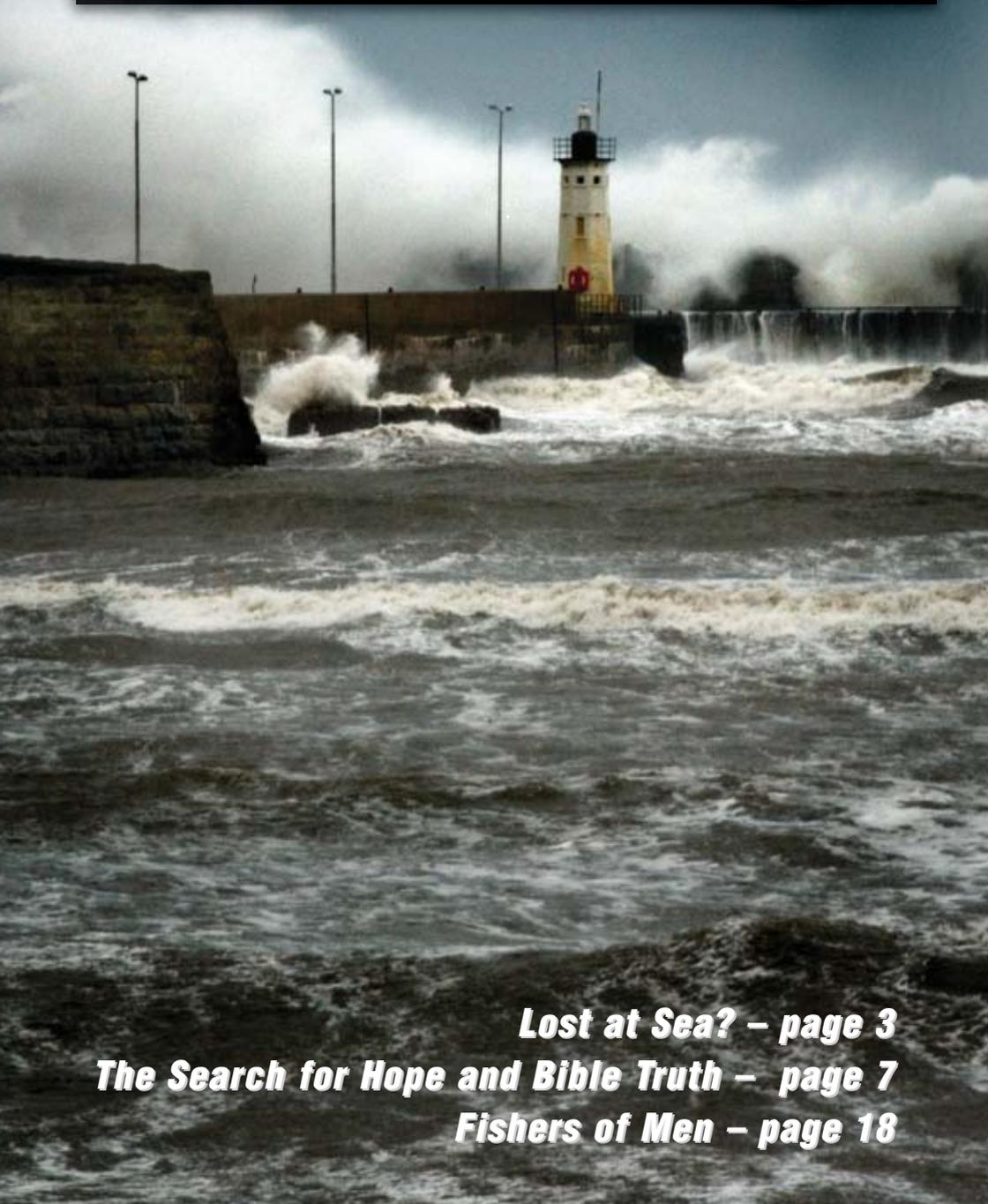


Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1501



Lost at Sea? – page 3

The Search for Hope and Bible Truth – page 7

Fishers of Men – page 18

Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

125th Year

FO9

1501

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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Contents

Lost at Sea?3

Questions about Life.....5

The Search for Hope and Bible Truth7

Road Map to the Kingdom 9

Destination Guide11

Are we nearly there yet?13

Pavel Kravař and the search for Bible Truth15

Fishers of Men18

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Bible Versions

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Lost at Sea?

