

Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1530



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Bibles and Bible Study – page 5
The Journey of Life – page 16

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OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

127th Year

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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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Bible Versions

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Season of Mists

It was John Keats who penned the now famous phrase: “*Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness*” in his poem “To Autumn”, written in 1820.

In it he captured the essence of a season brimming with the fruitfulness of harvest when vines, apples and nuts abound and late flowers bloom to give bees one last taste of summer before they hunker down for the winter.

Mist is a phenomenon caused when water droplets are suspended in air, and this is usually caused when colder air comes into contact with ground or water that has been warmed by the sun during the day. When visibility is substantially reduced we call it fog and whenever we encounter mist or fog, it is a gentle warning that colder weather lies ahead.

Seasons

Long ago God promised Noah and his family that the seasons would remain constant and that they could depend upon this element of stability, given that everything else had been overturned by the waters of the Flood. He made a covenant – a lasting agreement – with mankind at that time and, as you would expect, has remained faithful to that binding set of promises, and always will. This is what the Lord promised at that time:

“I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done. “While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease” (Genesis 8:21–22).

Notice the contrast! Mankind would be unreliable with a persistent tendency to go away from God; but God would always be constant and dependable. In a changeable world, you could always rely upon the fact that the sun would rise and set, that day would always follow night, and that the harvest would always come if the seed had been sown at the right time and then carefully nurtured.

Sowing the Seed

What is true in the natural world is also true in the spiritual sphere, as the Bible carefully points out. If you sow wheat you cannot expect to reap maize. The seed carries the potential to produce fruit, but only of a particular sort, and it needs to be sown in appropriate soil – something that Jesus explained in the Parable of the Sower.

There he emphasised that if we want to be fruitful for God, so that we can share in the Harvest celebrations He has planned, we have to avoid being too hard, too busy, or having too many distractions in life. Instead we should



give the Word of God a fair chance in our lives to grow and develop. The aim, as Jesus expressed it, is as follows:

He who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty (Matthew 13:23).

At the end of the parable he added these important words:

“He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” (Matthew 13:9).

Parables were given by Jesus to make people think about themselves and their life choices. Many of those present would return with just a few stories and no real idea what he was talking about. Others would take the time to think about what they had been told and would find a deeper meaning in the words, understanding that Jesus was not advising about farming, but about living.

The Right Seed

Years later the apostle Paul used the same idea of sowing and harvesting when writing to believers in Asia Minor – a Roman province which is now part of Turkey. This is what he said;

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart (Galatians 6:7–9).

Everyone has a choice of what to plant in their lives. If you live in a self-indulgent way, seeking only to satisfy yourself and your fleshly desires, you

will reap what that lifestyle deserves – corruption! But if you live a God-centred life, making the things that God has revealed your priority you will become fruitful in the way He wants you to be. And the fruit that God wants will be every bit as beneficial to you as it will be to those who live with you, or who are influenced by you. Paul elsewhere describes it as the fruit of the Spirit, and he catalogues what that fruit will be in the way you feel, think and behave.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (Galatians 5:22–24).

Everybody should want that sort of life, here and now, and it can be achieved when we let the message of salvation, contained in God’s Word, influence and change the way we think and feel. But we need to open our ears and our hearts to this wonderful message if we are to be changed by it.

Through the Mist

Not everyone sees things clearly, of course, which is why there is so much confusion in religious matters, and in the world in general. Not everything is yet revealed by God, so we have to wait for the time when He will act to redeem and rescue our troubled world. It was the apostle Paul who explained these limitations when he said:

Now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known (1 Corinthians 13:12).

Editor

Bibles and Bible Study

Spreading the Word

The Spanish Armada was defeated by a combination of the hand of God in the weather and the British fleet under Sir Francis Drake. From then on British naval power began to grow. The importance of the development of this power was recognised by successive rulers who needed to ensure that the trade and supply routes around the world were maintained, in order to ensure the survival and prosperity of Great Britain.

This also made possible the spread of the Word of God around the world and the King James (or Authorised) Version had an important part to play in that development. There were three factors which proved important.

❖ English Navy

1. 1514 – King Henry VIII invested in maintaining a permanent Navy of about 30 ships. By 1544 the number of ships had increased to 50 vessels. Queen Elizabeth I continued to develop the Navy through improved efficiency and promoted the global ambitions of her merchants and seamen.

