

Glad Tidings

of the Kingdom of God

1568



A Time to Reflect – page 3
How to Start Reading the Bible – page 5
Is there Death after Life? – page 11

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of the Kingdom of God

130th Year

A15

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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 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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A Time to Reflect

It was a tragic happening for a young man who loved wild adventure, but it certainly slowed him down and gave him time to think and write. William Henry Davies, who wrote *“The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp”* loved travelling.

He was a drifter who spent six years in the USA before hearing about the gold rush in the Klondike in north-western Canada. Like 100,000 other hopefuls, he set out to make his fortune but never made it to the gold-fields. Instead, attempting to jump a freight train in Ontario, he lost his footing and his right foot was crushed under the wheels of the train.

From then on he had an artificial leg and, as he said himself, “all the wildness had been taken out of me, and my adventures after this were not of my own seeking, but the result of circumstances”.

Slowing Down

Davies’ changed pace of life is something that eventually happens to all of us, though not usually as dramatically. Everything seems to be speeding up compared with how things were only a few years ago. Once you wrote a letter and it was a few days before you got a thoughtful reply. Now you text your communication and get an instant response. Or you don’t write at all, but just talk about it. Even if the person is across the world you can Skype, Face-Time, Tele-Conference or just call. That’s the way to make things happen, fast!

But does it mean that things are better as a result, or are they done in a rush, sometimes without the careful

thought that is needed to properly resolve issues?

W H Davies began to write poetry after his accident and his best-known poem “Leisure”, published in 1911, contains the lines:

*What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.
No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows ...*

*A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare*

Time

We may not like to think about it, but we all have limited time on earth. Eventually we will all die and before we die we will all slow down; that’s just how it is. Having rushed around and worn ourselves out, we will eventually end up sitting down, unable to move around freely, with lots of time to think, but perhaps without the mental energy and ability we once possessed. We probably used all that up: getting qualifications, earning a living, maximising our free time, caring for the family, and doing all the other things we so enjoyed. But it doesn’t have to be like that.

Long ago the pace of life was necessarily slower – before the invention of the phone, the computer, the internal combustion engine, and suchlike. The Bible was written at that time and contains advice which has endured because it comes from God who inspired wise men and women to tell us how to live, if we are to make the most of life. Here’s one such piece of sound counsel:

Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, "I have no pleasure in them"... (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

Wise King Solomon goes on to paint a word-picture of old age as experienced at the time he lived – a time without spectacles, hearing-aids, care homes and all the other conveniences that some people now enjoy. He likens life to a silver cord that can be loosed, a golden bowl that can be broken, a pitcher that can be smashed and a wheel that can be shattered (12:6), before adding:

Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

Hard as it is to face up to, time is running out for all of us.

Created World

Solomon was advising all of us to “Remember now your Creator”. Each of those words carries significance when you stop and think about them. We have the gift of memory and that gives us an awareness of our surroundings and our experience that animals lack or have only instinctively. God has given men and women some very special capabilities and we all use them on a day-to-day basis, often for our own ends.

Someday, sometime, we might think to use those faculties to ponder the deep things of life. Solomon says we should use those capabilities now, not then. The freight train of time could run over us and leave us incapable at any moment. And God’s great purpose with the earth is nearing its grand climax, when the Lord Jesus will return from heaven to establish God’s kingdom on

earth. It will be too late then to lament lost time and to repent and reform. Now is the time for serious thought.

The beauty of the world God created speaks for itself. It reflects something of the Creator’s personality. Just as a poem or a painting tells you about its creator, so the world God made expresses both His power and His personality.

God has a beautiful purpose with the earth which He is bringing to perfection. He wants His new society to be inhabited by men and women who will live in a way that pleases him and who themselves exhibit the characteristics we see so clearly in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus lived an exemplary life: he was the perfect expression of what his Father is like, so much so that he once said:

He who has seen me has seen the Father (John 14:9).

By all means look around, as did W H Davies, and marvel at what you see. But remember Solomon’s counsel. Marvel at the God who made the world, who made you, and who can remake both the physical conditions now experienced and can recreate you.