Seaside holidays offer a chance to relax and enjoy the beach, the sea and the bracing sea air. If the weather is good, what could be better than resting on a deck chair, gazing out to sea? Or, if you like messing about in boats, nowadays you can usually hire a variety of craft – from surf boards to jet skis – which enable you to have fun in the waves, or to venture further afield.

Living Dangerously

There was a time when seaside living meant that there was always a ready supply of food. You just had to catch it! Then fishing became an industry and the catches became bigger and bigger as trawling nets used a finer and finer mesh. Over-fishing by many nations led to imposed quotas and the loss of many jobs and much bad feeling. People began to view the sea as a conservation area, which needed protection. Now, with the prospect of rising sea levels as the ice caps melt, people who live near it are beginning to view it as a potential threat, especially in low-lying areas.

Sailors have long known that the sea is a dangerous place which needs to be respected and feared. Even now, when mankind prides itself on having ‘conquered’ space and ‘mastered’ most issues, the sea claims many lives. Sometimes holiday-makers are lost when they swim or stray into dangerous waters. Fishermen or cockle-pickers can lose their lives when trapped by incoming tides and experienced sailors can be overwhelmed by high seas or unexpected



storms. Lighthouses positioned near particular dangers issue a continuous reminder that danger is never far away.

Ancient Mariners

If the sea is dangerous to modern sailors, imagine what dangers it presented to mariners when seagoing vessels were far less sophisticated. At the time the Bible was being written, ships would never dare to stray far

from land, even when undergoing long sea journeys. They would only sail at certain times of the year, when storms were less threatening and, even so, sailors were often shipwrecked. In one of his letters to the believers at Corinth, an important city in

Greece, the apostle Paul recounted some of the difficulties he had experienced:

“Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren” (2 Corinthians 11:25,26).

He mentions three shipwrecks and he was to experience another one later, which is graphically described in Acts, chapter 27. But he also writes about “perils of waters” and “perils in the sea”, so this seasoned traveller had a keen awareness of the danger

posed by seafaring. A much earlier voyager saw more than danger, however:

“Those who go down to the sea in ships, who do business on great waters, they see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep. For he commands and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves of the sea. They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths; their soul melts because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. Then they cry out to the LORD, in their trouble, and he brings them out of their distresses. He calms the storm, so that its waves are still” (Psalm 107:23-29).

The Psalmist saw the sea and its stormy waves as an expression of God's power and sovereignty. He knew that God reigns over the sea, just as over the land that He has created, and that He can bring a storm or calm and quiet, if and when He so chooses.



Stormy Waters

In Scripture, the sea is likened to a turbulent world full of danger and difficulty for the unwary. The prophet Isaiah once used a powerful image, when calling people to repentance:

“I create the fruit of the lips: peace, peace to him who is far off and to him who is near;” says the LORD, ‘And I will heal him.’ But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. ‘There is no peace,’ says my God, ‘for the wicked’” (Isaiah 57:19-21).

The restlessness and potential violence of a stormy sea is clearly evident. It seems determined to smash and destroy everything in its path. Time and again the waves pound and crash. The prophet was saying that God views rebellious humans in the very same way – as never satisfied until they have stirred themselves up to do and think wrong things. God offers them peace and tranquillity but they prefer a life of chaos and disorder: a life without God.

The Lord Jesus spoke about our age in much the same way when foretelling the muddled and pressurised world that now exists, just before his return to earth:

“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).

The next time you look out to sea and marvel at its restless power, think about the many undercurrents in today's society and all the energy that is being expended by people who want to satisfy their personal ambitions. Then ask yourself whether you want to be restless and perplexed for evermore? Or would you prefer a life of peaceful tranquillity in the new world that the Lord Jesus will establish when he returns to reign on earth as king? It's your choice!

Editor

Questions about Life

Questions form an important part of our everyday conversation. Think how long you go during the day without asking a question. I doubt if I would manage to keep it up for long. So many things happen that we have to ask about, and we so easily forget what we have already been told.

Asking and Learning

The Bible gives important answers about all sorts of things but it also provokes us to ask questions. That's part of our spiritual education and it was the same for the disciples of Jesus. They asked him many things, and often did not fully understand the answers. That understanding grew bit by bit, as things got clearer in their minds. That still happens, for youngsters are always asking "Why this?" and "Why that?" It could become a bit irritating if we didn't understand the need to answer such questions patiently. For a child lacks experience, and is learning new things all the time, just as we once did.

