

# Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1500



***A Bird in the Hand – page 3***

***A Matter of Life and Death – page 5***

***The Promised Land – page 12***

# Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

125th Year

E09

1500

A monthly magazine published by the Christadelphians (brothers and sisters in Christ), available throughout the world. Its objectives are – to encourage study of the Bible as God's inspired message; 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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**Fiji** – Bible Mission, Box 1012, G.P.O., Suva

**Indonesia** – Bible Mission, Gereja Saudara Dalam Kristus, Kerten Rt 01/RW10, JalanMundu 3/40, Solo 57143, Indonesia

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**Bangladesh** – Christadelphian Bible Students, PO Box 9052, Banani, Dhaka 1213

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

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

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### Acknowledgements

**Photographs:**

Cover and page 3:  
A bird in the hand  
Peter Fry

**Illustrations:**

Christian Clipart pg 9; all others  
Clipart.com

### Bible Versions

*The version most used in this issue is the New King James Version (NKJV) but other versions are sometimes used.*

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# A Bird in the Hand

The proverb **“A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush”** goes back to at least the 13th century when the same sentiment was being expressed in Latin.

It may have then referred to the hunter who could either catch a nearby bird for the evening meal, or try for a couple of birds which were more difficult to catch. Which was it to be? The one sure catch or the two that might prove elusive? Did he and his family want to eat that night or not?

## Feeder not Hunter

Nowadays, in most countries we don't kill wild birds, but prefer to feed them and enjoy watching them. Bird watchers will sometimes travel vast distances just to catch a glimpse of a rare specimen. But the proverb still has a powerful message.

As used today, it means that it is better to keep what you have than to give it up and try to get something better. The thing you already have is the *“bird in the hand”*; the things you might want but don't have are the *“two in the bush”*. In other words, don't risk losing what you have by trying to get something that you might want, but don't have. Be happy with what you have, whatever it is.

We might not be in the economic mess that now confronts everyone if people had thought about the proverb earlier. Greed is thought to have brought about the financial collapse that has left us all in uncertain times

and already people are looking forward, hoping that the world economy might right itself in a few months' time. It's a natural human attitude to hope for better times when things are tough and it would be an unusual person who expressed himself or herself content with things as they were, when to anyone else they would be considered dire. Yet you meet such unusual people when you become acquainted with the life-story of Bible characters.

## True Happiness

As a later article in this issue explains, the apostle Paul suffered a setback during his visit to Jerusalem, about 57AD. He had gone there in the hope of improving relations between Jewish and Gentile believers.

But instead he was imprisoned by the Romans, transferred to Caesarea and then transported to Rome, to face trial before the Emperor.

For a man of his energy and passionate desire to preach the gospel, it would

have been a considerable ordeal, even if the process had been smooth and speedy, which it definitely was not! He had to wait years before the matter was resolved in his favour and, during the years of his imprisonment, the only way he could keep in direct touch with his converts was by writing to them.

## Frustrated?

Many of those letters have been preserved and you might expect to read



about his frustration and even his despair. Instead they contain some of the most uplifting and encouraging words you can find anywhere. The letter he wrote to the Philippians, for example, is full of joy and rejoicing. Here are just a few snippets:

*“I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again” (1:25,26);*

*“If I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me” (2:17,18);*

*“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” (4:4).*

And then he adds this thought, which is quite amazing, given his circumstances:

*“I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need” (4:11,12).*

For the apostle Paul, a “bird in the hand” was indeed worth much more than “two in the bush”. He was comfortable and content with what he had, even when he was hungry and in need.

## **How Come?**

Fortunately the Bible is much more than a record of the lives of good people. It also gives us an insight into their thinking and their belief systems. That gives us the opportunity to learn from them and to align our lives with

theirs. If we ask: “How did Paul develop such a contented state of mind?” there is every expectation that we can find the answer. One aspect of it comes immediately after the words we have just been considering, for he says:

*“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (4:13).*

Elsewhere he explains how he came to terms with his present circumstances, for he did not enjoy good health. Having made that a matter of earnest prayer, he was told that the weaker he was, the more it became evident that what he accomplished was not done in his own strength, but to the glory of God:

*“He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:9,10).*

These remarkable words show us what it is like to live a Christ-centred life. If we count our blessings and realise what God has already done for us, we can be absolutely sure that He will always care for us, come what may. And if God is for us, nothing can prevail against us. That was the confidence the apostle Paul had when in prison in Rome; and that is the assurance we too can share when we put our faith and confidence in God and make His will the ruling principle of our lives.

