

# Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1526



***Are you Active or Passive? – page 3***

***Commissioning the King James Bible – page 5***

***You Are what you Eat – page 15***

# Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

127th Year

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1526



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 men; to call attention to the Divine offer of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ; and to warn men and women that soon Christ will return to Earth as judge and ruler of God's world-wide Kingdom.

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## 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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# Are you Active or Passive?

**In every aspect of life you have to decide whether you are going to participate or just be a bystander.**

Were you to visit the ski resort of Seefeld, in the Innsbruck region of Austria – featured on this month’s front cover – you might be presented with an interesting choice. Would you like a set of skis and, if necessary, skiing lessons? Or would you prefer a deckchair, to sit comfortably in the sunshine, while you watch other people ski?

## **Thinking it through**

Skiing is not a compulsory pastime, but something that people do for pleasure, so the choice you make would depend upon a lot of things. If you are physically unable to ski, lack the necessary sense of balance, or are afraid of hurting yourself, which you think would be quite likely to happen – then a deckchair is the obvious choice. If you have skied successfully before and enjoyed it, or if you like to try out new things, to see if you can do them or not – then the skis are for you!

We have to make that sort of choice all the time in one way or another: deciding whether to become actively involved in something or just watching other people doing things we would rather not do, or just can’t manage ourselves. Sometimes the choice is easy. When deciding what work we should do in life we have to find out what we’re good at, and what we can’t really manage. That’s a process that begins at school and which progresses

as we try out skills that we hope to acquire or develop. We might want to do highly skilled work, but we will only succeed if we have the aptitude and ability. But sometimes the choice is much harder and what we do might depend on the amount of effort and commitment we show in trying to master something. Employers often care more about attitude than about aptitude.

## **Case Study**

The Bible is a resource which can help us in this respect, for it records and analyses the life stories of many people who have faced huge challenges. Some of those people were very gifted individuals, like King David. He was a young man who had already proved himself to be adept at shepherding, including fighting off wild animals to protect his flock. Later it turned out that he was able to play the harp as well as anyone else in Israel; was brave enough to fight a Philistine champion and defeat him; commanded the respect of the fighting men that he later captained; was very attractive to women; turned out to be a clever fugitive when the need arose; and in later life became an outstanding King.

You might think that some people have it all but when temptation came he too had his weak points and made a mess of some aspects of his life. At a time when he should have done nothing – when he saw Bathsheba bathing on a nearby rooftop – he acted improperly and suffered the consequences for the rest of his life (see 2 Samuel, chapter 11).

## Timid young man

Timothy was a young man born with far fewer natural talents than King David. He was someone who needed a lot of encouragement and reassurance. Fortunately his mother and his grandmother were believers and taught him well and somehow he found the courage to join the apostle Paul on his second missionary journey, and then to become his lifelong companion and helper. Paul called him:

*...our brother and minister of God, and our fellow labourer in the gospel of Christ (1 Thessalonians 3:2).*

Later he said of this young man:

*I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state (Philippians 2:19–20).*

Timothy might have remained an observer when the apostle visited his home town. He could just have listened to him and profited from what he had to say. But he got so much more out of life by getting involved, uncertain and lacking in self-confidence as he evidently was. Because he did so, part of his life experience is recorded in the Word of God, and there can be no greater honour than that.

## Active Involvement

One of God's prophets once painted a picture of a world that had fallen apart. He saw a world characterised by violence, injustice, untruth, evil and iniquity and he looked for someone who could put it right and there was nobody who could sort it all out. But then he looked again:

*Then the Lord saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore His own arm brought salvation for*

*Him; and His own righteousness, it sustained Him (Isaiah 59:15–16).*

The prophet Isaiah was explaining that Almighty God is not a passive observer of humanity, but someone who is actively involved in working out a plan of redemption, to deliver men and women from all the wrong things that now happen in life. God acted to save humanity by sending His Son and Jesus actively cooperated with his Father in this rescue plan. He willingly laid down his life for us and never once sat back and let things happen. His was a life of active service with his Father. As he once said to his accusers:

*“My Father has been working until now, and I have been working” (John 5:17).*

## Active or Passive?

Long ago Moses put a choice before Israel. They had to choose whether they would like to live or die: it was that serious. He urged them to choose life (Deuteronomy 30:19), but they had to make the choice. Now we have that decision to make, for God offers salvation to everybody who wants it and who is prepared to act accordingly.