Jesus had great patience when dealing with his disciples' questions, but he taught them that there are some questions they should not ask. This applies to us too! Once he told them not to be worried about their daily necessities:

"Do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the

kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:31-33)

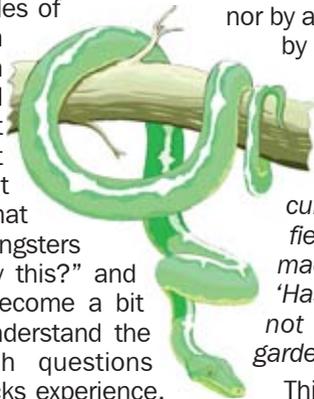
If we put first things first, Jesus says that God will provide all the necessary things in life. What really matters is that we spend time thinking about His gracious purpose and preparing our lives so that we can be part of it.

Questioning God!

Do you know the first question ever asked in the Bible? It wasn't asked by God – who knows everything anyway – nor by a man or a woman. It was asked by the serpent in the Garden of Eden when tempting Eve to disobey God's one commandment. This was the question:

"The serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said, "You shall not eat of every tree of the garden"?" (Genesis 3:1)

This question was designed to make Eve think. She answered the serpent's question correctly, saying that there was indeed forbidden fruit, but did not recognise that the question was leading to trouble. We may all have been asked "leading questions" before now, without recognising where they were going. It was like that with Eve for she lacked experience. She did not think to challenge the serpent when he proceeded to tell her that God could not have meant what He said: "You will not surely die" (3:4). The first recorded question was rapidly followed by the first ever lie.



God's Question

The next recorded questions are to be found in the very same chapter of Genesis and this time it is God, or one of His angels, who interrogates Adam and Eve. Hearing Him coming, they had hidden among the trees, and God asked: "Where are you?" (3:9). He would have known of course, but it was the start of an opportunity for the guilty pair to confess and to seek forgiveness. Adam responded that he had hidden because he was naked, an answer that led to further questions which came right to the heart of the issue:

"Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" (Genesis 3:11).

It was a gracious opportunity for Adam to explain and examine his motives for eating the forbidden fruit and Eve was given the very same opportunity, for: *"the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?'" (3:13).*

If only they had taken the opportunity that God offered and had thrown themselves upon His mercy, there and then. Instead Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent and, because God had made the serpent which started the trouble, they were indirectly blaming God!

Questions for Us

Genesis is a book which records the earliest history of mankind, but it has the ring of truth. For people still act in the very same way. Just one chapter later we read about a dispute between two brothers – Cain and Abel – which

had a disastrous outcome. First Cain was upset and became angry, but God asked about it and offered a solution:

"Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted?" (Genesis 4:6,7)



God knew why Cain was angry, but He wanted him to think things through for himself. Pride was his problem, but he must first admit it before he could begin to sort it out. Sadly, he did not take that step.

Instead, he murdered his brother Abel, thus removing the source of his aggravation in his own way. God, knowing what he had done, then asked another simple question: *"Where is Abel your brother?"*, and in a phrase that has since become world famous, Cain lied and said: *"I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" (4:9).*

Cain had been given the opportunity to explain himself, but he refused the offer and chose instead a life based on falsehood and deceit. He squandered the opportunity and, like many people after him, lived a life of rebellion and evil.

A time is coming when we will be asked to account for our own lives and to answer before the Judge who has now been appointed to rule the world (Acts 17:30,31). Like Cain, we have been given the opportunity now to ask ourselves searching questions about our own lives, our priorities, and our search for hope and truth.

God has the answer to every need, but we must ask ourselves how much we really want that answer.

Rachel Yuile



Signs for our times... are you on the right track?

"Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it..." **Matthew 7: 14**

Believing and following the gospel of Jesus Christ is often likened to a journey. Jesus describes the route that we should take as, not broad and easy, but narrow and awkward. However, we are not without help...



King David described God's Word as being...
'a light to my path' **Ps 119: 105**

...and the Bible can be the same for us.

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. **Romans 6: 4**

Obedience and baptism - both exemplified by Jesus.

