

Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1509



Taking Hard Decisions – page 3
Can We Save the Planet? – page 5
Is God a Delusion? – page 7

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OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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A monthly magazine published by the Christadelphians (brothers and sisters in Christ) and available throughout the world.

Its objectives are – to encourage the study of the Bible as God's inspired message to mankind; 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

Taking Hard Decisions ...3

Can We Save the Planet? 5

Is God a Delusion?7

The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus10

Abraham, Isaac and the Place12

The Powerful Creator ...14

What God Has Promised15

Rules for Daily Life17

Are We Good or Bad?18

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Taking Hard Decisions

192 countries attended the U.N. Copenhagen Summit in December to discuss climate change and to devise a plan of action that could save the planet from the effects of global warming.

For two weeks delegates debated what should be done and how an agreement could be framed, enforced and monitored. The result was deadlock.

Earlier it had appeared that an agreement looked likely, so key world leaders decided to attend for the signing ceremony, including Barack Obama and Wen Jiabao, the Chinese premier. But there was no agreement when they arrived and they found themselves heavily involved in trying to salvage something from the failed conference. The outcome has been described as “a meaningful agreement”, which is not legally binding, nor will it be followed up with on the ground monitoring. No country was said to be entirely satisfied with it, but it was regarded as “an important first step”.

Frustration

Whilst there was an agreement to cut carbon emissions to some extent, everybody agreed that this was a weak deal, but that it was the best which could be negotiated given all the circumstances. Environmental pressure groups like *Friends of the Earth* and *Greenpeace* were quick to accuse world leaders of a lack of moral fibre and of a failure to appreciate the dangers facing the planet.

Some of them had dressed up as polar bears and carried placards warning of impending danger. But you have to wonder what the outcome would have been if the polar bears had been properly represented at the Summit. For their plight is widely recognised. As the icecap melts and their habitat disappears, they too could disappear. One day soon polar bears may only exist in captivity.



Great Expectations

Despite the expectations people had, we should not underestimate the difficulties.

In the democratic world, politicians always have to consider the electoral consequences of any decision. And anything they agree to do must be ratified by their government and its various institutions. President Obama, for example, will have to obtain the approval of the Senate before any agreement can become part of official U.S. policy. And that agreement might not be forthcoming, for the U.S. has a history of being slow to act on carbon emissions, partly for economic reasons.

In the developing world, a huge cut in carbon emissions would threaten their standard of living and damage their present economic growth. Many of the consumer goods demanded by the developed world are now being manufactured in the Far East; so it is unrealistic to expect them to cut back on emissions and still be able to

supply those goods at the low prices that consumers have come to expect.

Nations which would be most affected by rising sea levels – the low-lying countries – are understandably most concerned about the problem. They wanted massive cuts, simply to save their countries from flooding, or even disappearing. They come nearest of all to delegates who could have effectively argued the case for the polar bears!

Reasons, reasons...

You may find yourself losing patience with all these explanations and might think that when urgent action is needed people should put such limitations aside. But wait a minute. Aren't there times in your life when you have a difficult decision to make, but you can't bring yourself to make it? Do you find yourself putting off something until tomorrow that would be best done today? Do you leave the hard issues for later consideration, and deal with the easy ones first?

Jesus was once asked by his disciples about the number of people who would respond to the invitation to follow him. "Lord", said his disciples, "*are there few who are saved?*" and Jesus answered: "*Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able*" (Luke 13:24). Notice that the answer is really a challenge. It is as though Jesus was saying, 'The gate is narrow and to enter it you have to strive, and not everyone will be able to enter'. Elsewhere Jesus confirms that only few will be saved (Matthew 7:14); but the emphasis in Luke's record is upon the need to want what God has to offer, and to want

it really badly.

Help Now!

