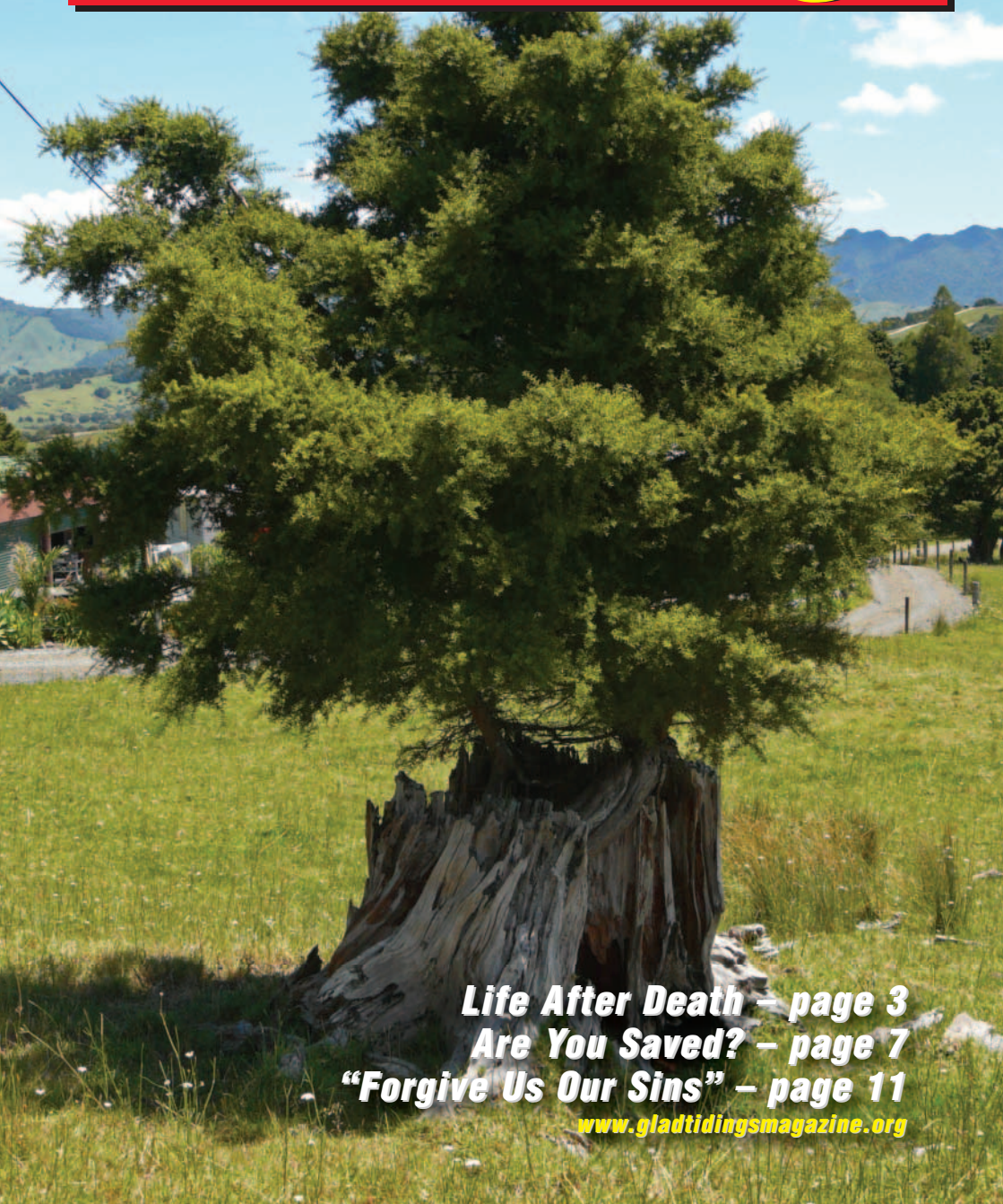


Glad Tidings

of the Kingdom of God

1578



Life After Death – page 3
Are You Saved? – page 7
“Forgive Us Our Sins” – page 11

www.gladtidingsmagazine.org

Glad Tidings

of the Kingdom of God

130th Year

L15

1578



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.

Glad Tidings Distributors for orders and payments

United Kingdom – Cilla Palmer, "Highlands",
78 Mildenhall Road, Fordham, Ely, Cambs,
England CB7 5NR
Tel: (01638) 723959 (24 hrs & Fax)
cilla@gladtidings.fsnet.co.uk

Australia – Jon Fry, 19 Macey Street, Croydon South,
Victoria, Australia 3136
gladtidingsaustralia@gmail.com

Canada – Vivian Thorp, 5377 Birdcage Walk,
Burlington, Ontario, Canada L7L 3K5
vivianthorp@bell.net

New Zealand – Neil Todd, 14 Morpeth Place, Blockhouse
Bay, Auckland 7, New Zealand
thetodds@xtra.co.nz

South Africa – A. J. Oosthuizen, P.O.Box 50357,
Musgrave Road, Durban 4062, South Africa
antoost@mweb.co.za

U.S.A. – Pat Hemingray, 3079 Kilburn West,
Rochester Hills, USA MI 48306

Other Countries – Andrew Johnson, 22 Hazel Drive,
Hollywood, Birmingham, England B47 5RJ
andrew@gladtidings.me.uk

Editor: Owen Tecwyn Morgan, 26 The Crescent,
Hampton-in-Arden, Solihull, England B92 0BP
glad.tidings@virgin.net

Publisher: The Glad Tidings Publishing Association
A registered charity – Number 248352

Bible Talks, Study Classes, Sunday Schools and Youth Clubs are held regularly by Christadelphians worldwide. The address of your nearest group can be obtained either from one of the Glad Tidings Distributors listed above, or from one of the contact addresses listed on the back cover.

