of eternal life. So here’s a question for you to consider:

“Are you following Jesus knowing what he really taught? Do you understand his message and look for his help in delivering you from the real devil?”

David Caudery

The Nature of God

“Hear O Israel the Lord thy God is one Lord”. This is how God described himself to the Jews. He also declared that he would eventually fill the earth with his glory.

Man has always struggled with this idea and human beings have often wanted visible gods. In ancient times, gods were often made of wood, stone or metals. People also worshipped the sun, moon or mountains as the source of life. Today we make gods out of celebrities, football teams or even material possessions. Those are things which some people now worship.

God is One

Some Christians have also tried to change that original declaration by God about His Oneness. They have suggested that He is three gods, or a three-in-one God. Yet God never described Himself in this way, and neither did the Lord Jesus, the prophets or Apostles. The word “trinity” does not even appear in the Bible.

What we do learn about God is that He is our Almighty creator who loved human beings so much that He arranged for His son to be born on earth.

God also used His power in Jesus to bring the opportunity of salvation to us. We also learn much of His character. He is so powerful that He created our universe and made a world appropriate for us to inhabit. God wants to have us for His friends, if he had not wanted this so much He could have destroyed us for our evil and started creation again. God is a fair God: He cannot

allow evil to dominate or ignore what is wrong in the world, but he is also compassionate and He has worked to offer people the chance to be saved from the wrong we do.

It is interesting that the Bible often describes God as “working” which shows us how resolute He is to have His wonderful creation inhabited in a good way. God is determined to put our world right and make it a wonderful, peaceful, happy and evil-free place. He remains in total control of the world (in spite of our actions), and He does not want to intervene before the very last saveable person is saved.

The Bible says that the Lord Jesus Christ will soon be back on earth to restore our world to the way God wanted it originally and to bring eternal life to all those who have tried to understand and please God. That will be an amazing time. Will you have organised your life sufficiently to be there with Him and helping in the work?

Cynthia Miles

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