If it could only articulate its needs, the polar bear on the ice floe would doubtless say 'I need a stable environment, seals to eat, and somewhere safe for me and my family'. For it must be obvious to it that something serious is going wrong with life and its living conditions: something that threatens its very existence. And really it's just the same with us, if only we would recognise it. It's not just climate change, or the financial collapse. Our world is going downhill fast and society is in danger as never before. A time of trouble is upon us, just as Jesus said it would be:

"... 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).

That's right! Jesus prophesied that the world would be in a dreadful state on the eve of his return and that he would then return to rescue the inhabitants of the world. When there is no

other way out, Jesus will come to save all those who have taken the hard decision now to become his followers and to live according to his law. So don't lament the failure of the nations to take hard decisions. Face up to the one you have to make. The sooner you make it, the better.



Can We Save the Planet?

It is probably fair to say that Global Warming is here to stay. Its impact is being experienced practically world-wide and scientists are generally predicting an average rise in world temperatures over the next 50 years of between 2 and 5 degrees. Why is this so significant? It must be better than being too cold and it's certainly good for holidays!

Greenhouse Temperature

The world is actually finely balanced. Rather like a greenhouse, where the controls allow just enough heat in, you can open the windows when it's too hot and spray the right amount of water to keep the plants healthy. The atmosphere around our planet, which is there to protect us, is now letting in certain types



of harmful rays. The oil based products (fossil fuels) which we have been burning for about 200 years, have created a sort of additional shield which has the effect of bouncing heat back down upon us.

All of this has changed, and is changing, the natural cycle of our rain and seasons, the sea and wind currents. In some instances the weather has been very extreme and has caused massive damage and loss of life. The extra heat is melting polar ice, sending a deluge of fresh water in to the sea which is changing the salt concentrations. That in turn affects all sea life.

Planet in Peril

This is a sign of the times, part of the long-foretold process which is leading up to the return of Jesus. Industrialisation has “stolen” the earth’s natural resources converting them into products for us to use or consume. Large amounts of oil, coal and other minerals have been burnt or changed over the decades. The by-products and waste have been poured back in to the earth or around it, polluting our planet. The world’s governments have finally realised this, and say they understand, but seem impotent to act decisively and with enough co-ordinated speed to slow the trend. Reversal is out of reach and impossible. *Greenpeace* is an organisation which is committed to publishing the problem as they see it and they are trying to get something done about it. This is their assessment of where we are now:

“We have caused the extinction of many hundreds of species of animals and ransacked the planet for fuel. Now we stand, like brutish infants, gloating over our meteoric rise to ascendancy, poised on the brink of the final mass extinction and destroying this oasis of life in the solar system.”

Some have speculated that by 2050 many parts of the planet may not be able to sustain life. Fresh water supply is the critical element. Water is treated as a low-value product because the profits to be made are very small. Water has no substitutes. It is taken for granted. There is no industrial process to make water or desalinate

sea water fast enough. Water is going to be scarce. People in Africa and Asia know all about this, the developed nations will soon. So the next time you turn on the tap or let the water run, or fill a bath, pause for thought, this substance is precious, a blessing from God – proof that He exists and its dwindling is a sign of the time of the end.

Balance Restored

So, what's to be done? Is there a solution? Humanly speaking the outlook is bleak. However, if you think that God is going to allow man to destroy his creation, think again. When God created the world he said in Genesis chapter One that everything was “very good”. He designed our planet capable of sustaining life in perfect balance and has promised a restoration to this state in His promised kingdom.

“Thus says the LORD, who created the heavens, who is God, who formed the earth and made it, who has established it, who did not create it in vain, who formed it to be inhabited” (Isaiah 45:18);

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

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5).

Divine Purpose

These promises were written over 2000 years ago and predict a future which gives us hope for a complete reversal of today's scientific predictions. God has a long-term purpose

with the earth which He created. He intends it to be an everlasting habitation for mankind and has a plan for its restoration and recovery, both physically and morally. When that plan has been completed the people who inhabit the redeemed earth will be fit for purpose. Once, long ago, when God was rescuing His people out of Egypt He made a declaration, despite their unfaithfulness:

“The LORD said: ‘I have pardoned, according to your word; but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD’” (Numbers 14:20,21).