**Editor**



# A Matter of Life and Death

**The first book of the Bible describes in simple easy-to-understand language all we need to know about the earth we live in.**

It tells us clearly that we were created and goes on to explain how we are constituted. For God made Adam out of the dust of the ground and breathed into him “the breath of life”. Notice what the Bible then says:

*“The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7)*

Earlier translations of the Bible, like the King James Version, said that man became “a living soul”, but more recent versions explain that “soul” was an old English word for a creature or a being. What Genesis explains is that when God energised the dust that had been shaped into a human form, His breath brought Adam into existence.

## **Man Alive!**

Bible teaching is always simple and straightforward if you accept what is written and don't try to introduce pre-conceived ideas of your own. There was a pagan belief that life never ends but that a part of a human continues forever. Greek philosophers had conjured up the notion of a never dying soul or spirit and when people tried to find support for those ideas in the

Bible they wrongly interpreted Genesis 2 verse 7 to mean that God had created a soul as part of Adam's constitution, and thereafter that we all have an immortal soul. That view has become widely accepted Christian teaching but a little analysis will soon make things clear, for the same Hebrew word (translated as “a living being” in Genesis 2:7) has already appeared in the inspired account.

Make a judgement for yourself as to what it really means:

*“So God created great sea creatures and every **living thing** that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good” (Genesis 1:21)*

*“Then God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth the **living creature** according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind’; and it was so” (1:24)*

## **Living Being**

Comparing Scripture with Scripture, as we are told to do, we can quickly see that when God created Adam he was not given an immortal soul: he was made a living being or a living creature. Put simply, because God had breathed into him, Adam was alive! But the inspired record does not proceed for long before we are told that his hold on life is shaky and that he could die if he was not careful and obedient.



Facing these evident facts should remove any arrogance or any sense of self-importance we might have. It really brings us down to earth, for that's what man was first created from, though that's probably marginally better than having originated in some primeval slime pit!

## Dead Certain

In the next chapter of Genesis, chapter 3, we are told how man could become a dying creature if he broke God's law. Adam was told by God that if he disobeyed the one commandment he was given, he would die:

*"The Lord God commanded the man, saying, '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).

Unfortunately that was precisely what Adam chose to do: he ate the fruit of the forbidden tree and the consequence was that this judgement was pronounced upon him by God:

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

Again, notice how straightforward all this is. He was given life but was told that if he broke God's commandments life would be taken away. So death is not the entrance to a new life of bliss; it is a judgement for disobedience. And

when we die we quite simply return to the earth from which Adam was created.

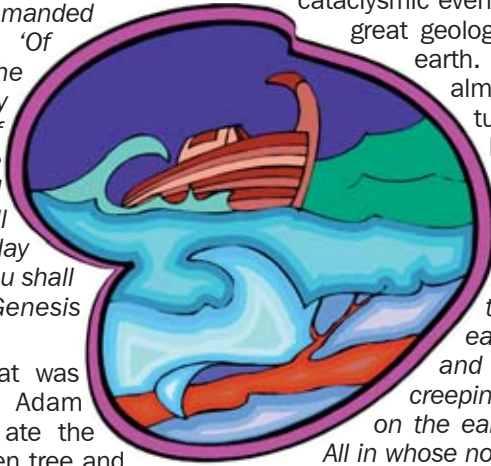
## Death Abounds

All that we have looked at so far has been encompassed within the first three chapters of the Bible, where the foundation teaching about human existence and human mortality is so clearly established. But as the Scriptures open up, so the scale of the problem that confronts each of us becomes ever clearer. Three more chapters of Genesis bring mankind to the time of the flood – a universal huge cataclysmic event that brought about great geological changes in the earth. It also wiped out almost all living creatures for mankind had become corrupt before God. This is what the record says:

*"And all flesh died that moved on the earth: birds and cattle and beasts and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man. All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, all that was on the dry land, died"* (Genesis 7:21,22).