Contents

Life After Death.....3

Do You REALLY WANT to Live For Ever?.....5

Are You Saved?.....7

The Letters of John.....9

“Forgive Us Our Sins” ...11

The Temple of God14

Hezekiah – Help and Healing16

Is Idol Worship Idle?18

Acknowledgements

Photographs:

Cover: A Reborn Tree, New Zealand
Ken Anderton

Other Illustrations:

Page 3: istockphotos; pg 4: Jeff Wilson; pg 8: Wikipedia Commons; All other images: clipart.com.

Bible Versions

The version most used in this issue is the New King James Version (NKJV) and other versions are sometimes used.

- ✦ The New King James Version is copyrighted by Thomas Nelson.
- ✦ The English Standard Version is published by Harper Collins Publishers © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission.
- ✦ The New International Version is copyrighted 1978 by New York Bible Society.

Life After Death

The oldest tree on the planet – a bristlecone pine, in the White Mountains of America – is said to be 5062 years old. But even old trees die eventually, because nothing lives for ever. Yet a dead tree can begin to live again, as this month's front cover demonstrates dramatically. Springing from the trunk of the dead tree, the new growth offers to start the life cycle all over again.

If Only!

The Book of Job is one of the oldest writings of the Old Testament and details the experience of a man who lost everything and then tried to work out why that had happened to him. He felt a huge sense of injustice and despaired that he would ever be vindicated, fearing that he would die and be no more. In one of his protests he made this plea to God:

There is hope for a tree, if it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its tender shoots will not cease. Though its root may grow old in the earth, and its stump may die in the ground, yet at the scent of water it will bud and bring forth branches like a plant. But man dies and is laid away; indeed he breathes his last and where is he? As water disappears from the sea, and a river becomes parched and dries up, so man lies down and does not rise. Till the heavens are no more, they will not awake nor be roused from their sleep (Job 14:7–12).

This might be an ancient writing, but it is clear that the inspired author had a clear view of what death consists of – an unconscious state from which



there might be no awakening. But Job was a believer in the Almighty and is described as an upright and a blameless worshipper, so he believed there was a prospect of life after death. He just hoped and prayed that he might be one of those who will be raised, to start life all over again. He wanted to be like a tree that would sprout again.

Never Forgotten

Years after Job wrestled with his anxieties, the prophet Isaiah responded to God's question and was given a most disconcerting commission. He had seen a vision of the Lord in glory, filling the temple, and had heard a voice asking "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" (Isaiah 6:8). It led to Isaiah becoming one of God's prophets when he volunteered: "Here am I! Send me", and the result was one of the longest books in the Bible – all 66 chapters of the prophecy.

But the immediate response was most discouraging, for the voice in the temple said that he was to tell the people of his day that however hard they listened, they would not under-

stand his message, and however hard they looked they would not be able to see what God was going to do (see Isaiah 6, verses 9–11). It turns out, as Jesus later explained, that they could neither hear nor see if they didn't want to know about God's purpose – desire was the key to perception (see Matthew 13:14–15), then and now.

Isaiah's question was to the point for, he asked, “*Lord, how long?*” and was told that the purpose of God would include His people being moved far from their land which would become desolate in their absence, but there would always be a remnant of faithful people through the ages and the purpose of God would never be abandoned. Like a tree which had been felled, there would come a time when the nation would spring up again:

*Then I said, “Lord, how long?” And He answered: “Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, the houses are without a man, the land is utterly desolate, the Lord has removed men far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. **But yet a tenth will be in it, and will return and be for consuming, as a terebinth tree or as an oak, whose stump remains when it is cut down. So the holy seed shall be its stump**” (Isaiah 6:11–13).*

The Hope of Israel

Isaiah prophesied until the time of good King Hezekiah, and a little over a hundred years after his time the land was indeed left without inhabitant and its people went into exile, but only for 70 years. It was during the much longer period of exile, following the Roman conquest of Jerusalem, that it seemed that the hope of Israel was lost. For nearly 2000 years the Jewish

people were dispersed throughout the earth (“far away” indeed) and the land was left desolate, just as the angel had said. The ancient prophecies about Israel's return and their future role as God's people seemed a distant prospect, but they had only to remember God's word to find hope for the future. For, as Isaiah had foreseen, when there was no hope of a king to succeed King David and to keep his line extant, as God had promised, the ancient stump of Jesse (David's father) sprang a new shoot, and a child was born in David's line, who was to be Israel's future king:

There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. His delight is in the fear of the Lord... (Isaiah 11:1–3).