It was the apostle Paul – who had himself been transformed, from an enemy to a believer – who once said this of all those who come to know and follow the Lord Jesus:

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

That’s something to reflect upon.

Editor

How to Start Reading the Bible

The Bible that Jesus used was what we know as the Old Testament. So if anyone is about to say 'I believe in Jesus but I cannot believe in the Old Testament' they have proposed a great contradiction.

In support of what I mean consider this passage:

Jesus said to them, "Have you understood all these things?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord." Then he said to them, "Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old" (Matthew 13:51–52).

True Instruction

Here is the estimate of Jesus about the meaning of true instruction in the things of God. Dwell on the phrase – "things new and old". We must be careful to avoid the idea that when the Lord said this he meant things new and things old, as though he was speaking of two separate things or two different sets of ideas.

There is only one thing suggested: one set of ideas – namely the things which are new and old at the same time. The word *new* here does not mean fresh in the sense that it has just begun, nor does the word *old* mean something which is ancient and about to pass away.

Everything is new and everything is old. The principle is old, the application is new. The root is old, the blossom is new. The tree is old – the fruit is new every season. The two things are essential to growth. Destroy the old



and new growth will be greatly hindered. See then the relationship between the Old and the New – they are the same things.

The Road to Emmaus

In Luke chapter 24 we encounter two disciples who were heading home at the end of a tragic day. It was tragic because because their hopes had been dashed. Jesus – the one they expected to see triumphant – had been executed. Their lives were in the past tense. They spoke about:

Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people (Luke 24:19).

We were hoping that it was he who was going to redeem Israel (Luke 24:21).

Now notice what the stranger did, as the record continues:

Beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, he expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself (Luke 24:27).

From the Old Testament, Jesus opened their eyes. He did not bring

them any new teaching – he gave them a new understanding of old things. He threw new light on familiar passages. And it changed their lives, for later:

They said to one another, “Did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us on the road, and while he opened the Scriptures to us?” (Luke 24:32).

See then how they reacted. They sauntered out of Jerusalem wearily – they went back at the double excitedly. So what folly it is to say the Old Testament is finished and can be disregarded, when Jesus used it to rejuvenate his own disciples. The lesson is – be sure to read the whole Bible.

Interpretation

Now a word or two about methods of interpretation. I am sure it is true to say that the Bible has two levels of understanding. There is that part of it which is plain, unambiguous and crystal clear, as to its meaning, given a fair and open mind. The teaching is self-evident.

But the Bible is not a slot machine. It is not just a case of putting in the coin and out comes the information. It does not provide ready-made answers to every problem at a flick of the wrist. There are parts of the Bible where meanings and intentions are submerged – that is, they need to be sought after, they need to be uncovered and exposed.

A better figure is that of harvest. God rewards the diligent. If you sow you reap. If you are neglectful and careless the harvest is poor. There are laws of fruitfulness which have to be observed, else the result is scanty. This old law of harvest is especially true when it



comes to finding the deep things of God. If someone sows sparingly he or she will reap sparingly.

Key Passage

Now I want to draw your attention to what seems to me to be, according to the Bible, the best means of finding truly spiritual knowledge and understanding. It brings us to a saying of Jesus in the gospel of John:

*Jesus answered them and said, “My doctrine is not mine, but His who sent me. **If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on my own authority” (John 7:16–17).***

Notice what Jesus is saying – that the real secret of spiritual knowledge is obedience. In other words, the person who is most likely to discover the real truth is the person who is seeking it in order to obey it. This is in strict accord with the remainder of Bible teaching:

The humble He guides in justice, and the humble He teaches His way (Psalm 25:9);

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever (Psalm 111:10);

For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isaiah 57:15).

These passages reveal that the Truth places no condition upon the accidents of our life, or our education, or our social standing. But the Truth demands honesty, reverence and sympathy. It is revealed by God to the lowly and the contrite.

He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty (Luke 1:53).