Baptism is symbolic of dying and being raised to life (as Jesus literally was) and is an essential part of demonstrating our commitment to follow him.

Death is no obstacle for God but, if we don't respond in time, it may be an obstacle for us...





To be sure of eternal life we **MUST NOT** enter the box before we are sure our exit is clear!

Obedience to God is not open to interpretation - there are very clear directions which must be followed...

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me..." **John 14: 6**



Signs in the Highway Code are described as being 'warnings' and 'positive instruction' - we should view the Bible in the same way...

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is **profitable** for... instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*
2 Timothy 3: 16-17



Therefore submit to God... Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. **James 4: 7-8**

The word 'submit' means 'giving ourselves into the hands of another'. We should think less about what we want and instead think about what God wants. By giving ourselves to God we waive all power of our own and instead are guided by Him. We should first consider God, then others, then ourselves.

The Highway Code can be difficult to obey at times.
Does that make it unnecessary?

It was first published over 70 years ago.
Does that make it irrelevant?

The Highway Code can save your life on the road.
The Bible could save your life.



Road map to The Kingdom

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Psalm 119: 105

No one sets out on a journey without somewhere to go, or directions of how to get there! The same is true for the ultimate journey to God's Kingdom - we need to plan ahead, and follow the signs on the journey to ensure we get there safely. God has given us His Word, the Bible, as a map, to help us on our travels in this life, preparing us for everlasting life.

We need to refer to the Bible on a daily basis, because no matter what obstacles we meet on the way, the overall route never changes.

...having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever...

1 Peter 1: 23

However, reading the Bible is not enough - we have to change our lives as well. Jesus spoke about this in **Luke 14**, referring to preparations made for building a house...

And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

Luke 14: 27

The Bible helps show us the way, and how God wants us to live. At times, living a life dedicated to God may seem difficult, and we may not always have the answers - but God will always be there for us.

The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them. Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!

Psalm 34: 7-8

It might seem difficult to put our trust in a God we cannot see, but the evidence for His existence can be seen all around us; the

wonders of His creation and the miracle of His chosen people Israel are only two examples.

When we're travelling somewhere, we trust that the signs along the way are there to help and guide us; the same is true on the way to the Kingdom. We have to put our trust in God; as the Psalmist says:

*Lead me, O LORD, in Your righteousness because of my enemies;
make Your way straight before my face.* **Psalm 5: 8**

Just as in life, we can sometimes make a wrong turn, and find ourselves heading in the wrong direction. The Bible calls this SIN - but just as we use our map to bring us back on course, so we turn to God to be guided back to His 'way'.

Through Jesus Christ, His son, our sins can be forgiven.

*For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so great is His mercy toward those who
fear Him; as far as the east is from
the west, so far has He removed our
transgressions from us.*

Psalm 103: 11-12

Therefore, our journey is one with purpose and direction - using the Bible as our map - arriving at The Kingdom of God and eternal life.

*"...seek first the
kingdom of God and
His righteousness...."*
Matthew 6: 33



Destination guide

Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those that love Him. But God has revealed them to us through His spirit. For the spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

1 Corinthians 2: 9-10

God knows us very well - After all He created us! So, He hasn't left us in the dark when it comes to His plans for the future. He has ensured that we have all the information we need to decide whether or not we like the look of the destination. He has painted some very clear pictures of this Kingdom in the pages of the Bible.

In **Matthew 6: 33** (p10) Jesus encouraged his followers to focus on Gods kingdom. He also taught that it is one of the most important things we can pray for.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Matthew 6: 10

God's Kingdom is not something that exists only as a state of mind or in our heart; in the pages of the Bible we are clearly and consistently told that the Kingdom of God will be a physical reality on the Earth. In the Old Testament there are many descriptions of what the Kingdom will be like, where it will be and who will be there.

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains... And all nations shall flow to it. They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Isaiah 2: 2-4

In the New Testament there is no deviation from this; the same type of Kingdom is described. Jesus talks about his return and the establishment of a physical, political kingdom, beginning in Israel and eventually filling the whole World...

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him... **Matthew 25: 31-32**

Under the reign of Jesus the nature of our Earth will be changed, not only in the human sphere, but also throughout the entire animal kingdom. Our planet will become a much less brutal place, a place of security, peace and contentment for all...