❖ English Bible

2. 1611 – God had overseen the development of a version of the English Bible that was destined to endure and be in use for at least 400 years.

❖ British Empire

3. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries British power and influence spread round the globe. It

has been said that during the reign of Queen Victoria, when the empire was at the zenith of its power, the sun never set on the British Empire. History shows us that the British Empire was to fulfil a unique role determined by God. It was by this means that the King James Bible was distributed to the English speaking peoples of the world.

Other Empires and trading powers had existed, for example, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch and French. They had Bibles in their mother tongues and they had their missionaries. However, none can be compared to the rigour with which Great Britain took to the work of distributing the Word of God around the world.

Bible Societies

❖ **1698** The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge was founded with the purpose of the distribution of the Scriptures. In the early 1790s they distributed 500 Welsh Bibles with a further 10,000 Welsh Bibles in 1799. The demand for Bibles in Wales was so great that there were whole districts where the demand could not be satisfied: Montgomeryshire, Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire!

Many other Societies were formed to spread the Word of God.

❖ **1701** The Society for the Promotion of the Gospel in Foreign Parts was founded. Through the communication routes of the Empire

they distributed Bibles in many places beyond the shores of England.

- ❖ **1709** The Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge (in Scotland).
- ❖ **1750** The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge among the Poor.
- ❖ **1780** The Bible Society (for soldiers and seamen).
- ❖ **1785** The Society for the Support and Encouragement of Sunday Schools.
- ❖ **1804** The British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS).

Many Languages

Bibles were printed in many languages and millions of copies were distributed throughout the world. Between 1804 and 1853 the BFBS printed 8.3 million Bibles in the United Kingdom languages of English, Gaelic, Irish, Manx and Welsh. A further 1.45 million Bibles were printed for distribution covering 26 languages. The work was funded by annual and lifetime subscribers.

The 'Laws and Regulations of the BFBS' included one important rule that held the society together and contributed to its longevity. The BFBS's "sole object shall be to encourage a wider circulation of the Holy Scriptures without note or comment: the only copies in the languages of the United Kingdom to be circulated by the Society shall be the Authorised Version." In 1901 the rule was amended to include the Revised Version of 1881.

In the first hundred years of its existence, the Society distributed 180 million copies of the Bible in languages

spoken by seven-tenths of the population of the planet. In the early eighteen hundreds, Bibles were distributed to British and foreign mariners at ports around the country including Portsmouth, Whitby, Hull and Aberdeen. The first systematic effort to distribute Bibles was started at Gravesend. In 1818 an agent was appointed to visit every outward-bound ship from Gravesend to sell Bibles to seamen. In the first year the agent boarded 1681 ships at Gravesend to distribute Bibles to crew members.

Bible Prophecy Fulfilled

Thus through its many Bible societies, Britain took the Gospel message around the world. It is a matter of historical fact that, in the purpose of God, Great Britain made a significant contribution to the fulfilment of the words of the prophet Jeremiah.

"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' (Jeremiah 31:10).

The Lord issued this challenge to the nations. He would scatter Israel because of their sins and their lack of faith. They were indeed scattered and every nation had its Jewish community. The Lord also stated that He would regather them to the land of Israel. The return of the Jews to the land is the most reliable witness for us that God is working in the affairs of the nations as a prelude to the return of Jesus Christ to set up the Kingdom of God on earth.

Britain was destined to play a role in supporting the establishment of the State of Israel. In 1917 the Balfour Declaration expressed a commitment by the British Government to support the establishment of the State of

Israel, “His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people...”. This declaration preceded the birth of the State of Israel in May 1948 and the regathering of the Jews began, as spoken by the prophet Jeremiah.

More Bible Versions

Since 1881 there has been a proliferation of Bible versions. Many are paraphrases or a mix of paraphrase with some literal translation and are based on manuscripts which some scholars consider to be corrupt.