What we Are

Here is the secret revealed: how much we know of the real truth about God is regulated by what we are in ourselves. If a man sows to the flesh he cannot reap the finer things of the spirit, even though his intellect is clear and his brain nimble.

The certainty of the truth and the deepest knowledge of God does not depend at last upon the discoveries of



science, nor the proof of miracles, nor the explanation of history. If it did then the truth would be in the reach chiefly of those who were the cleverest. Those who could weigh evidence, investigate history and languages, and study by experiment. This is exactly the opposite of what God says, as we have seen.

Again the truth about God is not likely to be found by those who seek it merely to speculate upon it, for truth ignored or misapplied is nearly always truth lost. Remember what Jesus said:

If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on my own authority (John 7:16–17).

A man who speculates about the truth but never does it has become half false already. In a way, the very truth itself has for him been turned into falsehood. So we ought to mark carefully the forces which blind men to the real truth revealed in God's word – so that we can be careful to avoid them. Here they are:

- ✓ Prejudice,
- ✓ Intellectual Vanity,
- ✓ Speculative Curiosity,
- ✓ Being superficial about serious things,
- ✓ Worldly preoccupations,
- ✓ Immorality.

God's Message for All

Think about it! Did prejudice ever discern truly and judge fairly? Can idle curiosity ever discover spiritual reality? Was anything deep and majestic ever revealed to the silly and the frivolous? Is it possible that a mind dominated by materialism will be able to understand the things of the Spirit?

The words of Jesus are singularly true - it is the person who seeks the truth in order to obey it who is most likely to find it at its best and its deepest. It is important to realise this because there is abroad an idea that the Bible can be understood only by those who are well educated and who hold degrees from some university or other.

As a result many people are put off making the attempt, thinking that they are not clever enough to understand the Word of God. Could there be anything further from the truth? Can you think for one minute that God would only communicate to mankind in such a way that only the very cleverest could understand him? Of course not!

The Word of God is for everybody – the educated and the uneducated alike. God is not interested in somebody's education. The simplest mind can understand the Bible; it's directed to the honest heart not to the clever mind. Jesus once said: *"Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice"* (John 18:37).

Straightforward

In general the Bible means what it says. There are parts which are symbolic, but common sense will soon tell you which they are. For the most part, what the Bible teaches can be taken at face value. When it says that people are dead, it does not mean they are alive on another level of existence. When it says that God will establish His kingdom of earth it does not mean it is just a spiritual reformation in human hearts. When it says that the Son of God rose from the dead, it does not mean it was a lifting up of his mind to the highest experience of God.

It does use symbol and figurative language at times, so it depicts the

devil as a roaring lion; the Lord is described as a lamb; the King has a two-edged sword projecting from his mouth. Your common sense tells you that these are symbolic statements and are to be understood in that way.

One Last Word

Finally I must say this. There is one great harmonious theme running right through the Bible and it can be summed up in one great Bible phrase: *"The kingdom of God"*. This phrase describes the sovereignty of God extending over all the life of mankind and over all the earth. It tells of a time to come when God's glory will be manifested in every part when His will is done by every person.

At that time every tear will be wiped away, all pain will end, all death will be abolished. The final triumph of God will be achieved through the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to earth, to establish once for all the government of God with Christ as its unchallenged King.

If you will read and understand the Bible and make it the centre of your life, by loving God and obeying His will, the prospect before you is wonderful. God offers the gift of eternal life – unsullied, untarnished and unending – in God's glorious kingdom. You cannot do it alone. God must be your help. Remember: it is the humble He teaches His way (Psalm 25:9). Pray to him for strengths and help and guidance. Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened. May the Lord bless you richly in your search.

Dennis Gillett

Concluded

The Labourers in the Vineyard

Jesus once told a story – a parable – about a vineyard owner who engaged casual labourers. Some were engaged early in the day while others were engaged as the day wore on. At payout time all the labourers were called and all were paid the same wage even though they had worked for varying times. You can read the parable in Matthew chapter 20.