## Breath of Life

Notice that birds, cattle, beasts, creeping things and mankind are grouped together as creatures that are energised by the same breath of life. We breathe to maintain life and when our breath stops, we die. Life is as simple and as fragile as that! But are we sure that human and animal life is one and the same commodity? Take a look at this Psalm:



*“O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all. The earth is full of your possessions – This great and wide sea, In which are innumerable teeming things, living things both small and great ... These all wait for you, that you may give them their food in due season ... You open your hand, they are filled with good. You hide your face, they are troubled; you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust” (Psalm 104:24-29).*

In the next verse, however, we read that this cessation of existence does not have to be forever. For some people there is the possibility of returning to conscious existence:

*“You send forth your Spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the earth” (104:30)*

Intriguingly the word translated *“Spirit”* is the very same word rendered *“breath”* in the previous verse. The God who took away their breath is a God who can breathe life back into them, should He so choose, and He will do that for some people when He renews *“the face of the earth”*. So there is a renewal of life and a renewal of the earth which is spoken about at the same time.

## **Mankind and Animals**

In this Psalm we have a declaration that God is the Creator and sustainer of every living thing, and that He explains again that there is no differ-

ence in terms of physical existence between mankind and animals. That is explained many times in Scripture. For example, wise King Solomon made this inspired observation:

*“I said in my heart, ‘Concerning the estate of the sons of men, God tests them, that they may see that they themselves are like beasts.’ For what happens to the sons of men also happens to beasts; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over beasts, for all is vanity. All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust. Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the spirit of the beast, which goes down to the earth?” (Ecclesiastes 3:18-21).*

Just as an animal ceases to exist when it dies, so it is with mankind. There is no prospect of living on automatically; no immortal life; no spark or soul that continues. There is, says Solomon, no such thing as one outcome for mankind (where their life goes *“upward”*) and another for animals (who go *“down to the earth”*). The hard fact is that all share the same fate. If people live without God, they die without God too. Their life ceases when their breathing stops. But it doesn't have to be like that. There is an alternative.

## **The Image of God**

For all that has been said so far, Scripture says that there is a vital difference between mankind and animals. When



Adam was being created we are told that this statement was made:

*“God said, ‘Let us make man **in our image, according to our likeness**; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man **in his own image; in the image of God he created him**; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:26,27).*

This is not said of the animal creation, just of men and women, that they are made in God’s image. We may be like animals in terms of our physical existence, but there is something we possess that they do not. We have been given a superior mind and a capability to understand and a freedom whereby we can choose to obey, or otherwise. Where much of animal life is governed by instinct, humans have been given some

freedom of choice. In Psalm 49 we are told that:

*“Man who is in honour, yet does not understand, is like the beasts that perish” (49:20).*

“Understanding” makes all the difference. If we do not try to understand God’s purpose, and choose instead to live without God, then we are no different from the animal creation. When we die, like them we will perish, or cease to exist. But God does not want that to happen. He wants us to find out about His offer of Life and to accept it with all our hearts. If we base our lives on what the Bible teaches we can have a real and living hope. If we don’t, then death is what awaits us for ever: complete oblivion; total irreversible destruction; the end of everything.

That is why finding about God’s purpose is so important to all of us. It is truly a matter of life and death.

**Barry Dray**

## Life

The quickly changing seasons  
Show that nothing lasts for long;  
The daffodils which herald Spring  
Toss in their sprightly throng,  
Each tiny little flower  
Opens wide at its rebirth;  
But they, alas, do not stay long  
And decay back to the earth.

We, too, have our allotted time  
Our Spring, with sun and shade;  
But come the Autumn of our life  
We, too, begin to fade;  
And soon the end of life draws near  
As it does for everyone,  
So do not waste life’s precious time  
But serve God while you can.

**Peggy Rawson**



## The Promise of the Kingdom - 7

# "Is This the Time?"

### Hopes Dashed

The death of the Lord Jesus had been something his disciples were not expecting, although he had warned them about it several times. Even so, they had expected him to overthrow the Roman occupying power and establish the kingdom of God on the earth.

It must have seemed to them that the nearest they had come to that was when Pilate had an accusation affixed over the cross: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (John 19:19). But that was not the end of the saving work of Jesus. The grave could not hold the man who was born to be King.

God's only begotten Son was the only totally sinless man the world has ever known and, as the apostle Peter was to say, he could not be held in the grave.

*"Him, being delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be held by it" (Acts 2:23,24).*

### New Beginning

When God raised Jesus from the dead, to die no more, the disciples recovered their faith. Although they had not understood Jesus earlier when he had taught them about his forthcoming death, perhaps because they didn't

want to believe that, after he was raised from the dead things began to fall into place. Jesus was with them for forty days between his resurrection and his ascension to heaven and he spent time giving them further instruction, answering their questions and preparing them for the teaching which they would have to take on.