This descendant was the Lord Jesus Christ, born of David's line, and he is Israel's future king, despite the fact that they do not yet recognize him, nor avail themselves of what has been done for them. That time of recognition and acceptance will come, as other prophets have foretold, and the people of Israel will once more flourish as their ancient promises become a vital and living reality for themselves and, through them, for all nations.

This hope of Israel is alive and well and soon will blossom and flourish when the Lord Jesus returns from heaven to call together his people for the great transformation that lies ahead.

Editor

Do You REALLY WANT to Live For Ever?

The prophet Daniel was inspired to foretell the resurrection of the dead at the coming of Jesus and called it an awakening from the dreamless sleep of death. Then he adds that only some of those raised from the dead will be made immortal. Here's what he said:

Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever (Daniel 12:2,3).

Jesus expands on this Old Testament teaching as follows:

The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear! (Matthew 13:41–43).

Many shall Awake

After the resurrection, the faithful will be rewarded with eternal life (perfect life that lasts for ever), but in these words there is also an important warning. Those judged unfaithful will experience 'shame and everlasting contempt'. Please note that the verses do not say they will suffer eternal pain. In fact the Psalmist says this:

The wicked shall return to Sheol (the grave), all the nations that forget God (Psalm 9:17 ESV).

"Hell" or "Sheol" are names that just mean the grave and what we are being told is that people who are rejected at the judgement in the last days will just die again. Their fate will be that of "everlasting destruction" (2 Thessalonians 1:9) and their bad reputation will be always remembered as a warning.

Jesus was once asked a trick question about the resurrection concerning who will be married to whom in the future age. His answer tells us much about the blessings of immortality:

Jesus answered and said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection" (Luke 20:34–36).

Equality with angels! Not ever dying or being sick or sad again! This is what God offers to us, if we will really try to be faithful.

New Nature

We are not thinking of living for ever with the weak sinful nature we have at present: that would not be a blessing at all. Angels enjoy a perfect quality of life in total obedience to God:

Bless the Lord, you His angels, who excel in strength, who do His word,

heeding the voice of His word (Psalm 103:20).

God promises that those who try to please Him now in their weak mortal state, will enjoy perfect sin-free lives helping forward God's purpose in His kingdom when Jesus is here as King.

We can be sure that if we really want to serve God properly, and for ever, He will make it possible for us. Here are two more of these promises:

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen (Jude 24–25).

And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his wife has made herself ready." And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God" (Revelation 19:6–9).



God's Gift

Immortality will be a free gift from God: we can never deserve it. All that we actually earn is death, but God wants us in His kingdom and He wants to forgive our failings. The apostle Paul, writing about Abraham, says this about his faith:

"It was accounted to him for righteousness." Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification (Romans 4:22–25).

God will count us righteous in His sight if we have a faith like Abraham's and act accordingly. God wants us to be baptized into the saving name of Jesus, so we can be covered by his sacrificial death. And Paul's chapter about baptism ends with this summary:

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

But let us not ignore something else that Paul said, earlier in this letter:

[God] will render to each one according to his deeds: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honour, and immortality" (Romans 2:6–7).

But to get eternal life, we have really got to want it, and must reach out to God for the salvation that He has graciously provided. As Jesus said, we must 'hunger and thirst' (Matthew 5:6) after the things that are right with God.

John Woodall

Are You Saved?

The house was blazing and fire-fighters were rescuing people trapped inside. It was extremely dangerous and the fire-fighters had to apply their skills with great care. "Thank you SO much for saving me", gasped one man who had finally been brought to safety. "No problem", said the fire-fighter, "but you stay well away from the building now; don't go anywhere near until we say it is OK".

Some minutes later the man ran back to a part of the house that did not look as though it was on fire. No-one knew why and no-one could stop him. Suddenly there was an almighty crash and part of the building fell on him, killing him outright.

Remember Lot's Wife

There is a similar account in the Bible. Angels visited the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and told the man Lot to get out, together with his family. God was going to destroy these cities because their inhabitants were so wicked. Lot's family was led to safety by the angels, who even held their hands and told them *"Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain"* (Genesis 19:14–17). However, after being taken out of the city, Lot's wife did look back and was turned into a pillar of salt. Jesus refers to this in Luke 17:32, warning people of the importance of taking notice of his words.

In each of these scenarios people had been removed from inevitable destruction by being taken to a safe place, but they subsequently perished because of their own foolishness.



Doubtless they thought they were 'saved', even though they perished.

Jesus our Saviour

We are all painfully aware that the human race is a dying race. Everyone dies. However, the Bible tells us that God sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world (1 John 4:14). In fact, being associated with the name of Jesus is the only way of escaping permanent death.

"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).

God has provided a way of escaping inevitable destruction. Consequently, the Bible refers to believers as 'saved' (2 Timothy 1:9, Titus 3:5, Romans 8:24). Some professing Christians believe that this means that eternal life is guaranteed to them, whatever might happen. This is not what the Bible says. The death of Jesus can save us from the inevitability of death, just as Lot's wife was saved from the brim-

stone and fire that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24). However, just like Lot's wife, we might still perish. This is clear in the writings of the apostles. In 2 Timothy chapter 1, the apostle Paul describes believers as 'saved' (verse 9), but subsequently urges Timothy to 'hold fast the pattern of sound words' (verse 13) and clearly states that some people have in fact strayed from the correct way (2:16–18).

