

Glad Tidings

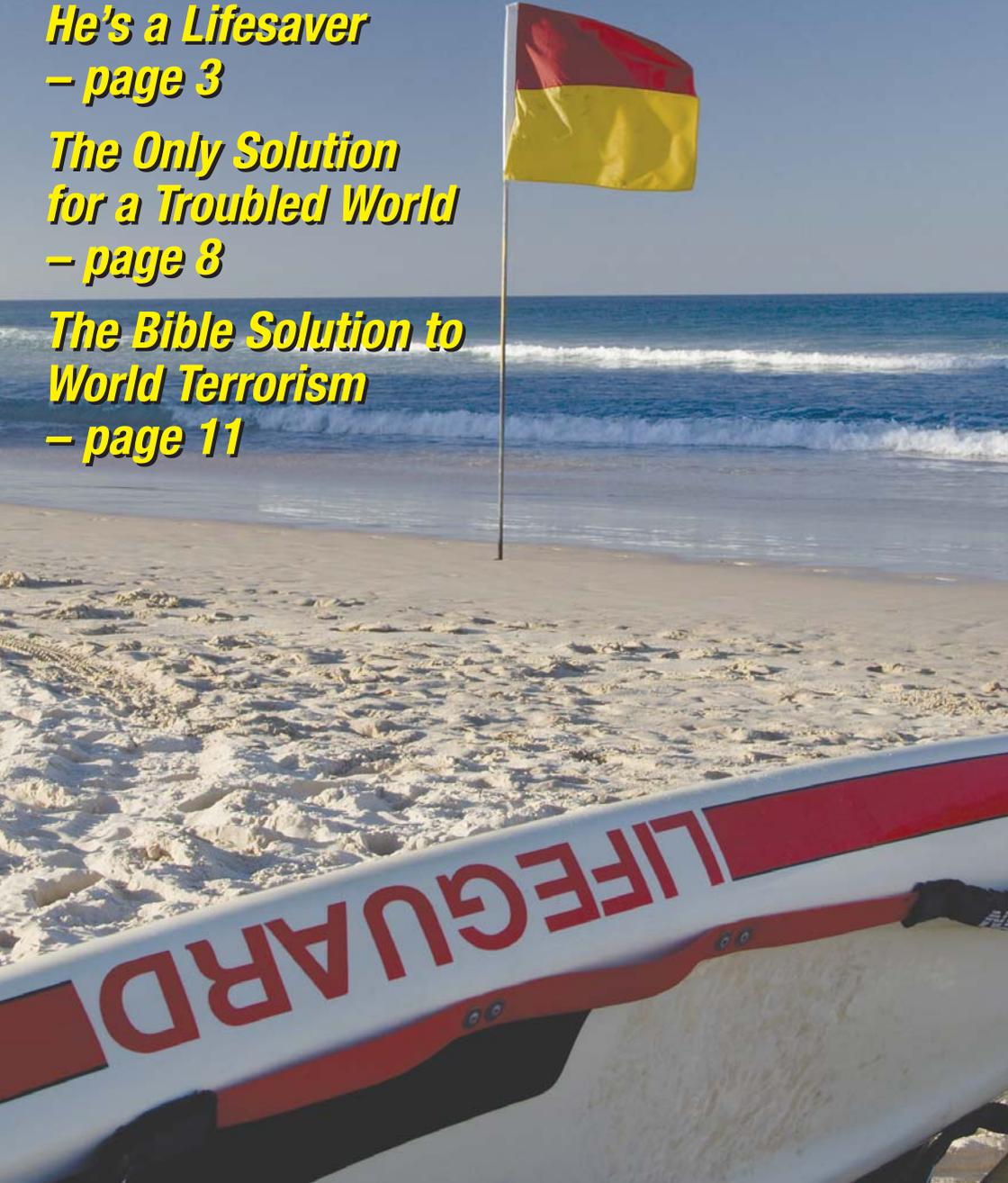
OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1457

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OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

121st Year

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A monthly magazine published by the Christadelphians (brothers and sister in Christ) and available throughout the world. Its objectives are – to encourage 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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He's a Lifesaver

It is said that there are more things that can kill you in Australia than anywhere else in the world.