Byzantine Text	Alexandrian Text
<p>From 1633, after the Reformation, the half dozen texts used to translate the New Testament of the King James Bible were known as ‘Textus Receptus’.</p> <p>Many New Testament manuscripts (over 5,000) have been found since and the Textus Receptus may be said to be representative of 90% of them because there are no variations that challenge or change Bible teaching.</p> <p>These manuscripts were found over a wide geographical area and the consistency between them gives us confidence that the King James Bible was translated from reliable sources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ King James Version (KJV) 1611 ❖ Young’s Literal Translation 1863 ❖ New King James Version (NKJV) 1979 	<p>1881 Dr. Westcott & Dr. Hort produced an eclectic Greek New Testament text mainly based on two manuscripts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Codex Vaticanus, and ❖ Codex Sinaiticus. <p><i>Eclectic</i> means, ‘free selection’. The two scholars constructed texts from manuscripts they preferred. Therefore, there is no single Greek manuscript that corresponds to an ‘Eclectic Text’. The work of Westcott & Hort has influenced the majority of modern versions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>Revised Version (RV)</i> 1881 ❖ <i>American Standard Version (ASV)</i> 1901 ❖ <i>Revised Standard Version (RSV)</i> 1952 ❖ <i>New English Bible (NEB)</i> 1970 ❖ <i>New International Version (NIV)</i> 1973 ❖ <i>Good News Bible (GNB)</i> 1976 ❖ <i>Revised English Bible (REB)</i> 1989 ❖ <i>New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)</i> 1990 ❖ <i>English Standard Version (ESV)</i> 2002

Bible Study Tools

Today we have the benefit of a wealth of different study aids to help us enrich our Bible knowledge and understanding.

❖ Cross references

Many Bibles have cross references either printed in a centre-page column or at the foot of the page. We should not neglect this source of Bible links. Such references can be useful to us in finding links with other parts of the Bible that build on what God has already said. Here is an example.

In the Book of Revelation we read that a time is coming when:

“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).

This Scripture tells us that God has a plan and purpose with mankind and that the work of Jesus, when he returns, will be completed when he finally eliminates sin and abolishes death. But is this plan something that is only revealed in the last book of the Bible? Surely not! This is where cross references can help.

In the margin of my Bible there is a cross reference to Isaiah 25:8. We learn from this that God is consistent, for He made this promise of a better future for the earth in Old Testament times and has repeated it in the New Testament. This is what Isaiah said that God will do:

He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces; the rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken (Isaiah 25:8).

❖ Bible Concordances

The purpose of a Bible concordance is to enable you to find verses in the Bible and then work out the meaning of words. The concordance is an alphabetical index of all the words in a particular Bible version. For the King James Bible, *Young’s Analytical Concordance* lists the different English words and shows the different Hebrew or Greek words that are translated this way. *Strong’s Concordance* lists the Bible references in sequence for a particular English word and gives a Hebrew or Greek reference number. The meaning of the Hebrew or Greek word can then be looked up in the Concordance.

For example, using *Young’s Concordance*, if we wanted to learn what the Bible has to say about the life of Abraham we can find where in the Bible “Abraham” is named. We can then follow the series of references listed. The first reference to Abraham is:

No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations (Genesis 17:5)

Abraham was a man of great faith who pleased God. Therefore God changed his name from Abram (‘father of height’) to Abraham (‘father of a multitude’).

Bible Concordances can be purchased in book form or can be downloaded or accessed from the Internet. With the aid of a computer we can search for a phrase or find where several different words appear within a single verse.

Peter Moore

Next month: Comparing Bible Versions

In the Temple

Jewish Law ordained that a male child should be circumcised when he was eight days old, and an offering was to be made as atonement. This is specified in the book of Leviticus chapter 12.

For those who were well-off the offering had to be a year-old lamb, but for those who could not afford this, it was to be either two turtle doves or two pigeons, one as a burnt offering, the other as a sin offering. So Joseph came with Mary to the Temple in Jerusalem to make the necessary offerings under the law about six weeks after the birth of her baby, the Lord Jesus.

"Righteous and Devout"

Luke introduces us to a man who only appears at this point in the story of the life of the Lord Jesus. Simeon lived in Jerusalem and is described as "righteous and devout", and "waiting for the consolation of Israel." His name means "he that hears or obeys" and he was true to his name.