If we want to live forever in a perfect world with the Lord Jesus Christ, we have to find out what the Bible really teaches, believe it, and be baptised into his saving name. “Glad Tidings” can help you to work out what the Bible teaches. But you need to take the necessary action if you are to be more than an onlooker at the coming of Jesus when he returns from heaven to set up God's kingdom on earth.

**Editor**

# Commissioning the King James Bible

When King Henry VIII died, he left the following legacy.

- England had broken its ties with the Papal power of Rome, and
- New Bibles were authorised or met with royal approval so that the common people had access to reading the Word of God.

## Who Next?

The order of succession to the English throne was bound to be a bit confusing as Henry had six wives, some Catholic and some Protestant.

- First in line was his son Edward, son of Jane Seymour.
- Next came Mary, daughter of the Catholic Catherine of Aragon, followed by
- Elizabeth, daughter of Anne Boleyn, known for her Protestant sympathies.

### ❖ King Edward VI

Henry died on 27 January 1547 and was succeeded by his very young son, Edward VI. Edward was the first English King to have been raised in a Protestant court. He reigned for only six years and died in 1553 at the age of 15. During his short life he continued the course of reforms set in motion by his father, being influenced by Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury,

### ❖ Queen Mary I

On Edward's death in 1553, Queen Mary I came to the throne. Being a



Queen Mary I – A Catholic Queen

Catholic, she was determined to restore papal authority, so she unleashed a reign of terror upon protestant England to try to achieve that objective. During her reign she executed over 300 people from all classes of society including, housewives, labourers, artisans, professional people, one Archbishop (Thomas Cranmer) and several Bishops, including John Hooper (1555). She also burnt reformers, Latimer and Ridley in Oxford and John Rogers (editor of Matthew's Bible), in Smithfield. In Oxford there is a Martyrs' Monument that bears witness to the cruelty she exercised on her subjects because they possessed or read the Bible.

Within one month of her accession to the English throne, Mary banned the reading of all Bibles in English Churches and reinstated the Latin Mass. She also destroyed many copies of the

1553 Great Bible. Nevertheless, one English edition of the New Testament was published during her reign. The Whittingham New Testament, based largely on the work of Tyndale, was printed in Geneva in 1557.

It had a special feature that we see today in the King James Bible. Italics were introduced for words that are not found in the Greek manuscripts. This practice was also used in the Geneva Bible (1560) for both Old and New Testaments. This simple device enables the reader to easily see which words have been added to complete the sense in English.

### ❖ **Queen Elizabeth I**

After a reign of only 5 years Queen Mary became terminally ill and died, at the age of just 42. She was succeeded by her half-sister, Queen Elizabeth I, on 14 January 1559. This brought a sense of great relief among the exiled Protestant community who were now free to return from the continent. They became known as “Puritans” because they had been influenced by a continental Protestantism which was considered purer than English Protestantism.

Elizabeth now became Supreme Head of a divided church. On the one hand there were the Bishops who controlled the Church and retained many of the vestiges of Catholic ceremony in Church worship. On the other, there was an increasing number of Puritans who challenged the Bishops’ power over the Church and promoted the use of the Geneva Bible. They wasted no time.

On the way to her coronation Queen Elizabeth was presented with a manuscript copy of the four Gospels in Wycliffe’s version. The 1560 Edition of the Geneva Bible was dedicated to Queen Elizabeth I. Despite official

opposition, the Geneva Bible was widely read in both the Elizabethan and Jacobean era. In October 1568 the Bishops responded and presented Queen Elizabeth with a copy of the Bishop’s Bible.

### ❖ **James I**

Queen Elizabeth died on 24 March 1603 and left no heir to the throne. The next in the family line with a claim to the throne was James VI of Scotland, son of Queen Mary I, who was herself the granddaughter of Margaret Tudor, sister of Henry VIII. James VI of Scotland came to the English throne as James I of England. He was christened a Catholic but due to the changing religious scene in Scotland was committed to a Protestant and academic education.

In 1603, James was met on his journey south from Scotland to London, by a Puritan lobby group. They presented the “Millenary Petition” signed by over 1000 churchmen demanding reforms in rites and ceremonies perpetuated in church



*King James I of England*

services. These included the practice of making the sign of the cross at baptism and wearing of clerical dress for which there is no Biblical basis.