Was it Unfair?

Many people find great difficulty with this as it seems to be so unfair that those who had put in a full day's work should be rewarded equally with those who had worked for only a few hours. We must remember that it is a story – not real life.

Obviously any employer who acted like the Vineyard owner would be inviting strike action. But Jesus was telling a story to teach us an important lesson, if we can work it out!

First we must look at the context and in this case we must ignore the chapter division between Matthew chapters 19 and 20. Those divisions are man-made and were not part of the original text. Whilst they are convenient for reference purposes, they can sometimes break the flow of the argument.

Rich Young Ruler

In Matthew chapter 19, verses 16-22, we read of a wealthy young man who came to Jesus with a question:



“Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” (Matthew 19:16).

The assumption behind the question was that we can earn God's gifts. But Jesus passed over that point and reminded the man of the Laws that God had given Moses. The young man was aware of those and had tried to live by them, but he still felt that there was something else he could do. Now Jesus knew all about the young man's fortune and of his big plans, and put his finger on the tender spot:

Jesus said to him, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me” (Matthew 19:21).

The young man's heart sank into his boots – he couldn't face it and he turned away. The apostle Peter heard all that had been said and he then spoke up:

“See, we have left all and followed you. Therefore what shall we have?” (Matthew 19:27).

His words reveal exactly the same attitude as that of the young man – that Peter had placed God in his debt and now he expected a wage. So Jesus answered that common outlook with the parable about labourers in the Vineyard who came at different hours of the day but all got a full day’s wage.

Key Ideas

Because the Bible is full of wonderful teaching about life you have to read it carefully, so let’s try that. Notice that:

1. The labourers engaged early in the day made a firm contract with the vineyard owner about the wages – “a denarius a day” (20:2). This was the going rate for an agricultural labourer. On that agreement they went to work.



This is a Roman denarius – reckoned to be a fair day’s pay for an agricultural worker in the 1st Century

2. Those engaged at the 3rd hour, the 6th hour, the 9th hour and even the 11th hour, were content with a very loose agreement (this is where the parable parts from real life – it is a story). The agreement was that “whatever is right I will give you” (20:4). It was the owner of the vineyard who would decide what was right and the labourers evidently trusted the employer to deal

with them fairly, otherwise they would not have come.

3. In the event, those late-comers were rewarded beyond their wildest expectations – they all received a full day’s pay. That was a very generous settlement
4. Those engaged early now assumed that they would receive more, but they received what they had contracted to receive and then complained. However, the employer pointed out that he had honoured the agreement and that they had no grounds for complaint, but that they were complaining about his generosity to others.

He answered one of them and said, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?’ (Matthew 20:13–15).

Key Lesson

If we go to the Almighty thinking in terms of wages, and of what we can earn from a relationship with Him, we need to recall this well-known Bible passage:

The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).

However, if we go to Him in faith, trusting in His generosity, He wants to give us eternal life. There is only ONE thing that God requires of us – our love. Without that it is impossible to please God

David Budden

Is there Death after Life?

It may seem a silly way round to ask this question but this is deliberate. For it is very important to establish the Bible answer, as there are various views about what happens after life ends. Attend a few funeral services and you will get very confused indeed.

Poems of Comfort

There was not a dry eye in the room. Adam's widow had just read a poem at his funeral service. It started:

*"Don't cry for me now I have died,
For I'm still here: I'm by your side,
My body's gone but my soul is here,
Please don't shed another tear"*

and it ended with these words:

*"While I'm still there, I can't be
dead."*

There are several such poems from which people derive great comfort. They express ideas like the deceased person being in the 'soft stars' rather than in the grave; that their 'loving arms will hold you, when we meet again' and that they 'comfort and stay with us, through each of our days'. In fact, many people, whether religious or not, believe that something of us lives on after the end of this life.