Simeon was godly in everything he did, and he had been told by the Holy

Spirit – in a way which is not explained – that he was not to die "before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (Luke 2:26). This tremendous promise meant that he would see the Jewish Messiah, the person the whole nation was looking for. There is a prophecy in the Book of Daniel about the time when Messiah would come (Daniel 9:24-27), and many Jews suspected that the time was right for that prophecy to be fulfilled.

Simeon "came by the Spirit into the temple" at the very time when Mary and Joseph were coming to make the appropriate offerings for the Lord Jesus. As they arrived he came forward and took the baby in his arms and gave thanks to God.

It must have been rather worrying for Mary, seeing this old man with this most precious child in his arms. She need not have been concerned; Simeon was not going to drop the baby he had waited so long to see. Now he knew that his own death could not be far off, but he would be fully content. He had seen the One he had so longed to see. His prayer is one of the most beautiful in all of Scripture:



"Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace,

According to Your word;

For my eyes have seen Your salvation

Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,

A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles,

And the glory of Your people Israel"
(Luke 2:29-32).

The Promised Messiah

Simeon was declaring that this baby was the Messiah – the long-awaited Deliverer; the one “whose right it is” to sit on King David’s throne in Jerusalem. In his prayer he gave thanks to the Lord God for revealing this to him, and allowing him to see and touch and hold the One who had been promised for so long. He had seen the salvation that God had prepared: the way that God would provide reconciliation for men and women who had been estranged from Him by sin.

Salvation for All

In the middle of the Jewish Temple, Simeon declared that salvation to be for all people – Gentile and Jew alike. His coming was a light for the Gentiles and glory for the people of Israel. That very wording pointed to the Lord Jesus as the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah:

“I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness, and will hold your hand; I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles” (Isaiah 42:6).

Simeon’s prayer was followed by a blessing for both Mary and Joseph, but also a warning:

Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (Luke 2:34).

Solemn Warning

Those who listen to and follow the Lord Jesus will be blessed, those who ignore his teaching will be judged for that. It was a very solemn warning, presumably revealed directly to Simeon by the Holy Spirit. There was

another warning for Mary “A sword will pierce through your own soul also.” Mary would suffer many times through her life, but especially so when she watched her firstborn son dying on the cross, as a sacrifice for sin to redeem Jew and Gentile who come to God through him.

The warnings were primarily for Mary and Joseph and those who heard them then. But they are recorded by Luke as a warning for us also. We need to take careful note of them.

Mark Sheppard

Not Alone



I’m not alone: I live alone
But that’s not what I mean;
He’s always there, to show the way,
All I have to do is pray.

So I sit and praise Him
And thank Him for His gifts;
Of food and shelter,
But especially for His Son.

Although I live alone
My comfort’s from above,
From Him who always listens
And showers us with His love.

So I live alone, but not alone:
You know what I mean.

June Legett

Jesus and Racism

*Nowadays racism is a problem that crops up all the time in one way or another. But we sometimes think that it is a modern problem and that difficulties between people of different races never occurred in the past. By examining the New Testament, **David Budden** now shows that racism was as much a problem then as it is now.*

Age Old

The problem of racism is as old as the human race. It existed at the time of Jesus but he combated it in a very powerful and original way. Israel, in Jesus' time, was divided into three areas. In the north there was Galilee, populated primarily by shepherds and fishermen. In the south there was Judea, where the elite, the educated and the ruling classes lived. They looked down on their poor relatives in the north and regarded them as uneducated peasants.

The centre of the country, Samaria, was occupied to a large extent by descendants of foreigners — people who had been drafted in by foreign overlords several centuries earlier. The Jews hated those foreigners in Samaria; they could not even be civil to them. So the people in the south of the country looked down on their Jewish brothers in the north and hated the Samaritans. The Jews in the north shared their contempt for the Samaritans, and all Jews did their best to avoid contact with them.

Jesus and the Samaritans

Jesus did not try to avoid Samaria. Indeed the gospel writers record that he needed to go through that part of the country (John 4:4). It was during that journey that he met a Samaritan woman. Jesus and the disciples had been journeying north from Jerusalem

and had arrived in the Samaritan town of Sychar (John 4:3-43). There was a well on the outskirts of the town, so the disciples left Jesus there to rest while they went into the town. Shortly afterwards a Samaritan woman arrived to draw water. To her utter amazement Jesus spoke to her, asking for water.