The Puritans, it seemed, had taken the initiative and wrong footed the Bishops who were alarmed by these developments. The Puritans argued correctly, that understanding the teaching of Scripture was more important than observing church traditions and the authority of the clergy.

The Apostle Paul encouraged the young man Timothy not to lose sight of the most important priorities in life, when he wrote:

*... from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness ... (2 Timothy 3:15–16).*

## **Hampton Court Conference**

On 24th October 1603 King James sent a letter giving notice of a three day conference he was to convene in January 1604. The conference was to be attended by the King, the Privy Council, bishops and other learned men. The Bishop of London, Richard Bancroft, played a pivotal role in the conference. He worked subtly to influence the King and sought to persuade him that the Puritans were in the same camp as the Papists.

Both, he argued, wanted to challenge the authority and divine right of kings. Bancroft argued that the King's best interests were therefore safe with the Bishops. James believed his royal authority was dependent on the Bishops, if "no bishops, no King". The

Bible teaches us to respect rulers: they are dependent on God. He sets up rulers and removes them according to His purpose with the nations. The apostle Paul told Timothy:

*I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour ... (1 Timothy 2:1–3).*

Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon learnt this lesson from practical experience when God deposed him for a time and then restored him to his throne. As Nebuchadnezzar put it:

*... my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendour returned to me. My counsellors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down. (Daniel 4:36–37).*

## **Bishops**

Bancroft was instructed to select who should attend the conference and was the spokesman for the team of Bishops. The conference delegates totalled 19, which included only four Puritans. The Puritan team was led by John Reynolds, President of Corpus Christi College, Oxford and Lawrence Chadderton, Master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Reynolds and Chadderton also had the distinction that they were invited



*Emmanuel College, Cambridge: Lawrence Chadderton was its first Master.*

to be members of the translation team.

The matters to be discussed at the Conference were those expressed in the Millenary Petition. There was no proposal on the agenda for the production of a new translation of the Bible. On the first day the debates focussed on Puritan concerns about phrases in the Prayer Book and other Church matters. These were all dismissed by the King. On the second day Reynolds put forward four demands for reformation of the Church.

The Puritans' hope was that the Geneva Bible would be authorised for use in the Churches. James regarded it as a version which challenged the authority of Kings and was the "worst of all" the English versions.

## **Commissioning the Bible**

In 1604 Richard Bancroft was promoted to Archbishop of Canterbury on the death of the incumbent. The Hampton Court conference was not going well. The Bishops resisted everything the Puritans requested. James rejected all the demands of the Puritans and was unable to offer them anything. They needed to propose something to which the King could assent. John Reynolds speaking on behalf of the small Puritan delegation requested that there might

be a new translation of the Bible.

Bancroft immediately opposed the idea, "if every man's humour were followed, there would be no end of translating". However, the idea appealed to the King and Bancroft was overruled. James was a scholar in his own right having translated parts of the Psalms and produced a paraphrase of the Book of Revelation. King James' decision was that there would be a new translation of the Bible.

By the end of July 1604 the translators had been appointed. Fifty-four scholars had been nominated and divided into 6 groups or companies. Two groups were to work in Cambridge, two in Oxford and two in Westminster. It was agreed that "a translation be made of the whole Bible, as consonant as can be to the original Hebrew and Greek; and this to be set out and printed, without marginal notes, and only to be used in all churches of England in time of divine service."

## **Translation Rules**

Archbishop of Canterbury Bancroft was to oversee the project for the King. Fifteen rules were drafted to be observed in the translation work and served to limit the freedom of the translators. In all this we can see the hand of God working to put things in place ready for the time when the Gospel message would be preached throughout the world just as Jesus had commissioned his disciples:

*"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned (Mark 16:15–16).*

**Peter Moore**

*Next: Translating the Bible*

# Are you well dressed?

**Are you up-to-the minute in fashion? After reading the fashion pages, do you comb the stores for hours to find the right outfit?**



Maybe you only dress up when you are going somewhere special, preferring casual clothes at home. Maybe it takes a wedding to force you into a fashionable outfit. Perhaps you're just grateful to have clothes at all.