Later He repeated that promise through one of His prophets:

“The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14).

While, in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, this prophetic forecast is made:

“The nations were angry, and your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that you should reward your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth” (Revelation 11:18).

God will create a “new heavens and a new earth” (Isaiah 65:17; 2 Peter 3:13), one in which everything will be for the best. So God's plan for the earth should fill us with hope instead of doom and gloom. There is something we can do about the global crisis. We can prepare for God's coming kingdom and be ready for the transformation that will then occur.

David Bilton

Is God a Delusion?

Since the publication of *“The God Delusion”* by Richard Dawkins in 2006 many people have jumped on the atheist bandwagon to claim that there is no God. Many religious groups and individuals have written responses to the book seeking to disprove Dawkins’ claims. However Dawkins’ views are not new.



Nor are the arguments put forward by many of his critics as robust as they could be. It may appear to the observer that it is a matter of simply deciding which view of the natural world is most plausible. The Christadelphian stance differs substantially from this position. Christadelphians believe that Bible prophecy proves the existence of God. This article presents some of that evidence.

Dawkins Limited Objective

Richard Dawkins’ web site promoting his book provides an outline of what Dawkins seeks to achieve in the book. One point made in the outline is that “He eviscerates (removes) the major arguments for religion and demonstrates the supreme improbability of a supreme being”. It should be noted right from the outset that Dawkins

seeks to show the “improbability” of the existence of “a supreme being”. So even if his arguments are all rigorous and sound, he does not claim to disprove the existence of God. All that he claims he is able to do is to show that the existence of a supreme being is a “supreme improbability”.

This is important because we are not aiming to contrast and oppose Dawkins’ “supreme improbability” with an argument which suggests that it is “highly probable” that there is a supreme being. Rather we will demonstrate that the existence of God is an empirical fact.

It is noteworthy that the advertising campaign in the UK in January 2009 sponsored by atheists only claimed “There’s probably no God” – an acknowledgement that they are not dealing with facts – just opinions.



The Jew is Forever!

The eminent historian – Sir Hugh Trevor Roper, then Professor of Modern History at Oxford, gave a lecture in which he commented on the existence of the state of Israel. Here are some of the things he said:

“geopoliticians could have foreseen the continued colonisation ... of the United States ... but who could have foreseen ... the creation of the State of Israel?”

“We may like it or not ... But we cannot deny that it is an extraordinary historical achievement.

“How little the British statesmen who listened to its early advocates foresaw the present consequences: the replacement of a Jewish National home by a national state ... the consequent transformation of the Middle East ... “The Islamic revolution of our day, ... the development of the State of Israel, is a phenomenon which could have been predicted ... But it never was.”

Unforeseeable!

The substance of his comments is that those who study history did not foresee the coming into existence of the modern-day state of Israel. Further, sociologists throughout the last few hundred years have pondered the marvel of “The Wandering Jew”.

Scattered by the Romans initially in AD 70 and finally in AD 132, they were a people without a homeland and without a leader. They were persecuted wherever they went throughout the world, which would have given them a huge incentive to assimilate and become like their neighbours.

Everything points to the fact that the Jewish people should have lost their identity. In fact, during several of the long persecutions they suffered many did try to assimilate to avoid persecution. Many, but by no means all, succeeded. For Jews continued to exist as a separate and identifiable people, yet their continued existence defies reason. Sociologists have written books about “The Wandering Jew” for that reason. It defies explanation.

These observations are important because the continued existence of the Jew and the return of the Jews to

their ancient homeland were predicted in the Bible – two thousand years and more before the event happened. So that which was beyond the wit of man to foretell has happened exactly as the Bible said it would.