“How is it that you, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?”, she replied. *“For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans”* (John 4:9).

Jesus side-stepped that question and instead engaged in a profound discourse about the Water of Life. While he was thus engaged the disciples returned and, like the woman herself, they were astonished to see Jesus talking to a Samaritan. But they wisely refrained from comment. The final outcome of the encounter was that Jesus stayed in Sychar for two days and many people believed in him.

The bitterness between Jews and Samaritans is vividly shown in that story. First there is the amazement of both the woman herself and the disciples that Jesus, a Jew, would condescend to speak to a Samaritan. Then there is the clear statement that “the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans”. This was blatant racism. And Jesus cut straight through it. He engaged in a profound discourse with the woman, totally ignoring the question of race.

Good Neighbours

On one occasion Jesus was teaching and among the listeners was a lawyer — one of the elite people who regarded themselves as superior to everyone. When the opportunity arose he sprang to his feet and asked, “Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”. As he was a lawyer, Jesus asked him to explain what the Law of God required and he answered correctly:

- 1 You shall love the Lord your God, and
- 2 You shall love your neighbour as yourself.

Jesus said that if he did that he would live, but the lawyer pressed the point and asked a supplementary question: “And who is my neighbour?” The response of Jesus was given in what has now become one of his best known and best loved of all his parables — the Parable of the Good Samaritan. You can read the parable in Luke chapter 10, verses 25-37.

The utter simplicity of the story enhances its appeal. A small child can appreciate the point that we should be kind and helpful to other people and that the Samaritan gave us an example of how we should behave by putting other people before ourselves.

Hidden Meanings

We can see the story as a presentation of what Jesus himself has done — that we are like the traveller, going downhill, attacked by sin and left dying. The priest and Levite, representatives of the Law of Moses, gave no help. But the Samaritan, the one despised and rejected, did all that he could, soothing the wounds, paying for whatever further care was required and promising to come again. For Jesus has

soothed our wounds with the oil and wine of the Gospel, he has paid the price for our redemption and he has promised to come again.

But there is more. The traveller is presented as “A certain man” — nothing is mentioned of his creed or his race. Of all people, the good neighbour was one of those loathed Samaritans. The fact that Jesus even mentioned the word must have shocked the lawyer.

For when he was asked, “Which of these three was neighbour to him that fell among thieves?”, he was careful to avoid fouling his mouth by mentioning that it was a Samaritan. He replied, “He that showed mercy...” But worse was to follow. For the lawyer then heard Jesus holding up the Samaritan as a fine example that he himself could learn from and follow.

Jesus said: “Go and do likewise” (Luke 10:37). That was as shocking to that Jewish lawyer as it would have been had Jesus said to a Nazi Officer “Follow the good example of that Jew”, or to a supporter of Apartheid, “Learn from the good example of that Negro”.

That is the very positive way in which Jesus dealt with the racism that he came in contact with.

As ever, the teaching of Jesus gives us the clearest possible example to follow if we want to live the life of Christ.



David Budden

The Chronicles of the Kings of Judah

In some respects, the two Books of Chronicles are a mirror image of the Books of Kings. They reflect the events of the reigns of the kings who ruled the two-tribe kingdom of Judah, making some cross-reference to the kings of Israel on the north side of the frontier.

Names and more names

1 Chronicles begins with a compilation of several sets of genealogies. These lists of ancestors were important to the Jews because they needed them to prove they were descended from Abraham as members of God's chosen people.

- ◆ Chapters one and two take us from Adam through Abraham to Jacob (Israel) and concentrate on the ancestors of King David.
- ◆ Chapter three lists David's descendants down to the time of the Captivity in Babylon.
- ◆ Four to seven run through the families of all twelve tribes.
- ◆ Chapter eight and the end of nine focus on the family of Saul, the first king, while the beginning of chapter nine lists those who returned to Jerusalem after the Captivity.

Historical Account

❖ 1 Chronicles

The history starts in chapter ten, where we are transported back in time to the death of Saul, and the beginning of David's reign. 1 Chronicles gives



more detail than the Books of Samuel and Kings about the bringing up of the ark into David's city, the promise that God made to him, and his military conquests. It focuses on the choice of Mount Moriah as the site for the Temple. Above all, it highlights the energy of David in the last years of his reign as he prepared for the construction of a Temple he would never see.