## **Does it Matter?**

Whichever is you, does being fashionable matter? Reading the newspapers, you could be forgiven for thinking so. What to wear – on the beach, at a party, meeting the in-laws, an important interview, a first date – the advice is endless. What's more, it is written in a way that makes us feel we're pretty poor specimens if we don't take the trouble to conform to the advice.

The fact that many readers could not possibly afford to meet these high

standards, seems not to matter. There must be wardrobes across the globe, filled with clothes that have been rarely or never worn, bought because their owner thought that without them they would be unfashionable.

The media sends a message that we are judged by what we wear; perhaps we ourselves evaluate others that way. Should our choice of clothes determine how others judge us, whether we're adorned in the latest trend or simply comfortable in an outfit bought years ago? For people who make a living from fashion, the answer is bound to be 'Yes', because they need us to buy their goods. But should we really take much notice of them?

## **What are we really like?**

One thing is certain: our external appearance makes no difference to how God sees us. The Bible says very little about the kind of clothes we should wear. With God it is what we are like inside that really matters. He loves to look on a genuine heart. As the Psalmist said:

*"Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom" (Psalm 51:6).*

God deplores those who give an outward appearance of truthfulness when inside they are anything but. Jesus said this to such people:

*"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like white-washed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones ... you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but*

inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness” (Matthew 23:27–28).

## “Be clothed with Humility”

If we want to look good in God’s sight, we need a loving and humble heart. So the apostle Paul advised Timothy that:

*...the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works (1 Timothy 2:9–10).*

While Peter said:

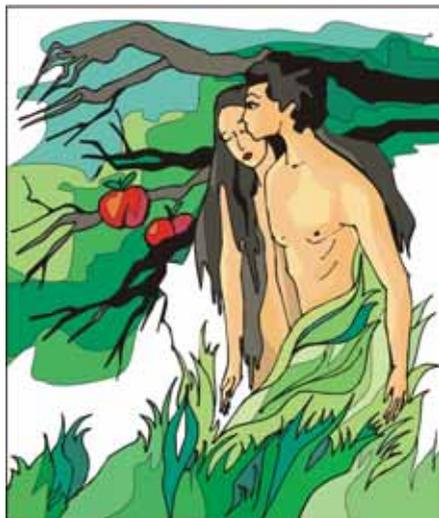
*Likewise you younger people ... be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble’ (1 Peter 5:5).*

So what we wear isn’t as important in God’s sight as it is in the eyes of fashion designers and clothing retailers. But it is important that we put on the “robe of righteousness” that God alone can provide.

## Naked and Ashamed

When Adam and Eve failed to follow their Creator’s command not to eat from the tree in the middle of the Garden they became aware of their nakedness. To cover themselves they made clothes using fig leaves (Gen.3:7). When God discovered what they had done He was angry and replaced their home-made clothes with garments He produced Himself; clothes, in fact, made from animal skin (Gen.3:21). Why? What was wrong with the fig leaves?

Well, Adam and Eve had sinned, and God had made it very clear to them that sin would lead to death (Gen.2:19). Adam and Eve thought they could remedy the situation in their



own way. But a few fig leaves were never going to repair the terrible rift that now existed between them and their Creator; only God could put that right. It is He who provides the ‘way out’ from death.

After Adam and Eve’s sin, God caused the death of an animal to provide them with a skin covering. This became a symbol of what God would ultimately provide as the final, once-for-all sacrifice for sin that would bring everlasting life to those who took up the offer of it. That final sacrifice came in the person of Jesus, the perfect lamb:

*You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, **as of a lamb without blemish and without spot** (1 Peter 1:18–19).*

Jesus was the only person who lived a sinless life and then offered himself to God, as a sacrifice for sin. He was tempted just as we are, but he never once sinned (Hebrews 4:15).

## Putting on Christ

Because we are sinners, we need to have our sins covered. The apostle Paul said believers must:

*... put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts (Romans 13:14).*



To put on Christ is to be baptised, by full immersion in water. In that way we identify ourselves with his sacrifice, burial and resurrection (Rom.6:1-5). Why does anyone do this? Because they know that if they have 'put on' Christ in baptism, God will look on them, not as sinners, but as He sees His own sinless Son.