The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox... they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, says the Lord. **Isaiah 65: 25**

...and disease, suffering and unhappiness will be systematically removed in this new world order.

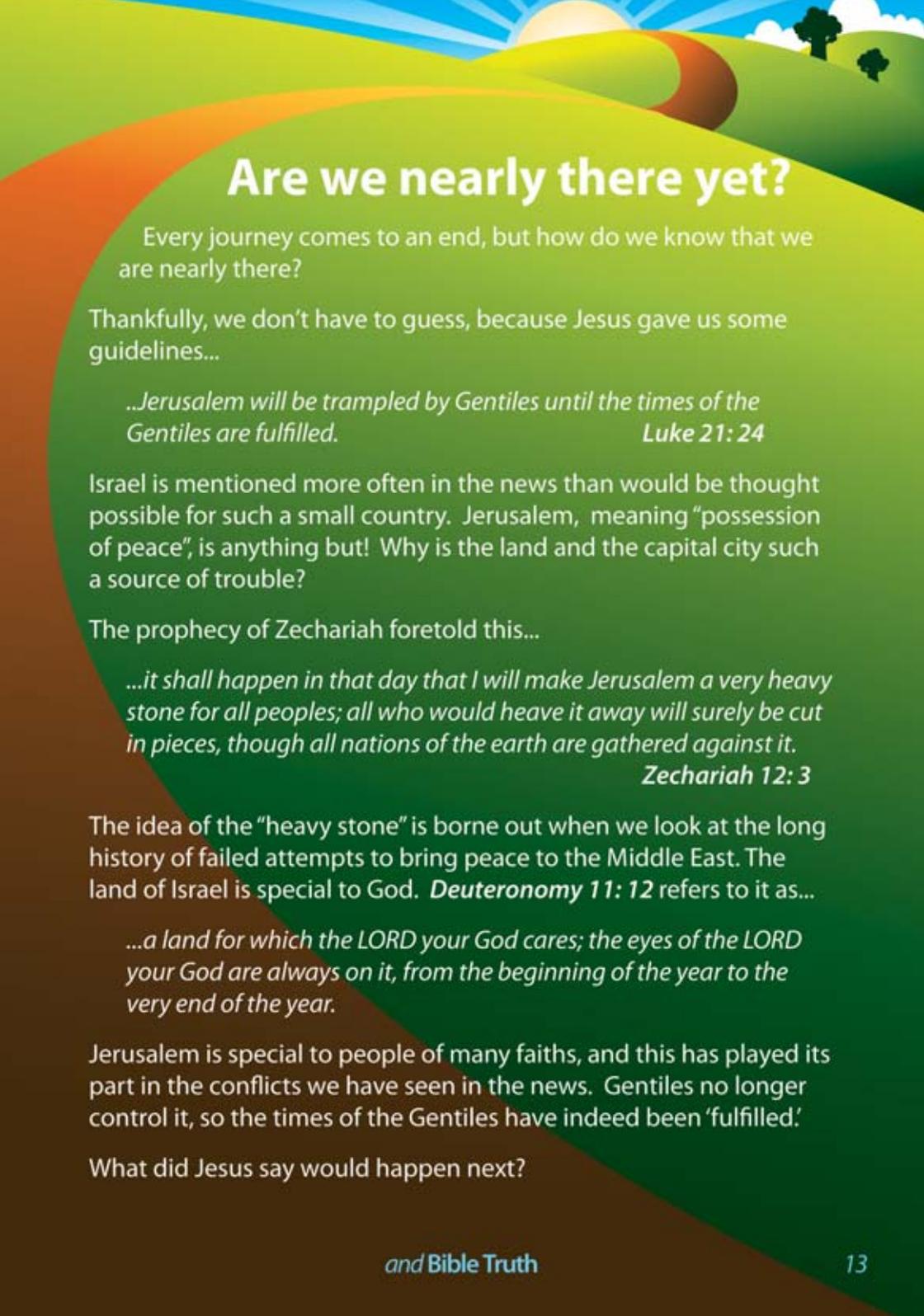
And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. **Revelation 21:4**

The ultimate objective of God's Kingdom is the eradication of death. Death exists because it is the end result of sin. This means that in the process of time sin – disobedience to God – will no longer be a factor in human behaviour.

For he must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. **1 Corinthians 15: 25-26**

The fundamental goal of God's purpose revealed in the Bible is that Jesus, as King, will oversee this process helped by his faithful followers. This is what the Kingdom of God is all about.