The continent boasts the world's ten most poisonous snakes and the five most lethal forms of jellyfish. In the sea there are sharks and crocodiles and, if they don't get you, the sea itself might for in places it has irresistibly strong currents that can carry you far away from the coast.

Despite all those dangers, the coastline in particular is a huge attraction for swimmers and surfers alike. There can't be many people round the world who haven't heard of Bondi beach, in Sydney, a mile-long stretch of golden sand which is a surfer's paradise. Yet danger lurks there too.

Life-Taker

The sea is immensely powerful and sometimes quite unpredictable. Even seasoned swimmers and surfers can be overwhelmed, either by the effects of hypothermia, or the power of sudden wave actions – which can be classified as plunging, dumping, spilling or surging waves. On one notorious Sunday in February 1938 – known locally as Black Sunday – hundreds of swimmers were swept out to sea by a series of large waves and five of them drowned.

The others were rescued, many in a very distressed condition, thanks to the efforts of volunteer swimmers who formed the Bondi Surf Bathers' Life Saving Club.

Founded 31 years before that fateful day, the members of that Club suddenly became well known and much appreciated. It took a tragedy like Black Sunday for people to realise how much they really needed people who could save them from life-threatening danger.

In an average year, 58 people drown off the coast of Australia; but the number would be far greater were it not for the work of lifeguards both on and off the beach. Their work is much more than scanning the coastline to spot anybody in danger of drowning.

Surf Life Saving Australia, one of the largest volunteer organisations in the country, integrates paid lifeguards and volunteers

who watch over swimmers and surfers alike. But they also restrict access to dangerous areas and mark out where it is safe to go; teach survival skills; and try to educate the public both about potential risks and best practices.

Life-Giver

The Lord Jesus Christ had occasional contact with the Sea of Galilee, given that several of his close followers were fishermen and were thus familiar with boats. He once taught from a boat while his listeners crowded alongside the Lake, straining to hear what he had to say. And he was once asleep in a boat when a sudden storm blew up which even his seasoned companions couldn't cope with. The Sea



of Galilee is notorious for sudden storms which can sweep across it and this was one of them. Everybody believed they were going to drown so, in desperation, they awoke Jesus and spoke to him, rather sharply it would seem:

They awoke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" (Mark 4:38).

They could not have known what they were saying; such was their panic. The whole of Jesus' life was an expression of God's care, and he had repeatedly demonstrated his own care for perishing men and women. That was why Jesus had been born and that was why he would die – to give people the chance to have eternal life. He was both a life-saver and a life-giver, and now they accused him of not caring! But this was no time for a lecture about their ingratitude or their failure to understand. The gospel account tells us what Jesus did:

He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. But he said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey him!" (Mark 4:39-41).

Who Was He?

Imagine how you would have felt if you had been in that fishing boat on a storm-tossed sea, fearing for your life and sure that you were about to die. It was a grim situation and you would know only too clearly what you then needed – a

life-saver. Then salvation came in the most remarkable way: your life-saver stilled the storm and brought peace to that troubled sea.

Just think how you would feel. Your appreciation for the man who had done that would be overwhelming; and you would forever afterwards be in awe of him and of the power he exercised. From then on nothing would be too much for you to do for him.

Our world is full of unexpected and sometimes inexplicable danger. The inhabitants of New Orleans and of the Southern States of the United States who decided to sit out Hurricane Katrina could have had no inclination of the dangers that were about to befall them. What they knew afterwards, however, was that they needed rescuing – and fast! Their peril after the storm had struck was then only too apparent.

Everlasting Life



It's like that for all of us, if we could only see it. We are all living on borrowed time, and none of us knows when something will loom up out of the blue. And it will. For, sooner or later, death will sweep us all away and then it will be too late to realise our need. This is the time to recognise that we need the Life-saver that God has provided – the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to listen to him and learn what he has to say. We need to do what he says if we are to be safe forever – yes "forever".

That is the quality of life that he, and he alone, can provide. Jesus can save us from eternal death and give us everlasting life. We just have to want it as much as we truly need it!

Editor

Is this World Facing Divine Judgement?