That is not all. God made a clear promise that He would one day send his Son back to the earth (Acts 1:11). When this happens there will be a resurrection of those who have died *'in Christ'* (Romans 6:5; 1 Thessalonians

4:13-16). The promise of the New Testament is that those judged worthy will be changed and clothed with a new kind of body – an immortal one (1 Cor.15:15-55; 2 Cor. 5:4-5.) They will then be able to live forever on the earth with the Lord Jesus.

## What to Wear?

The next time you feel pressured to 'dress to impress', remember what Jesus said about how little we need to think about outward appearance:

*"Do not worry about ... the body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing ... Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Luke 12:22-27).*

Towards the end of the Bible there is a lovely symbolic picture of those in the future who are living with Jesus on earth in God's kingdom. They were all wearing white robes, and when the apostle asked who they were, he was told:

*"These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb ... for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Revelation 7:14-17).*

Their white robes were a symbol of perfection and sinlessness and these are the clothes we all need to aspire to wear. No other covering will do.

**Joan Lewis**

# From Malta to Rome

*In the previous study we left Paul shipwrecked on the shores of an island, having encountered a tremendous storm during his voyage to Rome. What sort of reception would these survivors get and would they ever complete their journey to Rome? **John Hellawell** now explains what happened.*

## Where were they?

Once on shore it became possible to determine the place of their shipwreck since it had attracted the natives of the island, from whom they learned that they were on Melita (or Mitilene) for which the modern name is Malta.



When Luke describes the local population (in Acts 28:2) as “natives”, literally “barbarians”, his description is not derogatory but simply indicates that their native tongue was not Greek. In the Greek world anyone who spoke another language was a barbarian since their words sounded like “bar-bar” to them.

The local people took pity on them and lit a fire to warm and dry them, as the weather was cold and it was raining. It seems certain that more than one fire was kindled since there were 276 people involved. Luke is probably describing what was happening to Paul’s group.

Paul assisted in keeping a fire burning by gathering a bundle of sticks. As he laid them on the fire a viper, affected by the heat, emerged from the brushwood in which it had been hiding and fastened itself on Paul’s hand. On seeing this, the locals concluded that Paul was a murderer who had escaped death at sea but who now was to receive his just desserts by snake poisoning! They attributed the event to ‘Justice’, that is, the Greek goddess of justice, or their own local equivalent. Unperturbed by the incident, Paul simply shook the snake off into the fire.

## Safe Passage

The Lord Jesus had promised that his apostle would reach Rome safely and Paul would also remember another comment by the Lord Jesus:

*These signs will follow those who believe... they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them... (Mark 16:17,18).*

When the snakebite had no effect on him, although the onlookers expected that he would have swelled up or dropped dead suddenly, they changed their minds and concluded that he was not a murderer but a god!

Near to the place of the shipwreck was the estate of the chief official of the island, probably the Roman procurator, named Publius. Luke records

that he entertained 'us' for three days with courtesy. It is not clear whether this means all 276 persons or merely Paul and his companions and, perhaps, the centurion. It may be that the distinguished members of the party were entertained while provision was made for the support of the rest. It seems likely that the prisoners would still have to be guarded by the soldiers while they and the crew would need some accommodation. The house and farm of Publius may have been discovered during archaeological excavations near St. Paul's Bay in Malta. A church has been built over the site, called in Maltese San Pawl Milqi "St. Paul's welcome", and the whole complex is the largest Roman site on the island.

### **Miracle Cures**

The father of Publius was ill with fever and dysentery a problem that may have been recurrent. Paul went to his room and, after prayer, laid his hand on him and cured him. The effect of this was to attract all those who were diseased throughout the island. The fact of Paul's survival from the snakebite would have spread widely and now the news of the miraculous cure of Publius' father would cause a considerable stir. These patients were also healed. In gratitude, the people honoured Paul's party in many ways and when they finally sailed once more, they put on board the things which were needed, their own belongings having been lost in the shipwreck.

It is interesting to speculate how Luke, who had trained as a physician, would have felt at the ease with which cures were effected by Paul through the Holy Spirit. He would diagnose conditions that were beyond the capability of the conventional medicine of his day to cure. It may be, of course,

that Luke was also endowed with such Spirit gifts and could help with the large numbers who would undoubtedly have arrived at Publius' house.