David was determined that everything would be in place, right down to the writing of the hymns that would be sung, the training of the musicians, and the appointment of the doorkeepers. He held a national assembly to invite others to donate money to the project, supplementing his personal contribution, which was worth millions of pounds. He died 40 years after he came to the throne.

❖ 2 Chronicles

2 Chronicles, in its first nine chapters, reviews the reign of Solomon, and tells us more about the Temple construction, his wealth and the extent of his power. After that, chapters 10 to 36 repeat the history of God's people up to the Captivity, but with much more information about the kings who

ruled in the south. The province of Judah retained the Temple and the Levitical priesthood, and had many godly kings who kept the way of the Lord alive. Some of them were heroes of faith.

Good Kings of Judah

Asa, in 2 Chronicles 14, went out to face an army of a million invaders with one-third the numbers on his side. And Asa cried out to the Lord his God, and said:

“Lord, it is nothing for You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power; help us, O Lord our God, for we rest on You, and in Your name we go against this multitude. O Lord, You are our God; do not let man prevail against You!” So the Lord struck the Ethiopians before Asa and Judah, and the Ethiopians fled (2 Chronicles 14:11,12).

Then there was **Jehoshaphat**, who married his son to Ahab and Jezebel’s daughter, and consequently felt obliged to aid evil Ahab in battle. He narrowly escaped with his life. The prophet of the Lord was waiting when the shaken king returned home. Jehu the seer went out to meet him, and said to King Jehoshaphat:

“Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord? Therefore the wrath of the Lord is upon you” (2 Chronicles 19:2).

It is a lesson in the dangers of compromise. It is better to keep ourselves entirely separate from those who despise God, in spite of the potential gains.

Little king **Joash** came to the throne at the age of seven, following the revolt against his wicked grandmother Queen Athaliah. His uncle, the high priest Jehoiada, who had led the coup, was

his mentor and kept the young king faithful to the Lord until he died at the age of 130. Sadly, Joash then abandoned his faith. Even uncles can have a good influence on the younger generation.

Joash’s grandson **Uzziah**, whose reign is found in 2 Chronicles 26, was another young king, crowned at sixteen.

He sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God; and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper (2 Chronicles 26:5).

Uzziah was something of an engineer. He loved building and farming projects, and invented new weapons for his army. Unfortunately success went to his head. One day he decided to go into the Temple to offer incense, which was the privilege of anointed priests only. The High Priest bravely confronted his royal master, and in the ensuing row Uzziah found himself struck down with leprosy.

He ended his days miserably in a leper house outside Jerusalem. It is poignant to find that the prophet Isaiah, contemporary with Uzziah, builds up a refrain in his second chapter against all those who are “proud and lofty”. By coincidence, in 1931 a plaque was discovered in Jerusalem stating “To this place the remains of Uzziah, King of Judah, were moved. Do not disturb”. He is also named on several Assyrian monuments.

More Kings

Two generations later we come to an outstanding monarch named **Hezekiah**. Impatiently waiting for the death of his weak and idolatrous father, in the first year of his reign he introduces a

sweeping reformation, restoring the Law of Moses and the priesthood. Hezekiah was backed by Isaiah, his close friend. His true qualities shine forth when he is faced with the invasion of his country by the cruel and invincible Assyrians under Sennacherib. They had already captured all the walled towns of Judah using revolutionary siege warfare tactics, and now threatened the capital, Jerusalem. It fell to Hezekiah to persuade his people that the living God of Israel was stronger than the idols of the Assyrians. Here are his words:

“Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid nor dismayed before the king of Assyria, nor before all the multitude that is with him; for there are more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God, to help us and to fight our battles” (2 Chronicles 32:7,8).

His faith was justified. The army of the enemy was decimated by a violent illness that left Sennacherib so short of soldiers he was forced to return home. His campaign monument, discovered by the English archaeologist Sir Henry Layard, in the ruins of his palace in Nineveh, is unable to record the capture of Judah’s most important city. It can be seen in the British Museum. Another fascinating find was a water tunnel deep under Jerusalem constructed by Hezekiah to protect the city water supply from enemy action. It is described in 2 Kings 20:20 and 2 Chronicles 32:30. Visitors to Jerusalem can still walk through the tunnel today.