A Brief History of the Jews

The nation of Israel, brought from Egypt, settled in the land of Palestine – the land being renamed Israel. After the reign of King Solomon the nations split into two kingdoms. One in the North called Israel, the one in the South called Judah. The Northern kingdom was eventually taken into captivity by the Assyrians. The Southern kingdom, sometime later, was taken to Babylon by the Babylonians.

After a period of 70 years some of the exiles from the Southern kingdom of Judah returned to the land of Israel at the decree of Cyrus. They remained there for several hundred years until that second occupation was terminated by the Romans. Shortly after the death of Jesus – about 40 years later – the Romans destroyed the temple in Jerusalem and about 60 years later banned Jews from living in Jerusalem.

The consequence of this was that the Jews were scattered all around the world. The Jews survived for almost 2,000 years without a homeland, a leader or a common language. This state of affairs continued until the formation of the State of Israel in 1947.

Against all expectations, the Jewish people maintained their identity for almost 2,000 years. Bible students were not surprised by this, for it was predicted in the Bible. The events were foretold before they happened. We will only consider those events associated with the scattering of the Jews by the Romans up to the formation of the State of Israel.

Before the Event?

The prophet Micah warned:

“Therefore because of you Zion shall be ploughed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the temple like the bare hills of the forest” (Micah 3:12).

This was precisely fulfilled in AD 132 when the Roman Hadrian actually did plough the site of Jerusalem, after he had expelled Jews from the city. It was his way of declaring that Jerusalem would never be occupied again and to commemorate his actions he had a coin struck.



One might have thought that this would be the end of the Jewish people: expelled from their land with no national leader. However the Bible had already predicted that the Jewish people would not cease to be:

“‘For I am with you,’ says the LORD, ‘to save you; though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet I will not make a complete end of you. But I will correct you in justice, and will not let you go altogether unpunished’” (Jeremiah 30:11).

The prophet then foretells a regathering of the Jewish people:

“Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, ‘He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock.’ For the LORD has redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of one stronger than he. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, streaming to the goodness of the LORD” (31:10-12).

In 1903 the British Government who were at that time in control of Uganda in Eastern Africa devised a plan to give the Jews a national home in Uganda. The plan failed as did the many earlier plans to create national homelands for the Jews in other countries. Bible students should have realised that such plans were doomed to failure. The Bible had predicted that they would return to their national homeland – the land of Israel. For example, Ezekiel said:

“‘I will put my Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it, and performed it,’ says the Lord” (37:14).

When in 1947 the State of Israel was declared, God’s promise of a Jewish homecoming had been kept and a new phase of His purpose had begun.

The Jew – Evidence For God

Whilst the Atheist can say no more than ‘God probably does not exist’ those who know what the Bible predicted can say with certainty that the God of the Bible does actually exist. So whenever you hear about Israel, see the flag of Israel, or hear of conflict in the Middle East over the land, you should realise that these things would not even make the news if God did not exist.

Of course this sort of knowledge brings a responsibility. If we know that God exists then we should make sure that we know what He wants us to do with our lives.

Peter Forbes

The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus

Jesus once told a parable about a rich man who took no notice of a beggar outside his gate. The situation was reversed, however, when they both died and Jesus depicted a situation which is very different from what people think will happen after death. Read the parable for yourself in Luke chapter 16, verses 19-31, and then see what **David Budden** has to say about it.

Introduction

Many find difficulties with this parable and certainly it does present problems. However, the following points should be noted:

- ❖ It is the only parable in which Jesus presents a named character.
- ❖ There is an unexpected detail – FIVE brothers! Why five?
- ❖ The parable was for the ears of the Pharisees who were “covetous” (verse 14), and who were deriding Jesus as he spoke about ‘true riches’ and the dangers of covetousness.
- ❖ Jesus DID raise a real Lazarus from the dead; the Pharisees tried to destroy Lazarus because his very existence was a powerful witness to the power and authority of Jesus.