### **On to Rome**

After three months on the island, the party resumed their journey to Rome. The sailing season was normally resumed about the end of the first week in February, which indicates that the shipwreck occurred at the end of October. In view of the comment by Luke (Acts 28:7) that the governor had entertained them for three days it is evident that they must have been accommodated elsewhere for over eleven weeks. Given the healing powers at the disposal of the inhabitants of the island it is unlikely that Paul and his companions would want for anything during this time.

They embarked on another Alexandrian ship whose sign was *'The Twin Brothers'* that is Castor & Pollux, the twin sons of Zeus and Leda, who were the 'patron saints' of sailors in the ancient world. This may be the name of the ship but more likely it was the figurehead, or in this case, figureheads which adorned the prow.

It seems very probable that this vessel was also a grain ship that had sheltered in the island on its way from Egypt. It may be that all 276 from the wrecked vessel did not continue in this ship: the sailors amongst them having been able to secure employment on other ships.

From Malta they sailed some 90 miles northwards to Syracuse, the Roman capital of Sicily. They stayed here for three days, perhaps allowing for some cargo to be discharged and possibly for some of the former crew to disembark. Sailing on once more, Luke says they 'made a circuit' and arrived

at Rhegium. The meaning of the phrase is not clear: Rhegium was due north of Syracuse. Since Luke then tells us that the following day the south wind blew, it may mean that the journey was not a straight course but that the ship had to tack repeatedly to reach Rhegium. Once they had the benefit of a south wind they were able to reach Puteoli, some 180 miles



further north, in only two days.

## Reception Party

Puteoli (modern Pozzuli) in the Bay of Naples was the principal harbour in Italy and the main destination for the Egyptian grain ships. Paul ‘found brethren’ here which suggests that he was unaware of a Christian community in the port. They invited him to stay with them for seven days, ‘and so we came to Rome’. This phrase is not only the virtual climax of the events which Luke records but it also suggests that Paul was accompanied by some of the believers in Puteoli and that they had sent word of his arrival on ahead, during his seven day stay, so that believers from Rome also came to

meet him. The seven day break in their journey may have been necessary while the centurion, Julius, reported the arrival of his contingent and awaited orders from Rome as to what he should do.

Those believers from Rome came to meet Paul and his companions and waited at the Market of Appius (RV), some 43 miles from the city. Julius had two options in conveying his party to the capital, either by the Roman Road – the Appian Way – or by boat along the canal which ran parallel to the road. Given the uncertainty of the route, it was prudent for the welcoming party to travel no further than the Appii Forum. Other believers came to the Three Taverns, 33 miles from Rome. The place did not necessarily boast three taverns; the Latin *taberna* simply indicates a shop of any kind. Paul was greatly encouraged by the response of the Roman brethren: it was evidence of their fondness for him.

The long list of names in Paul’s Letter to the Romans, chapter 16, indicates that the apostle had many close friends who were now living in the city, even though he had never visited it. The reason for his writing Romans appears to have been a lack of unity between the Jewish and Gentile sections of the community. The presence of a ‘welcoming party’ indicated that his attempt at reconciliation had not led to a hostile response towards him or his gospel.

On entering Rome, Paul was not imprisoned but kept under house-arrest (Acts 28:30) and guarded by a soldier to whom he would be lightly chained (Acts 28:20; Colossians 4:18; Ephesians 3:1; Philemon 1).

**John Hellowell**

*To be concluded*

# You Are what you Eat

This maxim for healthy living has been proved true over and over again. How many times do we hear that too much red meat is bad for us? That too large an intake of saturated fats will lead to clogged arteries and heart disease? That too many sweet foods will cause tooth decay? And that too much alcohol will give us cirrhosis of the liver? The list is endless.



On the positive side we are constantly encouraged to eat five portions of fruit and vegetables a day to keep us healthy. And we are told to drink plenty of water if we want to keep our bodies in good working order. Most of us try to heed this advice if we want to stay healthy and enjoy a normal span of life. At the same time, we know that conforming to the healthiest diet in the world will not enable us to live for ever. For we are all going to die, sooner or later.