This life, today, is the time to decide whether you wish to be there...



Are we nearly there yet?

Every journey comes to an end, but how do we know that we are nearly there?

Thankfully, we don't have to guess, because Jesus gave us some guidelines...

..Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

Luke 21: 24

Israel is mentioned more often in the news than would be thought possible for such a small country. Jerusalem, meaning "possession of peace", is anything but! Why is the land and the capital city such a source of trouble?

The prophecy of Zechariah foretold this...

...it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it.

Zechariah 12: 3

The idea of the "heavy stone" is borne out when we look at the long history of failed attempts to bring peace to the Middle East. The land of Israel is special to God. *Deuteronomy 11: 12* refers to it as...

...a land for which the LORD your God cares; the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year.

Jerusalem is special to people of many faiths, and this has played its part in the conflicts we have seen in the news. Gentiles no longer control it, so the times of the Gentiles have indeed been 'fulfilled'.

What did Jesus say would happen next?

...there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity... Luke 21: 25

The distress and perplexity are certainly with us now.

...men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

There seems to be more to worry about on this earth than ever before. Climate change, financial troubles, war, famine, the breakdown of society – these things are all happening now.

...Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

This is the destination we are looking for. The world will not always be in its present state because God is going to intervene through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near. Luke 21: 25-28

Jesus knew how bad things were going to be in the time before his return to this earth. He gave this message to encourage anyone who would pay careful attention. The signs he mentioned are there, and he also gave the assurance that they would lead up to a time of great joy, when the world's problems would finally be addressed.

Isaiah 35: 10 gives an amazing picture of the end of the journey.

And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

the
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Pavel Kravař and the search for Bible Truth

This is a story of two men, from the same small town who, 600 years apart, would embark on personal journeys in search of Biblical hope and truth. At a time when we are being told 'times are hard', it is humbling to read of the spiritual journey both men would experience.

Alfons Jochim was born in 1920 in Kravař, in the province of Silesia, in the Czech Republic. His ancestors were Swedish Jews who had migrated some 300 years earlier, but he was encouraged to hide his Jewish connections and was schooled under the established Christian Church.

He always remembered how at school they were taught about Pavel Kravař (Paul Craw) the only local to have become internationally famous. Pavel was born in 1390 and was obviously an extremely gifted young man. He graduated in Arts from the University of Paris, and as a doctor of Medicine at Europe's foremost medical school in Montpellier, France.

Back Home

He returned to his homeland and in 1416 was appointed a professor at the Charles University of Prague (one of the five leading centres of higher learning in Europe at this time) where he lectured in both medicine and biblical theory. Alfons' tutors had always taught that Pavel was a misguided heretic who was rightly burned at the stake for daring to challenge the teachings of the established church.

Alfons chose not to accept this and learned as much as he could about Pavel, his life and his faith. The more Alfons learned of this infamous citizen of his town, the more impressed he became.

Pavel was influenced by the faith proclaimed by Petr Chelčický (pronounced Kel-chitzky) and the Czech brethren who followed him. Petr was only two years older than Pavel, but had remained all his days in his native village of Chelčice (Kel-chitz), helping and leading a group of people who were seeking Bible truth. According to Czech sources:

What Petr Chelčický did was to guide and lead a group of Bible believers, totally separate from the established church. Their faith and way of life was based upon the Bible and a deliberate effort was made to base their doctrine and practice on that of the first century apostles (as described in the gospels and letters of the New Testament).

Pavel's Search

Alfons became fascinated by Pavel's search for Bible truth. He discovered that Pavel had become close friends with a colleague at the University of Prague, Peter Payne, who had studied at Oxford University. There he had been tutored by the Bible translator John Wycliffe, whose followers were first known as the Poor Preachers.

In 1432 a professorial vacancy came up at the new University of St Andrews in Scotland, founded in 1411, and Payne encouraged Pavel to apply. An impressive Curriculum Vitae and glowing letters of recommenda-

tion were sent and the senate of St Andrews University unanimously appointed him as professor.

Arrested

It seems that the Senate didn't probe his religious beliefs very carefully, for before long it was clear that Pavel was not favoured by his employers. Unfortunately for Pavel's career at St Andrews, the Rector of the University was Lawrence Lindores, who also doubled as head of the Inquisition in Scotland. Lindores was described as "a dreaded ecclesiastic who gave heretics no peace anywhere in the Kingdom [of Scotland]".