The main thrust of the parable comes in the final verse – if people will not be convinced by God’s revealed Word, then even a resurrection from the dead would make no difference.

The Story

The story is about a rich man and a beggar named Lazarus. The rich man



lived in great luxury but the beggar at his gate – a man he knew by name – was in a pitiful plight, covered with sores which were licked by dogs. Both men died; Lazarus went to “Abraham’s bosom” but the rich man, having been buried, went to “hell” (‘Hades’) where he suffered excruciating pain in flames. There

was a great gulf between the two but nevertheless they could speak to each other and the rich man requested Abraham to send Lazarus to him with some cold water to ease his thirst.

Abraham reminded the man of the former days when he had ignored the suffering of the beggar at his gate but, besides that, the great gulf made it impossible for Lazarus to go to him. The man then remembered his five brothers and requested that Lazarus be sent to warn them of the need for repentance. “They have their Bibles”, replied Abraham. “Yes,” replied the suffering man, “but if one from the dead warned them, they would take notice.” Abraham’s response was: “If they ignore God’s Word, then even a miracle will be to no avail”.

Comments

This parable does not present Jesus' teaching about life beyond the grave. The Bible is emphatic, and Jesus himself taught, that the dead 'sleep' in their graves, totally unconscious until the day of resurrection. (See John 11:11-14, 23-25 and Matthew 22:23-33).

For many years Judea had been part of the Greek empire and Greek thinking, with ideas of immortal souls, had penetrated Jewish thought. The expression "*in the bosom*" signifies a very close relationship – Jesus used the term to express his relationship with his Father (John 1:18). In the upper room, John – the disciple whom Jesus loved - was leaning on Jesus' bosom. So, the righteous were deemed to be "*in Abraham's bosom*", Abraham being the father of the faithful.

Jesus is making a parody of the false beliefs that then existed and thus exposes their absurdities. Will the righteous really be able to watch the wicked writhing in eternal flames? Will they be able to talk together, yet be powerless to help? Of course not! We must remember that Jesus was talking to those evil Pharisees, men who were embracing these ridiculous pagan ideas.

But why is the detail given about the five brothers? Caiaphas was the High Priest at the time and he had five brothers-in-law, all of whom were priests. Those listening would perceive that the parable was first and foremost for Caiaphas' ears. Jesus did, in fact, raise a man named Lazarus from the



dead and because of that miracle many people believed on Jesus (John 11:45). The response of the Pharisees though was rather different; they "*consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death*" (12:10).

Thus the words of Jesus were vindicated. Those who set their faces against the word of God will not be moved even by one rising from the dead.

Conclusion

We are surrounded by the miracles of nature and our television screens enable us to witness marvels of complexity and inter-dependence beyond our comprehension. Are people moved to glorify God and appreciate His infinite power? Not at all! So, just as it was two thousand years ago, those who ignore God's written Word will not be moved whatever evidence they see of a Creator's interest in the earth He has created. Instead they are likely to say that "God probably does not exist". Really!

David Budden

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www.gladtidingsmagazine.org



Abraham, Isaac and the Place

- 1 In Genesis we have the record of the great trial of Abraham's faith, when God told him:

"Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you" (Genesis 22:2).



This was written long before Israel entered the Promised Land, and centuries before Jerusalem became the city of David.

Abraham was told to go to "the land of Moriah" and to a particular place there. The name 'Moriah' means 'Yah (God) appears', and when the angel of the LORD appeared to Abraham, telling him to

spare Isaac, Abraham renamed the place 'Jehovah Jirah'. In the Hebrew text the word 'Jirah' is a variant form of 'Moriah', which accounts for the comment:

"Abraham called the name of the place, The-Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of The LORD it shall be provided" (Genesis 22:14).

The Place

- 2 They set off, says the record, "to the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off" (22:3,4).