The historian Luke, writer of the Acts of the Apostles, tells us that Jesus:

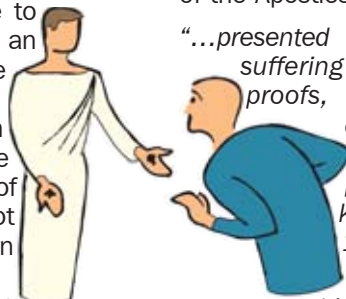
*"...presented himself alive after his suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3).*

We have seen that this was something Jesus had himself spoken a lot about, so it was not surprising that much of the later conversation should have been about the kingdom of God. And the disciples were still keen to know when that kingdom would be established on earth. For the record continues:

*"When they had come together, they asked him, saying, 'Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?'" (Acts 1:6)*

### Timing Problems

The disciples were clearly very anxious about this and the answer they received was not really what they wanted to hear. Jesus told them that it was not for them to know when the time was for that to happen: God alone had fixed it (1:7). After all, it would



have been very demoralising for them if Jesus had told them that the kingdom would not be established for a couple of thousand years!

Jesus continued to give his followers exactly the same message as he had done before his crucifixion. Then he had given signs, saying that the kingdom had to be watched for and those signs would be quite unmistakable.

*“Now as he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?’” (Matthew 24:3).*

## **Olivet Prophecy**

Because of where they were sitting, the explanation Jesus gave is often called “The Olivet Prophecy”. On that occasion Jesus gave no timing information, but indicated that a series of happenings would occur which would be pointers for his followers. And those who watched the ‘signs of the times’ would thus be able to prepare for his return to earth. Here are some of those signs:

*“You will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows” (Matthew 24:6-8).*

So Jesus gave clear signs of the way things would deteriorate, and that was

to be just the beginning. For the Lord then added many details about what was to happen between his ascension and his return to the earth.

*“For 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).*

## **Jerusalem Destroyed**

Some parts of this prophecy clearly refer to the events of AD 70, when the Roman authorities destroyed the city of Jerusalem following further Jewish unrest. Other parts of the prophecy, however, are more appropriately viewed as a description of what was to happen before the Lord Jesus returns to the earth. Some of it may refer to both situations, as Bible prophecy can often have dual or even multiple fulfilments.

Those later verses – 21 and 22 – seem to have a clear reference to the unrest that would be in the earth just

before Jesus returns. Such problems are now beginning to be quite acute, with an economic crisis and with prices rising dramatically. In some parts of the world people cannot now afford even the basics of life. The description of “great tribulation” seems to sum up very well the present position in which the world finds itself.



*A view of the Mount of Olives, outside Jerusalem, from which Jesus delivered his prophecy*

It is important to notice that Jesus does not specify a time scale for all this. At the end of the *Olivet prophecy* he is quite specific. “So you, likewise, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near” (Luke 21:31). No more than that.

## How Close?

As it appears that governments are less able to cope with the problems of providing food and safety for the population of the world, the fulfilment of the words of the Lord Jesus seems to come ever nearer. We do not know just how near. The Lord Jesus told his disciples that the fulfilment of his words was a sign that they should prepare for his return. They should not be overtaken by such events; nor be surprised by the deteriorating situation in the world. Their challenge was to be ready for him whenever he comes.

This is not new teaching from Jesus. So often he takes the starting point for what he has to say from the Old Testament, and in this case the prophecy of Daniel. Writing over 500 years before Jesus, Daniel also predicted a world crisis:

*“At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the*

*dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:1,2).*

## Everlasting Life

This “time of trouble” will lead to the direct intervention of the Lord God in the rulership of the world – the establishment of the kingdom of God. Difficult times will lead to deliverance and those who are to be delivered will have their names recorded in God’s book of life. Those who will be saved are not limited to those who are alive, for Daniel includes “those who sleep in the dust of the earth” – those who are now dead and are asleep (unconscious) in the grave.

Daniel clearly believed in the resurrection of the dead as the true hope for life after death, for he too now sleeps in death. From the New Testament we now know that this great event will accompany the return of the Lord Jesus when he comes to rule over God’s kingdom.

There is, as so often, a warning accompanying this good news. The raising of those who are now in the graves will result in some being given eternal life. But at that time others will be condemned to eternal shame. The Lord Jesus warned his followers, and Daniel warned the faithful of his day, and those who read his words. We must be ready for the Lord’s Coming, whenever he comes.