Bible Teaching

The Bible presents a radically different picture and this, remember, is a message from God, the Creator of all life:

The living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing (Ecclesiastes 9:5);

For in death there is no remembrance of You; in the grave who will give You thanks? (Psalm 6:5);

The dead do not praise the Lord, nor any who go down into silence (Psalm 115:17);

For Sheol cannot thank You, death cannot praise You; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your truth (Isaiah 38:18).

Old and New Teaching

These passages are from the Old Testament but you cannot discount them as merely an outdated message. These were the Scriptures read and believed by the Lord Jesus and this was his teaching also. On one occasion he was asked about an atrocity committed by the Roman governor Pilate, and this was his reply, followed by another reference to a serious accident that had happened:

*Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but **unless you repent you will all likewise perish.** Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but **unless you repent you will all likewise perish** (Luke 13:1-5).*

Notice the alternatives: either we repent or we perish! One of the most famous verses in the Bible teaches just this, if you read it carefully:

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

In our natural state we are therefore in a plight. We are born to live some years on earth and then to perish – to cease completely from any form of existence and to be forgotten. This is not what God wants to happen, because He loves His creation and wants the best for us:

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

What a wonderful thing to discover: that God does not want us to die!

Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord God, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?' (Ezekiel 33:11).

What a Gift!

Notice that the prophet is both affirming that God wants us to live and not die and is urging his hearers to turn from their evil ways if they want to live. For the God who wants to save us is also a righteous God who has decreed that all sinners must die. Yet, in His amazing love and mercy, God has provided a solution. He sent His son as a sacrifice for sin, so that our sins can be forgiven. This enables us to be saved from the otherwise inevitable punishment of extinction in death.

For the wages of sin is death, but **the gift of God is eternal life** in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).

God has done all that He can, but the death of Jesus does not automatically save us. We have to respond: to 'turn from our way', to 'repent' and to try, to the best of our ability, to live a godly life following Jesus. Not everyone will be saved. Not everyone will be raised from the dead. If we are not ready and waiting for Jesus when he returns we may hear these chilling words:

I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness!' (Matthew 7:23).

Decide NOW!

Jesus was raised from the dead, and resurrection at the Coming of Jesus is the hope of all his true followers, so there can be life – eternal life – after death. However, this hope is only for the true followers of Jesus (see Acts 3:19-23).

Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

For everyone else – and the Bible says this is the majority – there really is death after life. But it doesn't need to be like that.

Poems about the afterlife might give hope and comfort, but both are make-believe. The facts are that if we do nothing we are destined to perish – to cease to exist. If we become true believers then we can have hope. The choice is ours and we may not have much time to make up our minds.

Anna Hart

Jesus – Son of God and Son of Man

*In this series, **John Woodall** has explained the beliefs of Christadelphians and the titles of his articles, shown on page 15, demonstrate the coverage so far and gives an overview of Bible teaching about important issues. In this article he explains that whilst Jesus is the Son of God he was also truly human and was tempted in just the same way as we are, the difference being that he overcame every temptation.*

Key Man

Very rightly, Jesus is referred to many times in these studies. There is much more to say about him, but we have seen already that he is the most important person in the Bible and in the whole purpose of God. We have already mentioned his perfect life, his special death as the final sacrifice for sin, his resurrection to eternal life and his ascension to heaven, from where he will return as world-wide King.

Yet the New Testament still refers to him as a man – even after he was raised to eternal life. He is *“the man ... from heaven”* (1 Corinthians 15:47-9), and *“the man, Christ Jesus”* (1 Timothy 2:5). The Apostle John tells us that Jesus *“is come in the flesh”*; meaning that he had the same human nature that we do. This is so important that he warns – *“For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist”* (2 John 7).

Tempted like Us

Jesus therefore truly and fully shared our nature, and was *“in all points tempted as we are”* (Hebrews 4:15). Because of this, he could defeat sin in his own life by always obeying his

Father's will and never giving way to his human desires when they went against what his Father asked him to do. God himself could not overcome sin in that way, because God cannot be tempted. The Epistle of James tells us,

“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone” (James 1:13).

A thousand years before Jesus' birth, God made this promise to King David:

When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever (2 Samuel 7:12–13).