Notice the emphasis on "the place". Only the angels of God had met with Adam and Eve in a place that God had provided, but that paradise had long since been lost.

There was, however, a prospect of finding another such place of meeting. When the people of Israel were fleeing from Egypt the promise had been made:

"You will bring them in and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which you have made for your own dwelling, the sanctuary, O LORD, which your hands have established" (Exodus 15:17).

The Same Place

- 3 Centuries later, when God set His face against Israel in the days of David (2 Samuel 24:1), He sent a disease or plague upon Israel. It was stopped, however, at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, where the angel of the LORD appeared to David. David bought the threshing floor and erected an altar there, for it was revealed to him that this should be the site of the temple of the LORD that was to be built in Jerusalem. (24:16-18). Further identification



of this site of the temple links it clearly with Moriah, for we are later told:

“Now Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite” (2 Chronicles 3:1).

In such wonderful ways golden threads run through the Scripture and bind the record together. Solomon’s temple was the place where God dwelt in the midst of His people and it had been on this very spot that Abraham had once offered Isaac.

Forever Lost?

- 4 The temple built by Solomon was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and, although later rebuilt, was finally demolished by the Romans. The ‘Ark of the Covenant’, the symbol of God’s presence, was missing from this second temple. It was not there. We might say that God was no longer seen in the midst of His people after the days of Nebuchadnezzar. The temple, however,

was only a shadow of the ultimate purpose of God. Isaiah the prophet had made this clear:

“Thus says the LORD: ‘Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool. Where is the house that you will build me? And where is the place of my rest? For all those things my hand has made, and all those things exist,’ says the LORD. ‘But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at my word’” (Isaiah 66:1,2 and Acts 7:47-50).

- 5 The words of Isaiah 66 point us to the truth of the matter. God looks to the person who is of a poor and contrite spirit, who trembles at His word. God does not want to dwell in a literal, physical house, but a spiritual house comprised of men and women who pay careful attention to what He has to say to them. The New Testament takes up this very theme, when the apostle Paul asks:

“What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be my people’” (2 Corinthians 6:16; see also Lev. 26:12 & 13).

Later he adds:

“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple

in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:19-22).

God will ultimately be manifested (or seen) in a multitude of redeemed ones who, reflecting God’s character, will constitute the household of God.

- ⑥ A word is necessary, however, about the literal temple that is to be rebuilt in the Kingdom of God. During the Millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ, the 1000 years when he will reign on earth – there will be mortal nations, of whom Israel will be foremost, enjoying the blessings he will bring. As in the past, the temple will play an important part in their worship.

When the Lord Jesus cleansed the temple at the end of his ministry, he said:

“Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it a ‘den of thieves’” (Mark 11:17).

Those words remain a prophecy, for Solomon’s temple was never a house of prayer for all nations (see Isaiah 56:7). But Isaiah foresaw the time when that would be true for, speaking of that future day, he wrote:

“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 shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; he will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:2,3).

What a day that will be to look forward to and what blessings will then be experienced at the place that God has chosen.

Dudley Fifield

The Powerful Creator

We tend to make God in our image
And mould Him in the likeness of men;
The Powerful Creator of all that we see –
We should tremble – and then think again.

His Word shows us how we should serve Him
With reverence and awe of His might;
The God of the universe is far above all,
The nations just dust in His sight.

God wants to make us in His image,
Moulding us to His likeness sublime,
To be part of His Glory when Christ rules on earth
And reflecting His nature divine.



Colleen Simons

What God Has Promised

There are a lot of important promises in the Bible and in this article we intend to look at just some of them. But first we should remember that there are two sorts of promise: conditional and unconditional.

Conditions?

A mother might say to her little son ‘Tommy, if you eat up your cabbage then you can have some ice cream.’ This is a conditional promise dependent on whether Tommy eats his cabbage. Conversely, Mother might say ‘Tommy, as it’s a nice day we will go swimming this afternoon.’ This is an unconditional promise and expresses a firm intention to go swimming.

