

A Christadelphian's Faith - Conclusion

Baptised Believers

This issue contains the final instalment of John Woodall's series 'A Christadelphian's Faith' that has appeared since the beginning of 2013. To accompany that article about forgiveness, Tecwyn Morgan, former editor of 'Glad Tidings', looks back over the series and draws some overall conclusions.

Belief and Baptism

Among the last words spoken by the Lord Jesus before his ascent to heaven was this command to his disciples:

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

Belief and baptism are two things that mark someone out as a true follower of the Lord; but what must they believe?

From the time that God created the world, He took the trouble to explain what He was doing and why. What God wanted from His creatures was a loving response and Adam and Eve were to show that love by a simple act of self-control – not eating the fruit of one particular tree. Later, when God had rescued a great company of people (Israel) and called them His people, He asked them to show their love by keeping His laws. Those laws were designed to do them good, to keep them safe and well, and to help them establish a society that was caring and considerate for everyone.

As the Bible unfolds its revelation of God's gracious purpose, the careful reader discovers that everything God did was designed to help mankind and that it was directed towards rescuing them from the consequences of their disobedience.

Read just a few chapters of the Bible (from the first book – Genesis) and you will discover how quickly everything spiralled out of control and how desperately mankind needed to be saved from self-destruction.

As John Woodall's series traced the Bible story, God was revealed as a purposeful Creator with a rescue plan, something He revealed to faithful men and women and has carefully written down for posterity. Great promises were made about the formation of a nation who would be His people; a land they would inherit; and a king who would reign over God's Kingdom on earth. All this happened as promised and kings ruled in Jerusalem for over 400 years – from King Saul to King Zedekiah.

Everything Went Wrong

Deep-seated in the human mentality is a desire to please self, regardless of what God tells us is best for us. This tendency prevailed once again, this time with disastrous effect for God's people. King Zedekiah lost his throne and his kingdom and his people were deported to far-off Babylon. It was seventy years before their children returned to re-establish the nation, but this time they were under the control of other nations: Persia and Greece.

They would achieve self-government again for a few years but then the Romans became their masters for 133 years, before they were forcibly removed and sent into worldwide exile.

As the Bible traces the history of Israel as a nation it diagnoses the root problem as sin. That in-born tendency is variously described in the Bible as disobedience, lawlessness, the devil or, when this behaviour challenges God's will – the satan tendency.

God made mankind with a nature that would enable people to form a loving relationship with Him, but through the ages only a very few people have wanted to know Him and to love Him. But He has never stopped loving; so much so that God sent His only-begotten Son – the Lord Jesus Christ – to save us from sin and from death, the punishment that overtakes us because of sin. Jesus was right at the centre of John Woodall's series about faith, because Jesus is right at the heart of God's plan of salvation.

God's Rescue Plan

Although a man like us, Jesus lived a perfect life, learning obedience by the things he suffered (*Hebrews 5:8*), and although he was sorely tempted he never sinned (*1 Peter 2:22*).

He led a perfect life and voluntarily gave his life to rescue mankind from sin and death. It was all part of God's rescue plan, for Jesus' sacrificial death was the means whereby people can be saved and can become members of God's family.

They then await His new world, when Jesus will return to Jerusalem to rule as king of the whole earth. At the time when King Zedekiah was removed from the throne of God's kingdom, this promise was made:

Remove the turban, and take off the crown; nothing shall remain the same. Exalt the humble, and humble the exalted. Overthrown, overthrown, I will make it overthrown! It shall be no longer, until he comes whose right it is, and I will give it to him (Ezekiel 21:26-27).

It is the Lord Jesus Christ "whose right it is" to rule from Jerusalem, just as God has promised, and we can be there with him if we make that choice.

Time to Act

All the jigsaw pieces of God's purpose are fitting together. The Jews are back in Jerusalem after centuries of dispersion and the nation of Israel has been reborn. They are surrounded by enemies, just as predicted; and world affairs are in tumult. Nobody on earth can solve these global crises.

But there is a God in heaven and He has a rescue plan. That plan will take effect shortly and a king will again rule from Jerusalem, but we don't need to be onlookers or bystanders. God wants us to be part of the process of recovery and restoration. He wants us to get involved as members of His team, to take an active part in everything good that is about to happen.

This is why baptism is such a key act of obedience. Believe what God has done, is doing and will do for our salvation, and show that you believe it by being baptised – by full immersion – into the saving name of Jesus. That's the way to find salvation and to begin that never-ending relationship with God, made possible for all of us by His grace and outstanding forgiveness.

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