The first thing this tells us is that the Saviour would be the Son of God, and in the last article we learned how this happened, when Jesus was born of the virgin Mary (Luke chapter 1). The second thing this tells us is that the Saviour would also be truly a son of David. God told David very plainly that he will *“come from your body”*. These are the same words (in Hebrew) that God used to Abraham when promising the birth of Isaac (Genesis 15:4); and

David used them about his son Absalom (2 Samuel 16:11). In today's language, the Bible was saying that the Saviour would be physically, genetically, descended from David.

Truly Human

This shows us how mistaken it is to think that Jesus existed in another form before he was born. If any being – such as an angel – was introduced into the world by birth of a woman, he would not be the son of David in that literal way. Mary would not be his real mother either: in that case she would only be the way through which a spirit-being entered the world. But it was not like that.

Mary was the true mother of Jesus, David was his distant grandfather, and Jesus is truly descended from the long line of people who are listed in the genealogy in Luke chapter 3. The result of this was that Jesus had a real constant struggle in his mind between his own human will and the will of his Father. Like us, he had to fight against temptation inside himself. He fought it every moment of every day and that battle continued until his death. The apostle Paul refers to his obedient attitude of mind and his daily humility in these terms:

Being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted him and given him the name which is above every name (Philippians 2:8–9).

Jesus lived a perfect life because he always allowed his Father's will to rule him. Every day he accepted his Father's help, so that his victory was God's victory – in Bible language it was the victory of 'spirit' over 'flesh'. Earlier

we considered Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, and saw that he overcame every temptation by reminding himself of God's counsel in the Bible. The Gospels explain that such temptations went on throughout his life, and each time it was his reliance on God and His words in the Bible that made it possible for Jesus to do the right thing.

A Partnership for Salvation

Once we understand what Jesus accomplished in his life of perfect obedience we begin to realise what a wonderful partnership there was between God in heaven and His Son on earth. The work of saving God's people from their sins is God's doing, but we should also thank Jesus for all that he has accomplished for us. God sent His Son and made it possible for him to live that perfect life; and Jesus, using all the help that his Father offered to him, obeyed perfectly. Here is one occasion when Jesus refers to the way that Father and Son cooperated:

For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill him, because he had done these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working" (John 5:16–17).

This was a true fellowship, which was not spoiled or sullied by sin. For although Jesus was tempted in all points as we are, there follows this triumphant statement:

*We do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, **yet without sin** (Hebrews 4:15).*

John Woodall

A Christadelphian's Faith

*This is the coverage so far, as **John Woodall** has outlined the beliefs of the Christadelphians, so you can see how his latest article fits in to the unfolding purpose of God. All previous articles are available on our website: www.gladtidingsmagazine.org. There is plenty more to come, God willing, in this series about true Bible teaching.*

❖ **GOD THE CREATOR HAS PLANS FOR THE EARTH**

1. God is One, the Father, and the Creator of all. He is All-powerful and All-knowing.
2. God tells us everything that He wants us to know about Himself and His purpose, in the Bible.
3. God guided men to write the Bible, and it contains many evidences of its truth.
4. God has definite plans to make the earth a place of peace and praise to Him, for ever.
5. God revealed these plans to particular people such as Noah, Abraham, David, the Prophets and the Apostles.

❖ **GOD'S WAY AND THE SAD RESULTS OF DEFYING IT**

6. God wants all people to happily serve Him so He made laws. These laws are revealed in the Bible.
7. From the beginning most human beings disobeyed these laws. The Bible calls this 'sin'.
8. Sin brought death. Death is simply the ending of life, not the entrance to either paradise or torment.
9. The dead are not conscious of anything. But some who have died will be raised (brought back to life) again.

❖ **GOD'S WAY AND HUMAN RESISTANCE**

10. Sin and temptation – the desire to go our way instead of God's way – are deep-seated within our human nature.

11. 'Satan', and 'the devil' are graphic, dramatic ways of describing human waywardness in all its forms.