**Mark Sheppard**



# The Promised Land

Abraham was called by God to leave his native country and go with Him into the unknown. Great man of faith that he was, Abraham obeyed, and went with his family. Over the years in which he communed with God he was given many great promises, one strand of which concerned a land that he and his descendants would be given. In this article **Dudley Fifield** explains just what and where that land would be.

## Journey of Faith

1 Abraham was commanded by God to leave his country (Mesopotamia) and his family and go into a land that God would show him. He must have been told where this land was, for we read that:

*“they departed to go to **the land of Canaan**. So they came to **the land of Canaan**” (Genesis 12:5).*

These simple words express the determination with which they had set out and explain that finally they knew they had reached their intended destination. But what now?

2 On his arrival in the land, God said to Abraham:

*“To your descendants I will give this land.’ And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him” (12:7).*

The land was already occupied and all through his life Abraham had no settled dwelling place that he could call his own. He and his family lived in tents and dwelt among the inhabitants of the land. They were in that society but they did not belong to it, for Abraham and his household worshipped God and did not associate with the pagan practices that were all around them.

The Epistle to the Hebrews describes this period of his life in this way:

*“By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:9,10).*

3 The land was to be owned by his descendants, yet Abraham lived there as one who ‘sojourned’. That means that he lived like someone who had taken up a temporary abode in a strange (or foreign) country. He did not belong there, and the fact that he lived in a tent testified to that fact. Instead, Abraham looked for God’s City, God’s Kingdom, and wanted nothing to do with those settlements built by men, like the city that Cain had built in rebellion against God, or Nimrod’s Babylon (both of which were representative of the kingdom of men).

4 In Genesis chapter 13 we read about a dispute which arose between the herdsmen of Abraham and the herdsmen of Lot, his nephew, which resulted in the decision that they should each go their separate ways. Abraham could have claimed



precedence by right of age and status. He was, after all, the one who had received God's call to come into the land and he was the recipient of God's promises. But the older man shows a remarkable spirit of tolerance and forbearance towards his young nephew, saying:



*Abraham the tent-dweller meets three angels*

*“Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left” (Genesis 13:8,9).*

Lot had a good look around, saw the well-watered plain of Jordan and chose to take his flocks and herds there, while Abram stayed where he was. The eventual outcome for Lot was that he dwelt in the cities of the plain (Sodom and Gomorrah).

- 5 With an obvious play on the manner in which Lot had lifted up his eyes and looked (13:10), God then speaks to Abraham and gives him a personal promise about a possession in the land that had not featured in the earlier promises:

*“The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: ‘Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are – northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descen-*

*dants forever. And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you” (13:14-17).*

Note the implications of these words for Abraham himself. He was to possess this land, for ever. So there is involved in this promise the assurance of eternal life and of an eternal inheritance. This meek man was to possess a part of the earth as his eternal abiding place.

- 6 Two chapters on in Genesis the promise of the land is emphasized again, this time in what to us are very unusual circumstances. First came the promise: *“I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it” (15:7)*. And then Abraham asked a question:

*“He said, ‘Lord God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?’” (15:8).*

God's answer was to make a covenant with Abraham, to make the position clear beyond any question. The making of this covenant is described in verses 10 to 21, which is well worth reading. At God's command Abraham sacrificed five animals and laid them out on the altar in a way that God prescribed.

The animals were – an heifer, a she goat, a ram, a turtle-dove and a young pigeon. All these animals

were later prescribed in the Law of Moses as suitable for sacrifice. The way in which they were laid out (read verse 10) conformed to the manner by which, in those days, men entered into a covenant or an agreement with one another. It was called ‘cutting a covenant’ and that is precisely what the Hebrew word ‘made’ means (v.18). The two parties would pass between the divided animals as an indication of their assent to the terms of the covenant so, in accordance with the practice of the day, God came down and passed through the animals:

*“It came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there was a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces” (15:17).*

The furnace and the lamp were symbols of the presence of God (see Exodus 3:2; Zechariah 2:5). Thus the Lord God in His kindness condescended to Abram’s humanity. There was another factor that was emphasized for, having laid out the pieces of animal and the birds, we read that *“a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him” (15:12).*

- 7 These events communicated to Abraham the manner in which the promise would eventually be fulfilled.
  - a. It would be by sacrifice, by the shedding of blood.
  - b. Abraham would first die, having experienced a symbolic death.
  - c. His seed (descendants) should dwell in a strange land and be afflicted for 400 years (v.13).