Similarly, Paul tells the believers at Corinth that they are saved by the gospel *"if you hold fast the word which I preached to you"* (I Corinthians 15:2). Jesus himself says that *"he who endures to the end will be saved"* (Matthew 10:22 and 24:13). The point is reinforced in I Corinthians 1:18 where Paul describes believers as those *"who are being saved"* (also 2 Corinthians 2:15).

God Asks Us to Obey

God has saved mankind from the otherwise inevitable death sentence. However, He asks us to respond individually: to believe and be baptised:



"He who believes and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

Jesus said that

"Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

These are very strong words without any possibility of compromise. Later in the chapter Jesus says that we must believe on the 'name' of the Son of God (v 18). It is abundantly clear that this belief is not merely an intellectual assent to the record of Jesus' life. It also requires a personal commitment, which must be based on an understanding of what the 'name' means.

Jesus means 'Saviour' and Christ means 'Anointed One'. Those names spell out God's plan: to save us because of what Jesus has done and to send him again as King.

The Only Name

In Acts 4:17–18 Jesus' name is associated with doctrine (i.e. beliefs). It is therefore necessary to understand his name and the implications for our relationship with him. Jesus commanded his followers to live by the same selfless and godly principles that he did (John 13:34). He described this as taking up the cross:

"Whoever desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Mark 8:34).

This obviously requires us to understand what Jesus himself believed and how he lived.

We have been offered a reprieve from the death sentence that we inherited from the moment we were born. God offers us salvation. Please don't ignore this life-saving offer.

Anna Hart

The Letters of John

The Apostle John wrote letters, as well as his Gospel and the Book of Revelation. Three of these have been preserved in the Bible. They belong to a period late in the First Century, because there is already evidence in them of the infiltration of evil men predicted by Paul and Peter.

From the opening chapter of Revelation we learn that John had a special responsibility for a group of seven mainly Gentile (non-Jewish) Christian congregations in the Roman province of Asia (the west side of Turkey). So he seems to have spent his last days away from the land of Israel. The style of the letters, particularly the first, mirrors that of his Gospel – thoughtful and logical.

John's First Letter

It is difficult to follow the argument in the five chapters of the first epistle. It should be remembered that the original letter would have had no chapter divisions, indeed, no punctuation whatever, and so we depend heavily on our translators to guide us through the subtleties of the Greek text. The overall theme is clear – that believers must love each other, if they want God to forgive their sins. But John also wants to correct those who had begun to question the father-son relationship between Jesus and God.

❖ **The Beginning**

The opening verses correspond to the beginning of John's Gospel – the thrilling concept that God's Word – His will to bring a new kind of life to this world, revealed verbally in the Old Tes-

tament – had now been shown to men in physical form, embodied in His Son. Living with Jesus as we did, says John, and just as any son resembles his father, you will come to see what God is truly like.

This statement elevates Jesus of Nazareth above anyone else who has ever lived. The claims of any others to be channels of God's message fall down when we contemplate the life of the Son of God. There can be no comparison. Jesus is not just another prophet. As John writes in the fifth chapter:

This is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life (1 John 5:11–12).

❖ **Light and Dark**

Darkness and light do not mix. If we live a life of sin, John says, we cannot come close to God, Who dwells in light. Of course, none of us except Jesus is truly sinless. But our lapses, humbly confessed, can be forgiven for Jesus' sake. The real test of our claim to love God in heaven is twofold – first, that we are prepared to show compassion to our brothers and sisters here on earth, and second, that we keep ourselves separate from the evil world around us.

John remembers that Jesus warned that 'antichrists' (opponents of Jesus) would arise. They have already come, he says, and they deny that Jesus is the promised Messiah (the Christ). And to prove they were not genuine, he adds, they have begun to leave the

church and return to the world, because they are uncomfortable in the presence of the truth. The Holy Spirit, like the anointing oil that consecrated kings and priests, has revealed that truth to the community of the believers. We must hold it fast.

❖ **Life of Love**

John returns to the vital rôle of love in the life of a Christian. If we hate each other, as Cain hated his brother Abel, we are effectively murderers, he says, even though we strike no blow. Love is self-sacrificing, and emerges in practical giving, and forgiving, and even intercession for the forgiveness of another sinner. Love starts off from God – He loved us first, and sent His Son to bring us to Himself. Now we must show that love to others. Nobody can see God. But looking at us, as people once looked at Jesus and loved him, they should see a little of the character of God. What a challenge John leaves his readers to try and live up to!

John's Second Letter

The second letter is very brief. It is addressed to 'the elect lady' (one who is chosen by God). Whether this is a Christian sister, or John's code word for a congregation of believers, we cannot be sure. He commends her children for their faithful walk, and reminds her of the need to love each other (his life-long theme). But he has a sharp warning.