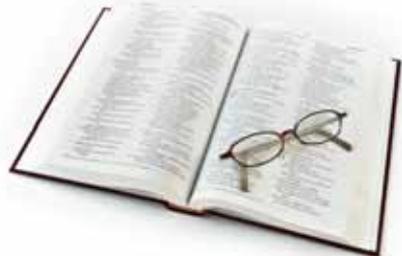
## Spiritual Diet

Yet how often do we hear the same level of advice for living a spiritually healthy life – a life that can lead to eternal life? Just as an unhealthy diet is bad for our physical lives so failure to feed our minds on a diet of God’s Word will lead inevitably to eternal death.

The saying that “Starvation can kill” is as true for our spiritual lives as it is for our physical lives.

The Bible anticipated our need for spiritual nourishment and health for it is full of advice on how we should feed our minds if we want to overcome the worst disease of all. The sinful tendencies with which we are born can lead ultimately to eternal death, unless we do something about them. What God recommends is first presented clearly in the Book of Deuteronomy:

*He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord (Deuteronomy 8:3).*



Here “bread” is a generalization for “food”. God knows our nature because He created us in His image (Genesis 1:27.) He knows that our minds need feeding as well as our bodies. He has provided the essential food in His Word and has carefully preserved it so that we can read it and benefit from a spiritual diet:

*Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live (Isaiah 55:1–3).*



## **Deliverance from Evil**

Jesus used the very words of Deuteronomy chapter 8, verse 3, to counter the temptation that he should turn stones into bread to assuage his own hunger. (See Matthew 4:4.) It was this principle of feeding on God’s Word that guided his whole life so that he became the personification of the Bread of Life.

*For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world (John 6:33).*



In Paul’s letter to the Romans, the apostle makes it clear that those who think only of the ordinary everyday needs of this life will perish – die for ever. But those who try to overcome wrong tendencies by being led by God’s spirit will live for ever:

*For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live (Romans 8:13).*

Faithful men like William Tyndale suffered and died so that we could read the Bible in English. Surely we will not refuse to read it and neglect this source of spiritual nourishment. It promises us a richer and deeper life than we can ever have by just eating bread!

## **Marion Buckler**



# Judges - Saviours of the Nation

**The book of Judges begins with the situation that followed the death of Joshua.**

His departure had severed the last link between the Israelites and the slavery of Egypt. A new generation arose who knew nothing of the hardships suffered by their fathers, and ease and prosperity turned their hearts away from God. There were still pockets of Canaanites left who had not been subdued, and the temptation to slide into the easy-going, pleasure-seeking fertility religions of their neighbours proved too great.

## **Trouble Ahead!**

Moses had warned his people that this would happen, and also of the consequences. God responded by putting painful pressure on His erring people to bring them to their senses:

*When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel ... And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. Wherever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for calamity, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn to them. And they were greatly distressed. (Judges 2:10,14-15).*

When, however, the people repented and recognized their folly, the Lord was quick to forgive, and sent heroes, called Judges in the Scripture record, to deliver them from their oppressors. The book of Judges gives fascinating biographies of these courageous men (and in one case a woman), who were called to risk their lives to save the nation. To understand the true greatness of these leaders you need to use some imagination, putting yourself in their shoes as you read, and feeling the pressures facing them. Every word counts. Let's look at one or two examples.

## **Deborah**

Despite being called "Judges", most of these heroes or saviours did not actually sit in courts of justice to hear and decide cases. But Deborah, who features in the fourth chapter of Judges, did just that. She had a court where people came to have their cases heard as the Levites were no longer performing this duty, now that people had turned away from God. She was also a prophetess, inspired from time to time by the Spirit of the Lord.

Hazor, destroyed by Joshua over a century before, had been rebuilt. Its new ruler had access to the latest advances in metal technology, and assembled an army accompanied by chariots with iron rims that enabled them to run faster. Jabin used his military strength to dominate Israel and put them under tribute, and they groaned under the heavy burden.

So Deborah called on Barak – whose Hebrew name means Lightning – to raise an Israelite army and attack Jabin, promising him that God would give him victory. Barak had cold feet, and insisted he would only go if she came along too. With some difficulty he persuaded volunteers from the northern tribes to join his troops, and his poorly-armed forces assembled as instructed on the Hill of Tabor, which still projects today out of the Valley of Jezreel. He had 10,000 men, but ranged against him was a vast army with 900 chariots under the command of Jabin's general Sisera, and they were positioned in the smooth, flat plain which was ideal for chariot manoeuvres.