12. The word 'satan' means 'opposer'; 'devil' means 'slanderer'. This is what human nature is like.

13. We are tempted by our own desires. There is no superhuman 'satan' in God's universe.

❖ **RECONCILIATION WITH GOD**

14. God's plan to fill the earth with His glory has not failed. He is working at it right now.

15. God wants men and women to change and come back to Him. The Bible calls this 'repentance'.

16. We must accept that God is right. Our human desires must be sacrificed – given up – when they go against God's way.

17. When we accept this fact and repent, God delights to forgive us and accept us into His family.

❖ **GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT**

18. God has provided a way for us to return to Him and be forgiven. That way is shown to us perfectly by Jesus.

19. God's holy spirit came upon Mary, and Jesus was born. Mary was his mother, God is his Father.

20. Jesus is truly human as we are, and was tempted like us. He is also the only begotten Son of God.

(To be continued)

The Spoils of War

We've heard it all before; we've heard Luke's story of Christ's birth every year for 2,000 years. Outside of the creation itself it was certainly the most unique happening in all the world, nor will it ever happen again. Have you forgotten so soon? Does it have meaning for you?

Out of the inky darkness, so goes the story, came a flash of light so dazzling it could knock you out. Scared witless, the shepherds nevertheless stood their ground standing face to face with the most commanding figure they had ever seen. Night turned to day bathing them in a glorious, out-of-this-world blinding light. Then the angel spoke:

Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord ... And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" (Luke 2:10–14).

Hardly believing what they were seeing and hearing, they hastily gathered themselves to run to Bethlehem where they found the newborn. They were so excited they even deserted their sheep for a time as they spread the news. What joy! This child, the Messiah, the Prince of Peace, must be their long-awaited king who would forever reign over Israel on the throne of his father David in a kingdom that would last forever (Isaiah 9:6-7). Thus far, we see it hasn't worked out that way for Israel, at least not yet.

Peace or a Sword?

Aged 30, Jesus began his ministry and selected and sent his twelve disciples to heal and to preach the gospel to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:6), giving them advice on how to behave. He comforted them with words connoting God's great care for them, comparing them in value to the sparrow, insignificant in God's creation, but of immense value to the Creator. (verses 29-30). Yet his final instructions were alarming: it was a difficult task that lay ahead for them. Here are his words:

Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household' (Matthew 10:34–36).

Luke's account includes these words:

Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division (Luke 12:51).

How can this be? What can these words possibly mean? After all, Christ's watchword was love, never division. And aren't families supposed to love one another, no matter what? He is the Prince of Peace – people believe this. It seems what Christ was doing was issuing a warning to us – as well as to his disciples – of how the world works. He is warning us not to allow ourselves to be led astray by dreamers, seducers, even family

members and best friends, who might try to persuade us to serve anyone but our Creator.

The dreamer or prophet could be your brother, son, or daughter, wife or best friend. Do not let them entice you from the love of the LORD your God with all your heart and soul. You need to fear Him and keep His commandments, and obey His voice, serve Him and cleave to Him (see Deuteronomy 13:6-11).

Fighting Talk

When the warning in Deuteronomy was issued the danger was idolatry: today the danger is that people prefer to exalt man and human thinking rather than worshipping God. Yet we are told in no uncertain terms to love and obey God; He is our lifeline, the key to everlasting life and we must hold fast to that conviction. God is a jealous God and He won't put up with rejection. Worldly distractions beset all of us and we can all be guilty of not keeping God in the forefront of our minds in a show of love and obedience.

Jesus Christ was declaring that we must wage a war which is unlike any you have read about or witnessed. We're not talking about guns and missiles and nuclear bombs. This war is one of the spirit, where we are to put on the whole armour of God:

Take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the



helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Ephesians 6:13–17).

Bolstered by prayer, such armour provides all our needs, but our weapons are invisible. How do we fight this solitary war? By trying to conquer our inner self and by seeking always the will of God, and aiming to do that, rather than pleasing ourselves. Thus we forth in our lives the fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness and mercy (Galatians 5:22-23). These are all characteristics learned at the feet of the Master. This is the war we must wage.