This distinction may not always be as simple as it seems but it is a useful distinction and, in the Bible, we find that God makes both conditional and unconditional promises.

Let’s look at two key New Testament passages, which tell of God’s promises.

“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires” (2 Peter 1:4).

Notice that the promises are described in superlative terms – they are ‘very great and precious’ and moreover they promise eternal life – participation ‘in the divine nature’ – as opposed to our natural mortal nature that is subject to eternal death.

All Through Jesus

The second New Testament passage we want to look at is this:

“For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ” (2 Corinthians 1:20).

The language may seem to us a bit strange but the meaning is very clear - ALL God’s promises find their fulfillment in and through Jesus. That means that God’s promises to people like Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham and David are all fulfilled in Jesus. This requires a bit of careful investigation, if you are not already familiar with those promises, so we will look at them one by one.

To Adam & Eve

The first of the great promises of God is unconditional and comes very early in the Bible – in fact in Genesis chapter 3 verse 15. Here it is, spoken to the serpent:

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel”.

These words were fulfilled in Jesus who was in a very special way the offspring of a woman (Mary) but had no human father. He was to receive a non-fatal wound (for a wound in the heel is non-fatal) but would in turn



deliver a fatal wound to the offspring of the serpent (representing sin and all opposition to God). The Lord Jesus, the offspring of the woman, did indeed receive wounds and was cruelly put to death, but his wounding was not fatal. For God raised him from the dead to eternal life on the third day.

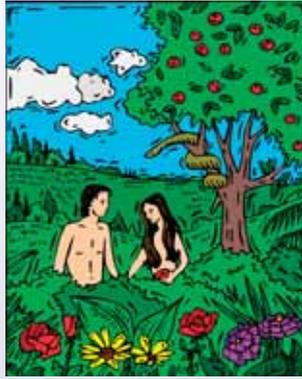
Through Jesus (the only sinless man) the power of sin and all opposition to God was broken (fatally wounded) and in God's own time all opposition to God and Jesus will be completely eliminated. If we think about it, it is a wonderful promise of hope, for the man and woman had sinned and were (and we in turn all are) subject to toil and death and yet so early in the Scriptures there is this absolute assurance that the power of sin and death would be completely broken.

To Noah

A little further on in the Bible account we come to the next promise:

"Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done. As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease" (Genesis 8:21,22).

In this passage we read that, after the great flood, God promised that the earth would never again be completely inundated with water. This is another great unconditional promise that the earth will remain inhabitable – and a great comfort to us when from time to time scientists forecast great natural



calamities which will come on the earth.

To Abraham

Perhaps the most important of all God's promises are those made to Abraham (later confirmed to his son Isaac and to his grandson Jacob). Please read Genesis chapter 12 verses 1 to 4. God made this promise on the condition that Abraham (1) left the land of his birth (2) his people and (3) his own family. Abraham did all these by leaving first Ur of the Chaldees, then his father, and finally his own people (in Haran in Syria) and finally leaving his close family (Lot his nephew).

Because of this the components of the promise are sure to be fulfilled. God promised that His descendants would become a great nation and this has already been fulfilled, for the Jewish and Arab nations are all descendants of Abraham. God also promised that all people on the earth would be blessed through Abraham. Has this been fulfilled? It has!

Jesus is a descendant of Abraham and through Jesus we can receive the forgiveness of sins and the sure hope of eternal life. That is why the very first verse of the New Testament begins with the statement: "A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1).

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To David

That verse mentions King David as well as Abraham. David was king in Jerusalem about 1000 B.C. and was a faithful servant of God. In 2 Samuel chapter 7 vs. 12-16 we have the

record of a great promise made by God to David, concerning a descendant of his who would reign as king for ever on the throne of David which was, of course, in Jerusalem.