The antichrists are on the way, he says, men who deny that Jesus was a man like us, subject to temptation and death. Their teaching would undermine the sacrifice of Jesus, emptying of meaning his victory over sin. Anyone who comes to you with these wrong ideas must not be welcomed. Do not

even allow them into your house.

These strong words indicate two important things: first, what we believe is important, and second, the truth the apostles taught cannot be modified. To confuse or change the rôle of Jesus as both Son of God and Son of Man is to risk losing our reward.

John's Third Letter

This time the recipient of John's letter has a name – Gaius. It was a common one in the First Century, and we cannot identify him with certainty from others of that name in Romans and Acts. John had just been visited by travelling Christian brothers who told him about the situation in Gaius' congregation.

All was not well. These brothers had tried to visit the church Gaius attended, but had been shut out by a man called Diotrephes, a self-appointed leader of the congregation. He did not even admit the authority of John, one of the 12 apostles! But faithful Brother Gaius had received the visitors and made them welcome. And Brother Demetrius, too, could be relied on. Soon, John tells Gaius, he would be on the warpath. He was going to make a personal visit and challenge Diotrephes to his face.

This letter shows once again how soon after the time of Jesus bad influences were creeping into the Church. It is a warning to us that an easy-going attitude will soon allow the gospel to become diluted and corrupt, endangering its power to save us from death.

We shall hear from John a little later, but first there is another short letter to consider – the Epistle of Jude.

David M Pearce

“Forgive Us Our Sins”

Millions repeat “The Lord’s Prayer” every day, but I wonder how many mean it and believe it? For a start it requires us to accept that we are sinners in need of forgiveness, an idea that doesn’t come naturally. So in this article, we’re going to look at four things:

- ❖ *What is sin?*
- ❖ *What are its consequences?*
- ❖ *What did Jesus do to find a remedy?*
- ❖ *What does that mean for us?*

Nowadays all kinds of sexual immorality, cheating, blaspheming, family and social disruption, stealing, greed, fighting are taken for granted. In the books we read and the TV programmes and films we watch we are condoning such behavior if we don’t see it as sin. We tend to explain such conduct as social problems and we certainly don’t talk of them as sin!

❖ **What is Sin?**

We are all sinners, because the Bible says so – *“all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3: 23). And a little later in that letter the apostle explains how sin came about and, in doing so, he confirms that we are all sinners:

Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned (Romans 5:12).

The “one man” is Adam who deliberately broke God’s law, while Eve had done so, without realising what she was doing, being deceived (1 Timothy

2:14). Their experience sums us up too. For we can be deliberate sinners, wilfully breaking God’s law, or we can sin through sheer inability, being unable to meet the high standard God expects of us. So, we ARE all sinners, whether we like it or not, when assessed by God’s high standards, but what does that mean?

❖ **Sin and its Consequences**

Well, of course, the immediate consequences are mainly social:

- ❖ disruption in society due to the break-up of family life when adultery or unfaithfulness occurs;
- ❖ diseases caused by sexual promiscuity, or over-indulgence in harmful substances, such as drink or drugs;
- ❖ the hatred caused by acts of revenge;
- ❖ personal loss when stealing prompted by covetousness and greed are uncontrolled.

But the ultimate personal consequence for each one of us, whether we commit specific criminal or anti-social acts, or if it’s just “falling short” of God’s standards, is spelled out for us in the Bible – *“the wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23). This is a reference right back to the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and this could easily lead to despair – except that God has made provision to deal with all kinds of sin, ours included.

❖ **What Did Jesus Do?**

God in His grace and generosity is unstinting in His offer to save us from

ourselves! He caused His only begotten Son to be born so that we might be saved, and Jesus dedicated his life to achieve that great aim – the salvation of mankind. Here’s how the apostle Paul describes what Jesus did:

For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:6–8).

What a loving God and what a magnanimous Lord Jesus Christ! The apostle continues his explanation with these words:

Much more than, having now been justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by his life (Romans 5:9–10).

Notice how we are described as “sinners” – we are God’s “enemies” because we are disobedient and fall short of His demanding standards; but we are enemies who God loves and wants to befriend. So He has taken action to achieve two things:

- ❶ We are reconciled (changed from enemies into friends) through the death of Jesus, and
- ❷ We are saved through his life.

Then comes an explanation of how the work of Jesus has reversed the tragedy that Adam brought about. The next passage in Romans 5 is not easy to summarise but, as I understand it, it’s saying something like this:

❖ Death came on us all because of the disobedience of Adam. A bit like an inherited disease, we have all inherited the tendency to sin, and its consequence which is death, because we are all descended from the tainted man, Adam.

❖ God’s grace not only matches mankind’s need, but is superabundant in that it “overflows”. God’s gift of salvation is readily and freely available to everyone who will accept it! (Romans 5:15–21).

❖ **Jesus and Us**

Notice how the apostle’s explanation of the saving work of God in Christ opens up a gulf between the Lord and ourselves. We are all sinners and deserve to die. Jesus never once sinned. He was altogether righteous and totally obedient to God’s will – he never deliberately transgressed against God or His commandments, nor did he fall short of matching God’s high standards.