In the space of one day, 23 July 1433, he was arrested, accused, convicted, condemned and executed. The professors of theology sought to correct him in the errors of his ways but were unsuccessful. Despite being found *'fluent and skilled in divinity*



St Andrews Cathedral, Scotland, where Pavel Kravař gave his "good confession" before hundreds of witnesses.

and in biblical argument'. he was deemed *'an obstinate heretic'* to be *'burned at the stake'*.

And what did Pavel so *'obstinately'* defend? Some of the things he believed, and for which he died, can be read at the foot of this page.

Martyred!

What happened to Pavel is an indication of how much things have changed. In the 15th century, as Raymond Lamont-Brown (historian of St Andrews) reports:

"The trials [of heretics] were looked upon as social occasions, and within the cathedral, probably before the chancel screen, the clergy sat in a specially erected wooden grandstand; alongside was a pulpit for the red-hooded accuser, and the accused person spoke from a rostrum. The ordinary folk filled the nave to hear the proceedings.

Pavel Kravař's Confession

"I believe that there is one God, who is a Spirit, and the Creator of all things, who is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Him I love as the author of all good, and fear Him as the discerner of my heart. I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the true manifestation of the Father, my Mediator and my Advocate, and that there is no other name under heaven given unto men, whereby I may be saved. I believe that Christ is the only Way, Truth, Peace, Righteousness, Shepherd, Sacrifice and High Priest, who died for the salvation of those who believe and raised from death for their justification. I maintain that there is no other mediator with God the Father than Jesus Christ. As regards the Virgin Mary, I hold that she was holy, humble and full of grace. I believe that she and all other saints wait as I do for the resurrection of the body in the day of judgement. I have never confessed that there are any other sacraments than the baptism of believers and the Supper. I am awaiting the arrival of God's Kingdom on earth. I consider that Scripture alone should be the guide to true doctrine and practice."

The record of his trial indicates that he was then tortured to extract a recantation, but when this failed, he was sentenced "as an obstinate heretic" to be "burned to ashes". A brass ball was stuffed in his mouth so that he could not preach or defend himself while he was being burned.

Alfons Jochim

With all of this in his mind, Alfons was considering what he should do with regards to his faith and his life, but he was cut short by the start of the Second World War. For a man of Jewish ancestry the war was an extremely difficult time for Alfons.

Towards the end of the war he was taken as a prisoner of war to England where he worked on a farm near Worcester. After the war he stayed on and worked a while longer in Worcester before moving to London and taking up his old trade as a butcher. It was while he was working in Harrods of London that he started discussing religion with a co-worker named Cecil Burton, who was a Christadelphian.

Alfons was astonished as he talked with Cecil for he seemed to share the beliefs of Pavel Kravař. Could it be that Pavel's faith had somehow lived on 600 years after his death? Alfons' old hero in far away Silesia had not died in vain.

Pavel Kravař and his fellow Czech brethren insisted that the brother-



Mercat Cross, St Andrews, Scotland – where Pavel Kravař was burned at the stake for basing his faith on the word of God and "the Apostle's Doctrine".

hood of God's true Israel of the Spirit would be identified by two manifest features:

'I have never confessed that there are any other sacraments than Baptism of believers and the Supper'.

Here at the Christadelphian meetings Alfons saw believers rejoicing in a Bible truth that was firmly based upon the baptism of believing adults and the sharing of the Lord's Supper of bread and wine.

Baptised

So, it was in a suburb of London that Alfons was baptised into Jesus Christ. There he met his wife Edith, also a refugee of the 2nd World War who had been adopted by a Christadelphian family in Coventry. She had moved to London to train as a teacher.

"My story" writes Alfons, "is an illustration of Jesus' words: 'Seek and ye shall find'. When the trumpet of God shall sound, and the dead will be raised, and all the faithful will be invited to the marriage supper of the lamb, I believe I will have a chance to thank Pavel Kravař for first inspiring me to search for Bible truth."

Alfons Jochim now sleeps in Christ awaiting the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth.

Written, with assistance from Pavel Vyšný of the University of St Andrews, by Alan Eyre, visiting research fellow at the University of St Andrews and Andreas Jochim.