The descendant referred to is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. This is made clear in the words spoken to Mary (in Luke chapter 1 vs. 30-33). The angel told her that her son would be great and that God:

“will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; his kingdom will never end”.

This promise has not yet been fulfilled but Jesus was raised from the dead and is God’s anointed king. In



due time (and we believe that will be soon) he will return from heaven to rule over the whole earth from Jerusalem, just as God has promised.

“For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ” (2 Corinthians 1:20).

These are the things that God has promised and in His grace God offers to each of us a share in His promises and eternal life in His kingdom – in and through Jesus.

David Godfrey

All Quotations from the NIV

Rules for Daily Life

Commence the day with God
And speak to Him in prayer,
Ask for His blessing on the way,
And He your life will share.

Open His wondrous Word
And read it every day;
For priceless wisdom is therein
A Light for all your way.

With God go through the day,
For He is at your side,
At home, abroad, in solitude,
Or on the ocean wide.

When daily work is o'er
And sunset gilds the sky,
Think on the marvels of His power
And praise the Lord Most High.

Conclude the day with thanks,
To Him who will you keep
From harm and danger in the night
Whilst you shall sweetly sleep.



Charles H French

Are We Good or Bad?

“We’re all basically good, aren’t we? It’s only the odd 10% of people who seem determined to spoil it for us others, by their anti-social behaviour.”

This was John’s opinion after we had been discussing the problems of drug-taking, binge-drinking, violence and vandalism, prevalent in western society today. The implication was quite clear: *“Once we find a way of reforming this minority the world will be a good place to live in”.*

Tom was vociferous in his opinion of how this reform could be achieved:

“Corporal Punishment,” he said. *“We should take a leaf out of the law book of some Arab states. If a man is found stealing, cut off his hand!”*

John was not quite so sure that such drastic measures should be used.

“It’s lack of parental correction and guidance that accounts for all this loutish behaviour,” he claimed. *“Without the discipline of caring parents children soon develop into delinquents and law-breaking teenagers.”*

Both Tom and John were quick to recognise that some restraining measures are needed in rearing the young; but they couldn’t agree on a satisfactory answer to the problem. Neither shall we, unless we turn to the Bible and find out God’s view of men and women.

What does God think?

God created us and understands our nature better than we do ourselves.

Take a look at a few verses to find out what God thinks of us. But be prepared: it may not be what you hope to hear.

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings” (Jeremiah 17:9,10).

“The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good. The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one” (Psalm 14:1-3 and Romans 3:10).

What does Jesus say?

What did the Lord Jesus think of humans? As you would expect, his views were perfectly in accord with Old Testament teaching. He once said:

“From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man” (Mark 7.21-23).

What a depressing picture, you may think. God and His Son, the Lord

Jesus, certainly see us as flawed creatures – not as basically good. But that is not the end of the story. The amazing message of the Bible is that God wants to rescue us from our present condition. That was His intention when He sent His Son into the world. This is the meaning of the most famous verse in the Bible:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

There is Hope

Not one of us is naturally good, but we can be made righteous in God’s eyes if we believe in the saving life and sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have the ability to distinguish between good and bad, which means that we can make choices in life. Christians must try to model their behaviour on that of the Lord Jesus Christ – the only perfect man who has ever lived.

But we must recognise that we are incapable of living perfect lives now. We know the Apostle Paul dedicated his whole life to spreading the good news of the risen Lord but even he was in despair because of his inability to do right always. He wrote of himself to the believers at Rome:

“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practise. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God

according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Romans 7:18-25).

Only God can do it

Paul realised that God alone can deliver us from our sinning, natural state. Only when our flawed nature has been changed to the perfection of immortality can we hope to be made perfect. But that is a real and vital prospect, and it is the key to victory over sin and access to the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ. No wonder Paul could also write these wonderfully triumphant words:

“Behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’ The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:51-57).

Marian Buckler

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