Hezekiah’s son **Manasseh** turned back to idolatry, and though his son Josiah was a good man, idol worship and the accompanying immorality and social injustice was spreading like a



Gill and George emerging from Hezekiah's Tunnel in Jerusalem

cancer through the body of Judah. This was the era of the prophet Jeremiah, who tried in vain to stem the rot. The kingdom collapsed into ruins, with four rulers in quick succession. The end came when Zedekiah rebelled against the new emperor of the Middle East, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and brought captivity upon his people and the destruction of Jerusalem. Ezekiel, God’s prophet amongst the exiles taken to Babylon, warned that Zedekiah would be the last king.

“Remove the turban, and take off the crown ... Overthrown, overthrown, I will make it overthrown! It shall be no longer, until he comes whose right it is, And I will give it to him” (Ezekiel 21:26–27).

The throne of David has stood empty ever since, awaiting the coming of Jesus, who will sit upon it forever, exactly as God had promised his forefather King David.

David M Pearce

The Journey of Life

At some time in our lives all of us have known what it is to be utterly exhausted. Sometimes we have been frightened, possibly so frightened that we feared that we might even die. Such feelings were shared on more than one occasion by Jesus and his disciples.

Busy Day

In Mark's Gospel Jesus had been talking to a large audience for a long time from a boat on the Sea of Galilee. For exactly how long we are not told; whether there was any break we are not told. It is difficult to believe that Jesus talked non-stop. Surely there must have been some interaction. We know that the crowd was a large one. The effort of engaging the crowd for a long time with or without a break was tiring and Jesus felt he just had to have a rest. So he asked his disciples to row him across the lake.

Jesus spoke from a boat a little way from the shore to get away from the thronging crowd and perhaps to allow his voice to carry to a wider audience. How long he was there talking to them; how suitable the conditions were for putting and answering questions is unknown. It is clear that at the end of his speech Jesus was tired out.

Storm Brewing

Some were well acquainted with the local weather and may well have sensed the imminence of a storm. Jesus was the master however, and his word was to be obeyed. That is still



true. If his teaching was obeyed worldwide just think how much better a place it would be. Obeying their master in spite of any misgivings, they launched forth accompanied by other boats as Mark records. The phrase Mark added that the other gospel accounts omit seems to imply that Jesus had at some point come ashore,

“They took him along in the boat as he was” (Mark 4:36).

This seems to suggest that Jesus was tired out and that they had to help him aboard. At all events he was no sooner in the boat than he fell asleep. So tired was he and so deeply asleep that even the increasing turbulence of the water and in all probability the sea spray falling on him failed to awaken him. As the storm became fiercer and the ship began to take in water, the disciples became more and more anxious. Eventually the situation became life-threatening and as a last resort the disciples woke Jesus out of his deep sleep.

Problem Solver

Quite what they expected Jesus to be able to do we cannot be certain. Certainly they had seen him cure people. The very first chapter of Mark's gospel contains the account of how Jesus cured Peter's mother-in-law of a fever. So completely was the fever cured that no period of convalescence was required. Immediately "*she served them,*" as Mark records (1:31).

Could a man who did such things help them here on a small boat in danger of foundering amid this raging storm? He was their last hope.

But he was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" (Mark 4:38).

Jesus now thoroughly awake, rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "*Peace, be still.*" The ensuing sudden calm left the disciples almost speechless. Healing of bodily ailments they could accept but this, control over the very forces of nature, was something altogether on a different scale.

Who is This?

The exclamation from the disciples is understandable, given what had happened. Their question was:

"Who can this be that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (4:41).

Another account tells us that just before he stilled the storm Jesus rebuked the disciples for their lack of faith. He asked them,

"Why are you fearful, O you of little faith (Matthew 8:26).

They might have been solid, practical men but when put to the test they had forgotten or chose not to believe what they had heard in the synagogue from

their childhood onwards. Jesus was really challenging them to remember the words of David in Psalm 107:

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 107:28,29).