Because of his wonderful obedience in laying down his life as a sacrifice for sin, Jesus died and was raised again from death, as the apostle Peter explained:

[Jesus], being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be held by it (Acts 2:23–24).

Why was it impossible? Because, as we have seen already, “*the wages of sin is death*”, and Jesus had done nothing to earn the wages of sin. He did not deserve to remain in the grave – he was, and is, the conqueror of sin

and death, the vanquisher of the grave!

All that seems fair enough for Jesus, but how does it help us? As sinners we deserve to die and stay for ever in the grave, because we've earned the wages of sin, which is death!

He Died for Us

Whilst Romans chapter 5 indicates how generous God is in making provision for our salvation, the next chapter is all about what we can do to take advantage of God's free gift of salvation and His wonderful offer of everlasting life. The heading in my NIV Bible is "*Dead to Sin, Alive in Christ*" – that's the two-part aspect that was hinted at in Romans Chapter 5 when the apostle said: "*If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by his life*" (5:10).

Chapter 6 is all about our response for baptism is the way in which we associate ourselves with God's saving work in Jesus Christ:

Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3–4).

True Christian baptism – the immersion of a believing adult as a powerful re-enactment of Jesus' death and resurrection – is what makes the connection and bridges the gap with Jesus' righteous life, death and resurrection, and our otherwise hopeless state as convicted sinners.

We don't deserve immortal life; but if

we accept God's provision for us by being baptized, we are enacting our own symbolic death and resurrection – copying, in symbol, what Jesus went through. We die in a figure and put our "*old man, Adam*" to death in the watery grave.

We rise out of the water again to live a new life – in fact, as well as we can, the life of Jesus himself. Thus our sins and our past life are washed away and, in baptism, we express our firm belief that, just as we are now raised out of the water, we will be raised out of the literal grave of death, when Jesus returns.

Summary

- ❖ We have to properly understand what sin is, how stark it is in God's sight, and how we have to get out of its entanglement;
- ❖ We have to acknowledge, to ourselves and to God, that we are indeed sinners in need of God's love, grace and salvation;
- ❖ We have to ally ourselves to Jesus and his perfect sacrifice, and so acquire for ourselves the benefit of his death and resurrection, receiving forgiveness for our sins and shortcomings;
- ❖ The merciful way God has provided this is through the beautiful and meaningful symbol of the Lord's own death and resurrection, so we can have a confident hope that one day God will raise us up from the grave to everlasting life in His Kingdom.

Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Hamilton Wilson

The Temple of God

If somebody mentions a temple you will probably think of a stone-built structure, used in the worship of one religion or another, but in the New Testament the 'Temple of God' is something very different. Here are three passages, written to first century believers and what they say is quite remarkable:

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are (1 Corinthians 3:16–17);

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? (1 Corinthians 6:19);

You are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (2 Corinthians 6:16).

A Temple in Jerusalem

These fascinating descriptions of the believers were foreshadowed in the literal temple which King Solomon built and they have profound implications for how 21st century followers of Jesus should conduct themselves. It was King David who originally desired to build a temple (or 'house') for God (see 2 Samuel, chapter 7). God sent Nathan the prophet to say that it had never been one of His requirements to have a house built for Him. Conversely, God said that He would build a house for David, meaning a dynasty of kings,



Model of the Jerusalem Temple, built by King Herod during the 1st century

who would be descended from him! Then He said this:

"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).

Solomon's Temple

David made extensive preparations for the temple that his son would build and Solomon built a magnificent temple in Jerusalem and instituted temple worship. But it's not there now and the kingdom over which David and Solomon reigned – the Kingdom of God (1 Chronicles 28:5) – has also gone. The temple was destroyed by the Babylonian army in 586 BC and, although rebuilt (twice) was destroyed again by the Romans in 70 AD.

Jesus visited that temple during his ministry but made it clear that God wanted a closer relationship with His people than mere temple worship

could achieve. He made this dramatic statement to indicate that a huge change was coming:

“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” Then the Jews said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking of the temple of his body (John 2:19–21).

The Seed of David

Jesus is the seed or descendant of David, as the New Testament makes clear (Matthew 1:1; Romans 1:3; 2 Timothy 2:8; Revelation 22:16). Through his life, death and resurrection, Jesus has made possible the building of a community of people: believers whose sole purpose concerns the glorification of God. This wonderful teaching was foreshadowed in the literal house which Solomon built.

That was made from quarried stone, lined with cedar wood from Lebanon, but even while Solomon’s temple was still standing there was a prophecy about another structure which would be greater and more long-lasting:

Therefore thus says the Lord God: “Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily” (Isaiah 28:16).

As the New Testament makes clear, this was a prophecy about the Lord Jesus Christ (see 1 Peter 2:4–8 and Romans 9:33). Jesus is the sure foundation stone; the start of a new dwelling place for God.

Other Stones

As well as Christ, who laid the foundation, there are other stones needed to build a dwelling place for God and

these are the believers, so the apostle Peter can write:

Coming to him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:4–5).

The wonderful privilege of forming part of the Temple of God comes with great spiritual responsibilities, as the Bible makes clear. God expects those who draw near to Him to live decent, honest, clean lives.