- d. Afterwards God would judge the nation that oppressed them and deliver them, giving them this land *“from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates” (v.18).*
- e. It followed that Abraham could only inherit his portion if he was raised from the dead to eternal life.

- 8 The New Testament comments on these events in these words:

*“God gave him no inheritance in it, not even enough to set his foot on. But even when Abraham had no child, He promised to give it to him for a possession, and to his descendants after him” (Acts 7:5 and see Hebrews 11:8-10).*

Abraham never inherited the land. In faith he looked forward to his future resurrection when God would fulfil His word in the establishment of His city Jerusalem (when His Kingdom is established on earth). In that day Abraham will possess the land for an everlasting inheritance.

- 9 It should be noted that the land was promised to Abraham and to “his seed”, or his descendants. It follows that the land between *‘the river of Egypt and the great river, the river Euphrates’* belongs to those whom God declares to be the seed of Abraham and that aspect is something that needs careful consideration, in a future article, God willing. When God allocates the land, according to His decree, the present dispute between Jew and Arab will be resolved once and for all.

**Dudley Fifield**

# Recovery

Today we changed the car – it was time and the garage had some very good offers. Not for the first time, I was struck by all the paraphernalia that was required just to drive a car never mind to own and insure one.

The practise, lessons, learning the Highway Code, the test – and then persuading some one to let you drive their car – usually your father! “Drive carefully! Don’t drink and drive! Be back by ....” And then the next morning Dad would walk round the car to check nothing was damaged.

Oh! How I yearned for my own set of wheels! But when that objective was obtained there were more conditions that had to be fulfilled if I wasn’t going to be a nuisance to everyone else who happened to be using the road at the same time.

## **Bible Tuition**

I remember seeing a film once about Bible reading. It showed a car driver recklessly ignoring all the sensible things he had been taught, speed limits and the like, especially the Highway Code. Of course, as you might expect, there were many disasters along the way, often involving others and eventually the driver was killed and you saw his coffin being lowered into a hole in the ground. The message was – “If you throw away the book of rules then what can you expect?”

If you have to do all that just to drive a car, why should we think its going to be any different for life in general? We need guidance and instruction – a kind of Highway Code for living and God has provided us with that very thing in the Bible. Perhaps that’s why it is some-

times called the Book of Life! For we all need instruction and practise in how best to live our lives – that’s why we all have families into which we are born and why parenting is so important.

## **Rules for Life**

What has all this to do with my personal situation? I have been blessed with a good hospital experience, the consciousness of God’s guardian care of me the whole time, a death and resurrection experience (when I had the operation) and a full recovery. Thankfully the disease has been removed and in the words of the surgeon, when looking at my results – “They don’t get better than that.” I really do feel that I have been given a new life. BUT ... it’s not immortal life with eternal health. I still have basically the old body with its other failings and weaknesses to remind me of my mortality. And if I’m to make a really complete recovery there are various things that have to be done. As I left hospital there was a whole new way of life to learn about. Just look at this list:

- ✓ Hospital medication to complete.
- ✓ Periodic blood tests.
- ✓ The doctor available if things don’t feel quite right.
- ✓ Calls from the district nurse to check the wound was healing.
- ✓ Visits to the hospital so the surgeon can check his handiwork. I have to say the medical services have looked after me as well as they possibly could. Add to that the concern and support of

friends, wife and family, then I really have been blessed.

- ✓ Specific exercises to do every day – almost certainly for the rest of my life.
- ✓ Regular general exercise. You see, my body has to relearn how to perform certain functions in an appropriate way following the removal of a bit of my anatomy. Because of the loss of that one part the rest of the body has to do more work and become more efficient. Happily the body, in this case mine, is quite capable of making the changes and I am confident of a good outcome.

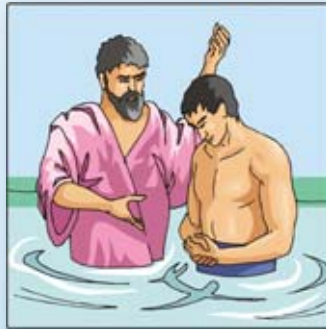
## New Life

Let's just emphasise – without any exaggeration – that the whole experience I have been through requires that I should learn to live differently if I am going to really benefit from my recovery; if I am to be totally delivered (or saved) from the disease. This is equally true of the new life we can have in Christ Jesus and there are some very close parallels.