Our Journey

By the grace of God all of us are afloat, journeying on the sea of life. To his disciples Jesus said,

"Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the age."

Just as he was with his disciples on the Sea of Galilee all those years ago so he will be with us.

If we really believe in him and try to obey his teaching we have his promise that he will be there to comfort, encourage and support us in all the difficulties of life whatever they are and however severe they might be.

More even than that, there will come a day when, as he promised, Jesus will return to this earth, in power and great glory, to sweep away man's misrule, establish a new worldwide kingdom and rule the world justly for ever. All who have tried to serve him in the way he has shown us will be welcomed into that kingdom.

As we look around us we see increasing corruption and lawlessness in the world. Here, in Jesus' teaching, is a prospect more glorious than anything this world can offer. Our appeal to you is to examine the evidence, and make the Lord Jesus your guide in your journey of life.

J. Michael Buckler

Always just right

Most of us live reasonably comfortably on Planet Earth, especially since, of all the other planets in the solar system only ours is able to sustain life.

Our world just happens to orbit the Sun in the middle of a band called “The Region of Tolerance”, where the temperature is just right for us. Take our two neighbouring planets, Venus and Mars:

There could be no possible life on **Venus**, for it is far too hot, having a surface temperature of 900 degrees F. Furthermore, it is surrounded by a thick cloud of 90 % CO₂ gas, and has an atmospheric pressure of 100 times that on Earth.

Life on **Mars** would be equally impossible; it would be far too cold. The daytime temperature rarely reaches 25 degrees Fahrenheit and at night it plunges to minus 80 degrees. Mars has very little atmosphere, the pressure being about a fiftieth that of Planet Earth. But the most serious problem is the total lack of water, for on Mars it never rains.

Just Right!

Now, Planet Earth just happens to be right for human life. Our atmosphere consists mainly of 78% nitrogen and 20% oxygen; an excellent mixture for breathing.

Because we have an atmosphere the Sun’s rays fill it to give us daylight, and by means of it, we can hear each other speak.



Earth’s atmosphere also protects us from falling rocks. Every day these rain down from outer space, and we can often see them brightly burning up at night time. We call them shooting stars, but we would call them something else if there was no protection from such missiles.

Our atmospheric pressure of 14.7 psi, is also comfortably just right for us, as also is our average temperature, and because the axis of our planet is tilted about 23 degrees from vertical, the temperature changes around, from season to season. This is something which plants and animals take full advantage of, and without it some would not exist.

Just Happened?

So how did we all get here? And why is it that we happen to exist where everything is so suitable for life? For some scientists to say that all these favourable conditions came about by sheer chance, including life itself, is just non-scientific talk. True Science deals with facts not airy speculation.

Our existence on this planet just cannot be because of a long string of coincidences. We have to introduce a word which atheistic scientists do not like to hear: Intelligence. Yet the concept of our existence being due to intelligent design is much more likely, than a succession of chance accidents.

The uniqueness of our planet shouts intelligence. There are too many “just happens to...” That is not a good enough answer, besides being most unscientific. Nature itself screams design, wherever one looks, and even more so through a microscope. Design suggests Creation, and Creation means God.

Factor God In!

With God in the equation, the prob-

lems dissolve, and we are led to His Word, the Bible.

We are on this planet because God wishes us to know something about Himself. There is something we can learn to our eternal advantage. It is about Salvation.

Without Him, this wonderful planet has no meaning whatsoever. With God's teaching about salvation we learn that Planet Earth is yet to enjoy a glorious future, of which you can become part.

This is now about your future. Whatever else you do, please make sure you investigate this Good News, and please do it soon.

Malcolm Edwards

Regular readers will be sorry to hear that Malcolm has fallen asleep in Christ after a long illness. He now awaits the time when, at the Coming of the Lord Jesus, he will be part of the new creation when “all things are made new” and the earth is transformed once again into a paradise. Then everything will always be “just right”.

True Happiness

The world's idea of happiness
Is when all is going well,
When lives are filled with sunny skies
Then happiness can dwell.

Spiritual happiness is different
It's far deeper: more profound;
And not touched by circumstance,
Or by what we have around.

Happiness comes when we embrace
God's Word, and then obey;
Then His peace will fill our hearts
Which naught can take away.

Colleen Simons

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