If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are (1 Corinthians 3:17);

What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” Therefore “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.” “I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:16–18).

It is an extraordinary blessing to be a part of the Temple of God. It means living for Him and not for ourselves; being mindful of His Word and trying to live according to the perfect example set by the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the bottom line:

You were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Stephen Green

Hezekiah – Help and Healing

*In the two earlier articles in this short series, **Mark Sheppard** has explored several aspects of King Hezekiah's life. He was a major reformer, seeking to restore true worship in Judah and Jerusalem, and he put his trust and confidence in God. This was most necessary when the Assyrians began to conquer Judah, to extend their empire, and began to besiege Jerusalem. How would this faithful man cope then, and what other trials were to befall him?*

Appeal for Help

With Rabshakeh and the Assyrian army still threatening, Hezekiah sought the help of Isaiah, the prophet. He recognized that this was not just an attack on his own authority and kingship, more importantly it was an attack on the Lord God. Isaiah had these comforting words for Hezekiah:

“Say to your master, ‘Thus says the LORD: Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the young men of the king of Assyria have reviled me. Behold, I will put a spirit in him, so that he shall hear a rumour and return to his own land, and I will make him fall by the sword in his own land’” (Isaiah 37:6-7).

Sure enough, Rabshakeh returned to Assyria, but he did not stop his attacks on Hezekiah. He sent a letter to the king, along with messengers to Judah. There is a touching scene as Hezekiah received the message. He simply took the letter into the Temple “and spread it before the LORD. And he prayed to the LORD.” The Lord God was very real to Hezekiah, and this letter was an attack on his God. His prayer finished like this:

“So now, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the

earth may know that you alone are the LORD” (Isaiah 37:20).

Next Problem

This prayer brought a favourable response. Sennacherib was overthrown, 185,000 of the Assyrians died overnight in the army camp, and the threat was removed. The faith which Hezekiah had shown in his God brought rewards; but there were still problems for him. He had no heir to succeed him, and so the future of his kingdom was unsure. The Lord God may solve some of our problems, but He does not solve them all, even for kings.

The Assyrian threat had been removed, but the problems had not all gone away, for Hezekiah became ill. We are not told precisely what ailed him, but one symptom was a boil. Some think it may have been a form of leprosy, but it is not certain. Whilst he was so unwell Hezekiah received a visit from Isaiah with unwelcome news. *“Thus says the LORD: Set your house in order, for you shall die, you shall not recover” (Isaiah 38:1).*

Such news would be devastating, but Hezekiah was a man of prayer. So, lying on his bed, he prayed to God, this time for his own life.

“Please, O LORD, remember how I have walked before you in faithfulness and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight.”

God’s response was swift and favourable. Before Isaiah had reached the outer court of Hezekiah’s palace he was sent back to tell the king that God had heard his prayer, and would grant him another 15 years of life.

The Sign

The sign that God gave to Hezekiah was that the shadow on the sundial erected by Ahaz was to move back ten steps (Isaiah 38:8). We cannot be certain how this would be done, and astronomers have argued over the issue for years, but it happened. Hezekiah was re-assured, and able to resume his work for God and lead his kingdom once more. He began with a psalm of thanks.

“Sheol does not thank you; death does not praise you; those who go down to the pit do not hope for your faithfulness. The living, the living, he thanks you, as I do this day” (Isaiah 38:18-19).

The future looked bright once more and Hezekiah’s experience teaches us important lessons. When we are confident and assured in ourselves, problems can still occur. The record in Chronicles says simply that:

Hezekiah did not make return according to the benefit done to him, for his heart was proud. Therefore wrath came upon him and Judah and Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 32:25).

The historical account in Kings and Isaiah gives us more detail. Envoys were sent from Babylon to Judah, and Hezekiah, apparently secure, with 15 years longer to live, behaved unwisely, and showed them around his treasure

house and armoury. This was most unwise. The Babylonians now knew the exact strength of Hezekiah’s kingdom, even though he depended on the LORD God to protect them. Such could not be allowed to continue. God’s judgment on Hezekiah’s folly was pronounced by the prophet Isaiah.

“Hear the word of the LORD: Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have stored up till this day, shall be carried to Babylon. Nothing shall be left, says the LORD” (2 Kings 20:16–17).

The judgment was deferred until after Hezekiah’s death, but happened during the reign of his son, Manasseh. He was born to Hezekiah during this additional 15 years of life, so the question of succession was determined. The Book of Chronicles records that Hezekiah had done good things.

“Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah and his good deeds, behold, they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz, in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel” (2 Chronicles 32:32).

He was greatly respected, for we are told *“they buried him in the upper part of the tombs of the sons of David, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death”*. So ended the reign of one of the greatest of Biblical kings, a great man, who tragically forgot towards the end of his life that he was dependent upon the Lord his God. Hezekiah’s life story has lessons for us all.

Mark Sheppard

Quotations from the ESV

Concluded

Is Idol Worship Idle?

Many years ago I befriended a pleasant young Indian named Lama. He was on leave from the Merchant Navy and had travelled the world.