It all starts with a diagnosis, just like going to the doctor, when we realise that there is something wrong with our life, something that needs urgent attention. We are all in need of the salvation that God has offered to us, because we have the most deadly of diseases. The Bible calls it sin and every human being suffers from it. It is like a cancer that continually eats away at us and ultimately we will perish unless we undergo some radical treatment.

Just like a patient entering the hospital, we have to prepare ourselves for the experience. We need to consult the expert. Once again the Bible comes into play telling us what has to be done and how we have to change our thinking and ways so that the Consultant – God Himself – with the support of the Lord Jesus Christ – the Master Physician – can operate on our lives to spiritually remove the disease and give us a fresh start. He alone can give us a new life.

We will have to undergo a death and resurrection experience to start the new life. Once again it is the Bible that comes to our aid to tell us we need to be baptised. It says this,



*“He who believes and is baptised will be saved.”  
(Mark 16:16)*

Notice that word, ‘believes’. When we need to have surgery and enter a recovery programme it is absolutely vital that we believe in what the doctor tells us, especially about recovery. We are going to place our complete confidence in the surgical team.

With spiritual things it is just the same. We have to place our complete trust in God and the Lord Jesus, who are the experts in dealing with our problem.

Being baptised is the believer's way of showing faith in God. It is also a personal symbolic experience of death and resurrection. We are buried in water for a few moments, an act which symbolises the end of the old way of life and the start of the new. It also associates us with the Lord Jesus in his death and resurrection. (If you want more information about why baptism matters, read Romans chapter 6.)



## Recovery Plan

After baptism we begin a new life in Christ. But let's remember that baptism is just the start. Like my recovery from the operation, there is a continuing need to follow a recovery programme. There was a new regime of regular exercise, the support of friends and family and the continued interest of the medical staff. In the new life in Christ these things are mirrored by:

- ➔ **Daily Bible reading** (a Bible reading plan is available if you write to one of the addresses on the back of this issue). It is important to be systematic and regular about this, just like my exercises. If you start to miss days, or do the exercises haphazardly, the cure will not be effective, recovery will not be as good. The book of rules can never be thrown away! The same thing really applies to every aspect of the new life.
- ➔ **Prayer** is your opportunity to share your concerns through the Lord Jesus, the Master Physician with the Consultant, the Father, about your recovery and spiritual development.
- ➔ Finally **the support of a new family in Christ** (Christadelphians – “brothers and sisters in Christ”) is also important.

Where will all the exercises of this new life get you? The surgery I experienced, good as it was, will only prolong my mortal life. One person with whom I shared this experience said that the doctor had told him it would prolong his life by about fifteen years. Be that

as it may! As we said earlier it won't bring eternal life. Nor will it bring certain hope into our lives. One of the things which is often neglected or taken for granted in the practice of human medicine is the patient's hope that a cure can be achieved.

But new life in Christ leads both to a better quality of life now and the sure hope of resurrection from the dead when the Lord Jesus returns from heaven. That brings the prospect of everlasting life and eternal health in the Kingdom that is to be established on earth when Jesus reigns from Jerusalem.

Baptised believers can live in the confident expectation that God, working through the Lord Jesus, will keep His Word. He will never let us down and the cure He offers will finally be totally effective. One of the

Old Testament prophets gives us a glimpse of that life in these words:

*“Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. There is no searching of His understanding. He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40:28-31).*

Now that's the kind of recovery I'd really like!

**David Nightingale**

# Problems in Jerusalem

The apostle Paul had travelled to Jerusalem with several companions from ecclesias in Europe and Asia Minor and had been greeted by the elders of the Jerusalem ecclesia. They asked him to demonstrate that he was still keeping the law by accompanying some believers to the Temple where they were completing a vow they had previously undertaken and this he gladly did. But, as **John Hellowell** now explains, things did not go according to plan.

## Uproar in the Temple

Alas, some Asian Jews recognised Paul in the Temple and, knowing something of his reputation, stirred up the worshipping crowds to arrest him forcibly. These Asian Jews had seen Paul earlier in the city with Trophimus the Ephesian, whom they knew to be a Gentile.