Fishers of Men

Jesus often taught in parables – stories about everyday things that his listeners would have been familiar with, but always with a spiritual meaning. He talked about farmers sowing seed in their fields (the spreading of the Gospel) and about shepherds tending their sheep (Jesus leading his followers). And because it was an important part of Israel's economy at that time – some of his disciples were fishermen – Jesus also talked about fishing.

The Master Fisherman

It soon became apparent to those who listened that Jesus was no ordinary man. He had astonishing power, given to him by his Father in heaven. When he first met the apostle Peter, Jesus guided him and his partners, miraculously, to a catch of fish that had eluded them the whole night. It became clear that, from that day on, fishing was not going to be Peter's primary concern. Calling him to follow, Jesus said to Simon (Peter): *"Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men"* (Luke 5:10).

Although they didn't immediately understand, Simon Peter and the other disciples Jesus called learned about the gospel – the good news of the Kingdom of God which Jesus taught. After Jesus was crucified, God raised him from the dead and he revealed himself once more to his faithful followers. It then became clear to them what they had been prepared for: they were to continue the work of Jesus,

preaching the good news about their risen Lord and the Kingdom of God.

When we look closer at the teaching of Jesus we notice that the foundation of what he taught was based in the Old Testament. It may well be that when Jesus first spoke to Peter that he had an Old Testament prophet in mind. In chapter 16 of the book of Jeremiah we are told that at some time in the future there will be an event that will eclipse the Exodus, when God miraculously rescued His people from the land of Egypt. Jeremiah speaks of a time when the God of Israel will recover His scattered people from every corner of the earth and bring them back to their promised homeland:



Painting by James More Horsburgh, a lifelong fisherman from Pitenweem, Fife, Scotland.

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"They will say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.' For I will restore them to the land I gave to their forefathers. 'But now

I will send for many fishermen,' declares the LORD, 'and they will catch them.'" (Jeremiah 16:15-16).

The Gospel Net

So it was always in the mind of God that there would be *'fishers of men'*, people who were casting the teaching of the gospel far and wide. After Jesus had ascended to heaven the apostles continued his work, teaching about his Return and the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth. Many of the follow-

ers at the time of Jesus hoped that he had come to save them from the cruelty of the Romans who then occupied their land. It was the job of Peter and the other apostles to explain that Jesus was not a 'short term fix' for the suffering of that time. He had come to save the earth from the oppression of Sin for all time, by giving his own sinless life as a sacrifice. It was up to them, as it is now up to us, to live a dedicated life: one that is no longer self-centred, but God-centred.

But it wasn't only the apostles who would be fishing for men. There are many lures and baits in life awaiting the unwary. A wise man once said:

"Man also does not know his time: like fish taken in a cruel net, like birds caught in a snare, so the sons of men are snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them" (Ecclesiastes 9:12).

The major obstacle we have to face in life, the one thing that stops us being obedient to God, is ourselves. We are naturally attracted to the things of this world. As Paul McKenna once said: *"Our world is designed for us to notice what we do not have"* (BBC Radio 5Live – 11th September 2007). And someone else observed that: *"Financial stability and happiness are common, acceptable goals in our modern world; but the Bible demands that we 'seek first the Kingdom of God' (Matthew 6:33)".*

Lifeline

A key lifeline for us is constant atten-

tion to this amazing guide book that we know as the Bible and the example of the Lord Jesus who embodied its message. For many years the lifeboats of the British Isles have been a lifeline for many thousands of fishermen and sailors. It's interesting to note that before the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) was so named, for the first 30 years of its existence (from 1824) it was known as *The National Institution for the Preservation of Life.*



'The Kingdom of Fife' – One of two lifeboats in the East Neuk town of Anstruther, Fife, Scotland.

If there is one clear message from the pages of the Bible it is that Jesus Christ IS an institution for the preservation of life, even to the giving of his own life. The amazing reality of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was that he

gave his life for us before we knew we needed saving, before we were even born. He also gave his life knowing that many would reject his sacrifice, for he once told this parable:

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. So it will be at the end of the age" (Matthew 13:47-49).

We have an opportunity now to read God's Word and, like those fishermen of long ago, we can accept the lifeline that it throws in our direction.

I wonder if lifeboats are ever turned away by sailors in distress.

Jon Gill

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