He told me of the many idols that he had seen being worshipped. His own mother worshipped the tiger god, and firmly believed in its power. We thought about the major religions of the world, and found that most worshipped one supreme God, but that idols feature in many of them and worshippers prostrate themselves before them.

Israel's Idolatry

My mind went back to the Israelites in captivity in Egypt. They were surrounded by dozens of idols, including bulls, crocodiles, cows, vultures, hawks, goats and many more. We may smile, but God's commands were explicit: His people were to bow down to Him alone. Yet the worship of idols was something that persisted for many years. God had rescued His people from slavery in Egypt but they brought Egypt out in their hearts (Acts 7:39).

When, in later years, they were still inclined to worship gods they had made, the prophet was scathing as he ridiculed what they were doing. He imagined a man cutting down a tree, and getting firewood:

It shall be for a man to burn, for he will take some of it and warm himself; yes, he kindles it and bakes bread; indeed he makes a god and worships it; he makes it a carved image, and falls down to it. He burns half of it in the fire; with this half he eats meat; he roasts a roast, and is satisfied. He even warms himself and says, "Ah! I am warm, I have seen the fire." And



the rest of it he makes into a god, his carved image. He falls down before it and worships it, prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god!" (Isaiah 44:15–17).

One Supreme God

The Psalmist was reflecting on Israel's unhappy history when he said:

The Lord is the great God, and the great King above all gods. In His hand are the deep places of the earth; the heights of the hills are His also. The sea is His, for He made it; and His hands formed the dry land. Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker (Psalm 95:3–6).

God is the Mighty One who formed everything. There was no one or no power on earth that could do what He had done but it took Israel a long time to appreciate that. Because of their persistent idolatry, Israel were sent as captives to Babylon where they saw idols being worshipped aplenty. But when God delivered them from exile, exactly as He had promised would

happen, they came to their senses and recognized the futility of worshipping idols, rather than placing their faith in the living God. They never worshipped idols again.

21st Century Idolatry

There are still many parts of the world where idol worship exists, as Lama explained to me. But even in places where there are no visible idols we can be led away by the worship of things or celebrities. People go to enormous lengths to see footballers or football teams; people in the musical world, film stars, or other well-known folk. Or we may spend an enormous amount of time and money on holidays, sport, housing and other material things. Our lives can be dominated by them, yet our Lord calls us to forsake what the world loves, and to be content with the blessings we have from God.

It doesn't matter whether we live in parts of the world where riches abound or whether we have very little. To all of us the supreme God of the universe calls us to trust His word. In all His greatness He knows each one and the response we give to Him. Salvation is offered to all, rich and poor alike. No man can save us from our sins: God alone can do that. No one else can raise us from the grave and remake us, so we can have an amazing life that lasts for ever. Everything we possess is lost immediately when we die, but God offers us everlasting life in a perfect world because of His wonderful love to us. We have only to respond with humble hearts, resolving to give our lives to Him by believing in His word of truth and acting accordingly.

Known or Unknown?

On his first visit to Athens, the apostle Paul was taken aback by the number



of temples and altars he saw in the city. They were trying to make sure that all the known gods of the ancient world were worshipped there, so they could get protection and blessing from them all. But they knew nothing about the one true God, nor about His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It gave Paul the opportunity to tell them that idolatry was an idle pursuit and that there is only one true God. This is what he told them:

God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us (Acts 17:24–27).

What a description of the God we worship! Vividly it points out the futility of worshipping idols, but holds out the greatest hope for mankind if we will resolve to “seek the Lord”.

Ken Clark

Free Offer

GladTidings

of the Kingdom of God

If you would like to receive the Glad Tidings magazine FREE for 6 months – send your name and address to one of the addresses below. Or go to our website.



Your Name (BLOCK CAPITALS please)

Address _____

Post Code _____

Country _____

Addresses for the Free Offer :

In the UK write to: FREEPOST GLADTIDINGS
cilla@gladtidings.fsnet.co.uk

In Africa and Europe write to: Anne Bayley,
68 Hay Lane, Shirley, Solihull, West Midlands,
England B90 4TA

In other countries, to: Andrew Johnson,
22 Hazel Drive, Hollywood, Birmingham, England
B47 5RJ
andrew@gladtidings.me.uk

Visit our website:

www.gladtidingsmagazine.org

Contact Details

To find out about your nearest Christadelphian Meeting, or if you want some free Bible literature, or a correspondence course, write to the address nearest you.

United Kingdom

FREEPOST GLADTIDINGS
cilla@gladtidings.fsnet.co.uk

Africa & Europe

Christadelphian Bible Mission,
404 Shaftmoor Lane, Birmingham,
England B28 8SZ

requests@cbm.org.uk

The Americas

CBMA, 567 Astorian Drive, Simi
Valley, CA 93065, USA
cbma.treasurer@gmail.com

Caribbean

CBMC, Box 55541, Unit 119,
15280, 101 Avenue, Surrey, BC,
Canada V3R 0J7
philsnobelen@shaw.ca

India

T Galbraith, GPO Box 159,
Hyderabad, 500001, India
tim@galbraithmail.com

South and East Asia

ACBM, PO Box 42, Wallacia, NSW,
Australia 2745
coelmada@ozemail.com.au

Local Information