### **Amazing Victory**

Surprisingly, Barak completely defeated Sisera. His soldiers chased the fleeing enemy to the far end of the Valley of Jezreel. How did he achieve this amazing victory? Here we have to read the narrative carefully. We notice first that Sisera abandoned his chariot and fled away on foot. Then, in chapter five, we have a celebratory battle ode composed to thank God for the victory in which it speaks of heavy rainfall, and the brook Kishon sweeping the enemy away.

Putting these hints together we can visualise a sudden heavy rainstorm, swelling the river and turning the clay soil of the valley to mud. The chariot wheels stick fast, and the enemy loses his advantage. It was typical of the way God's timely use of natural forces can change the balance of power in minutes. But we are left deeply impressed by a man who, faced with tremendous odds, was prepared to go into battle believing that God would not let him down. That quality the Bible

calls faith. It is essential that we also have it, if we are to please God.

### **Gideon**

In Hebrews chapter 11 several characters are listed as examples of faithful people. Barak is one and alongside him is Gideon, who is also said to have been '*made strong out of weakness*'. In Gideon's time the people of God had turned to the worship of Baal, the fertility god of the Canaanites, and Ashtoreth, his consort. Even Gideon's father, headman of the village, had decided to go along with the trend, by building an altar to Baal. God, ever patient, waited for His people to repent. To jog their consciences He allowed the Midianites, descendants of Lot, to raid their farms and steal their produce. The lives of the Israelites became a misery.

Gideon was busy threshing his wheat, not on the village threshing floor where the give-away cloud of chaff would be visible from a distance, but uncomfortably in a below-ground winepress. Here an angel of the Lord visited him. The stranger looking down at him heard his complaint that God seemed to have abandoned His people, and challenged him to go himself and deliver Israel. His first assignment was to destroy his father's altar and build a new one to the God of Israel. Gideon did this by night to avoid publicity.

He was then instructed to gather the tribes together for a confrontation with the Midianites. Untrained in battle, he did that but began to have doubts as to his ability. He asked for a sign, and God gave it to him. He asked for another one, and God gave him that too. Then, to his dismay, the angelic commander suggested he should reduce his forces down to a mere 300.

God was going to show His people that it is not human strength that brings victory, but faith in Him.

On the battle night Gideon was instructed to set his men in three groups of 100 around the camp of the Midianites. They were to lift up blazing torches, blow trumpets and cry 'the sword of the Lord and of Gideon'. The effect was dramatic. In dire panic, the enemy soldiers attacked each other in the darkness, and fled downhill across the Jordan.

Gideon, the timid hero, became a



Judge in Israel, and the land had rest for forty years. Again, it is easy to read these thrilling stories, but we need to think through the courage it takes to abandon yourself into the hands of the unseen God, believing He will not let you down.

The 21 chapters of the Book of Judges cover a period of 400-500 years, and can be characterised by this one phrase:

*In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes (Judges 17:6).*

## **The Book of Ruth**

It was a time when spiritual reform was needed, and eventually God would bring this about through a new form of

leader – a king. But the next book in the Bible – the delightful Book of Ruth – is sandwiched between the Book of Judges and the period of the Kings of Israel. This short account is a delightful romance and explains how the Israelites could live in harmony with their neighbours when those neighbours became worshippers of the one true God – the God of Israel.

The Moabites were enemies of Israel. They lived on the opposite side of the Dead Sea, and worshipped their own gods. In a time of famine, an Israelite family from the town of Bethlehem near Jerusalem emigrated to Moab, believing they would be better off there. The two sons married Moabite wives, and soon abandoned their religion. In time they both died, and so did the father, leaving Naomi a widow. Heartbroken, she decided to return to Bethlehem, and said goodbye to her two daughters-in-law. But one of them, Ruth, had been so impressed with the faith of Naomi she begged to come with her.

The book describes how she met, while gleaning corn in his fields, a God-fearing Israelite called Boaz. He was related to Naomi, and when she appealed for his help, agreed to marry Ruth so that the family inheritance would not be lost. The last chapter gives an intriguing description of an Israelite marriage custom, and finishes with the significant fact that Boaz and Ruth became progenitors of the Lord Jesus Christ through the family line of Jesse and David. It underlines the principle that, as the Apostle Peter declares:

*In every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him (Acts 10:35).*

**David M Pearce**

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