Jesus is King

The obvious irony here should not be overlooked: the war may be spiritual, but the reward is temporal. The shepherds ran with great expectations towards what they believed was the start of a new era, and they worshipped a saviour who they believed would reign as King of the Jews. It didn't happen in their lifetimes, but if

we read the prophets carefully, we will learn that these things may well come to pass in ours.

We're talking about a kingdom here, and a king who will reign on earth. Not a kingdom in heaven, but the kingdom of God to be established on earth, as preached by Christ and his disciples. We're talking about God's purpose with the earth, with Israel, Jerusalem and the believers who are to reign with Christ.

After the resurrection, as the disciples watched him being taken up to heaven, two angels appeared and said to the men:

Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw him go into heaven (Acts 1:11).

Apparently it was no secret to the general public that Jesus would one day be king. On the cross, a criminal being crucified alongside him, in a display of unalloyed faith said:

Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom (Luke 23:42).

This was the kingdom that Jesus had taught his disciples to pray for:

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Luke 11:2).

In this prayer Christ was teaching us to pray for God's Kingdom to come on earth. He admonishes us to watch for his return and to be ready, giving his blessing on those who are faithful to this truth. For it is said:

They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God (Luke 13:29).

On Earth – Not in Heaven

This Scripture supports the premise given, that earth – not heaven – is the site of the promised Kingdom of God. There are no geographical directions in space, only relative ones, e.g. up, down, backward, forward. Terrestrial directions only work on earth.

When earthly salvation becomes a reality at the return of Christ, believers will reap the spoils of war – the gift of eternal life. If you have ever wandered through a graveyard and paused to read the messages on the tombstones, you will see the name of the deceased, dates of birth and death, and occasionally this message: *Awaiting the Resurrection.*

Christ knows them that are his. So thanks be to God for Christ's sacrifice for us so that we can win the war, our sins and imperfections covered. By the grace of God we shall live, despite failures in the battle. When death comes, the strife will be over, our individual battles will be won or lost. Our next waking moment will be when the Lord comes to save us. Believers will be resurrected to immortal life in the Kingdom of God on the earth:

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate them one from another ... Then the King will say to those on his right hand, 'Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world' (Matthew 25:31–34).

Marian Canoles

Choices

We all like freedom to choose. We prefer to choose our occupation, our husband or wife, our clothes, our food and we don't take kindly to being told by other people what we should do.

When we are young our parents make choices for us and caring parents will choose what they consider best for our welfare. As we grow up, they try to guide us into making wise choices for our future. But we want to make our own decisions. The process of growing up and becoming more independent can be painful for both children and parents.

Difficult Choices

Whenever we have to make a difficult decision in life – Which career to take up? Which purchase to make? Which route to take? – we like to make an informed choice. We like to know all the details and weigh up the pros and cons, before coming to a decision.

It's strange how many people don't take the same care when it comes to choosing what to believe about their spiritual lives and their long term future. They muddle along through life accumulating a hotch-potch of religious ideas remembered from childhood, friends, books and television personalities. It's no wonder that they often end up confused or sceptical.

Making the Right Choice

There are innumerable notions about God and the purpose of life but there is one Book which claims to be from God. Here is the claim it makes – that it is a message from God for all mankind:



All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16).

In the Bible we have a guidebook to teach us God's ways and His purpose. It is a manual for living with God. He, as a loving Creator, has given us freedom of choice or freewill. We can read it or ignore it.

"But," you may say, "the Bible is a huge book and I don't know where to start." There are so many modern English versions today and the Christadelphians, who produce this magazine, are always willing to help with classes, seminars and internet correspondence courses.

They will never impose their own views on you but are ready to help you discover the exciting message of hope they have found in its pages. It was the Psalmist who said:

The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple (Psalm 119:130).

The choice is yours. Leave the Bible closed on the shelf and remain in the dark or open it today and find the wonderful hope that can be yours.

Marion Buckler

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