Gentiles were permitted to enter the outer court (hence it was known as the "Court of the Gentiles"). But they could go no further into the Temple complex on pain of death. The Roman authorities conceded this penalty even to Roman citizens. In order that all should be aware, notices were posted in Latin and Greek on the separating wall. One of the Greek inscriptions was found in 1871 and is now in Istanbul. This read:

**NO FOREIGNER MAY ENTER WITHIN  
THE BARRICADE WHICH SURROUNDS  
THE TEMPLE AND ENCLOSURE.  
ANYONE WHO IS CAUGHT DOING SO  
WILL HAVE HIMSELF TO THANK FOR  
HIS ENSUING DEATH**

## False Accusation

The Jews now took the opportunity of getting their revenge on Paul and stirred up the crowd. Seizing Paul they shouted: "*Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against our people and our law*

*and our place"* (i.e. the Temple). Worst of all, they alleged that "*he also brought Greeks into the temple area and has defiled this holy place"* (Acts 21:28).

It is interesting to note the comparison between this accusation and that made against Stephen (Acts 6:13) and also the Lord Jesus (Mark 14:57f). Although, strictly speaking, Trophimus would have been the guilty one, were the accusations true, Paul would have been charged with aiding and abetting the crime.

Soon the whole city was aroused, with crowds arriving from all directions. They seized Paul and dragged him from the Temple, closing the gates behind them. This was probably a symbolic act on their part to prevent any further defilement and to ensure that any rioting took place outside. One can imagine that, given the use of the Court of the Gentiles as a market controlled by the High Priests, they would not want the tables of the money-changers overturned, nor the animals escaping in the turmoil!

## Paul Arrested

While they were attempting to kill Paul, the news that the whole city was in an uproar reached the commander of the Roman troops stationed in the Antonia barracks, a fortress on the north-west corner of the Temple precinct. The 'commander' was the military tribune

[Gk. chiliarch] Claudius Lysius (Acts 23:26). Taking officers (centurions) and soldiers he rushed down to the crowd who, seeing the troops, stopped beating Paul. Since there was more than one centurion present, it can be inferred that at least 150 to 200 soldiers were called out. This number indicates the fierceness of Jewish rioters and we shall see later how many troops were required to convey Paul to trial in Caesarea.

The military tribune arrested Paul and had him bound with two chains to his hands, perhaps with a soldier either side. Only then did he ask who he was and what he had done. It seems likely that before Paul could answer, the crowd's cries drowned out what he was saying. A chaotic response, with one group saying one thing and another group something else, made it impossible to get at the truth. So the command was given for him to be taken to the barracks. When they reached the steps leading up into the Antonia, the crowd was so violent that Paul had to be carried by the soldiers, presumably above the heads of the mob. They, in the meantime, continued to cry out for his death.

As Paul was about to be taken into the barracks he asked the commander if he might speak to him. The commander was amazed that Paul spoke to him in Greek. One wonders why, as a Roman citizen, he did not use Latin. His question "*Do you speak Greek?*" is also a little strange, for this was the lingua franca of the Roman world. Perhaps it was the quality of his Greek which was remarkable, especially from a dirty, bruised and dishevelled man whose clothes were torn and who probably looked more like a beggar or a thief!

## Confused Identity

The commander had thought the prisoner to be the Egyptian who had caused a revolt some time ago, leading 4,000 followers out into the desert. The Jewish-Roman historian Josephus gives details of this episode. The Egyptian came to Jerusalem about AD54, claiming to be a prophet, and led a multitude of some 30,000 followers to the Mount of Olives. He promised that, at his command, the walls of the city would collapse, presumably in imitation of Joshua, and he would march in. The Roman Governor Felix (see Acts 23:24) sent soldiers who killed 400 and captured 200. The ringleader escaped and promptly disappeared. No doubt his return in due course was anticipated.

These "*assassins*" (NKJV) or "*terrorists*" (NIV) were literally "*dagger-men*" who became active in the time of the procurator Felix. They were bitter enemies of the Romans and Jewish Roman-sympathisers and their technique was to mingle with the crowds during the festivals and use the anonymity which this gave them to stab their opponents. This may help to explain why the military commander used such force to arrest one man.

Paul explained that he was Jewish and hailed from Tarsus in Cilicia and that he was a citizen of no ordinary city. Again, one wonders why he did not add, "and a Roman citizen at that!" He then asked for permission to address the crowd. Permission was granted, perhaps in the hope that it would throw some light on the problem which had caused the riot. Paul signalled his intention to speak and the crowd fell silent.

**John Hellawell**

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