Scientists are in two minds about the future of the earth. Some think that in a few million years the world will cool down radically and that life on this planet could cease. Others reckon that the world is warming up.

The concern of the latter group is more immediate. They think that within the next 50 years – or at the most 100 – we are going to have a much warmer earth; that the polar icecaps will melt and the seas will rise. Were that to happen many low-lying islands and coastal plains will be submerged and countries like Holland and Bangladesh would be very badly affected indeed.

Worldwide Concern

Those who believe that this warming is likely to happen are getting extremely concerned. They want Governments to act now to stop the vehicle and industrial pollution they believe is causing this. But even if that were to happen immediately their concern is that it is already too late to stop some of the problems that will occur in the next decade or two.

I am not a scientist but, from what I read of the evidence, I believe they may well have a case. As a Bible believer, however, I am convinced that the world is facing an even greater crisis. There are

accurate future predictions that are being wilfully ignored. The pronouncements of the God who made the world are being treated as unimportant and irrelevant and that cannot be right!

We live in remarkable times. The past 100 years have seen more development and change than any other period in history. A hundred years ago there were no planes, rockets, telephones, cameras, television, computers, submarines, bombs which could destroy whole cities at once, or refrigerators. The creation of the petrol engine was just beginning as was the discovery and use of electricity. If people who died a hundred years ago were brought back to life now, they would be overwhelmed by the things we take for granted every day.

But not everything is under human control. In recent years man's confidence in his own ability has been jolted. It was thought 30 years ago that all diseases would be overcome, as one miracle cure after another was discovered. Today scientists have to think again.

Out of Control

Diseases like malaria are making a comeback with more dangerous strains, and it is proving difficult to control their spread. New diseases are coming to the fore; the Ebola virus can kill people in a day or two;



and of course everyone has heard about AIDS! Uncounted billions of dollars have been spent on finding a miracle cure for this in the last 15 years, and all they have succeeded in doing so far has been to prolong the agony by making it possible for AIDS sufferers to live a year or two longer.

What has also happened, especially in the Western World, is that people have become so obsessed by man-made things, such as television or the computer, they have less and less time for God. The Churches have become empty. The Holy Bible is left unread and many people have rejected God, or at least ignore Him. They no longer have time for Him, or His pronouncements.

***“No time for God”?
What base ingratitude
To Him who loans us life and powers;
When He scans your life page through,
Will He – Should He –
have time for You?***

Time for God?

Many years ago, a very God-fearing man I knew well wrote a little poem part of which went like this:

This is exactly how God predicted things would be! In a remarkable age – surrounded as we are with examples of human cleverness – here is an even more remarkable thing. More than two thousand years ago God forecast this decline of interest in Him. He said that, in the last days of man’s rule on earth, people would turn away from worshipping Him. He then foretold what would follow.

When God becomes angry with human beings it is time to beware. The greatest example of this was at the time of Noah when God was so angry that, except for Noah’s immediate family, God took away

the breath of life from all other human beings.

The Bible shows that this was because they had turned away from God and become totally wicked. Only Noah paid heed to God and His warnings.

We can be thankful that after God had destroyed everyone, except Noah and his family, He promised that He would not carry out such a total destruction again. In Genesis chapter 8 we read that Noah, when he came out of the Ark after the flood, built an altar and made offerings to God whereupon God said:

“I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done” (8:21).

Way of Escape

This declaration by God did not mean that He had changed His mind about removing evil from the earth. It meant that He would not again bring such widespread destruction, leaving just eight people to start all over again.

Throughout the ages God has offered a way of escape from sin and death which many people have noted and acted upon. When God brings this present age to an end and takes over direct government, by establishing His King and His Kingdom on earth, there will be a company of people raised from the dead who will live in the new world order that Jesus will establish. And there will be people still living who will be invited to enter that kingdom together with the Lord Jesus.

These are people – like those listed alongside faithful Noah in Hebrews chapter 11 – who have believed the promises of God, made time for Him and His Word, been baptised into the saving name of Jesus, and have been patiently preparing for the new world that is coming. You

could be among their number if you really want to be.

Coming Judgement

There have been examples in the past of God's judgements on individual nations because of their evil ways. One of the clearest demonstrations was what happened to God's chosen nation Israel and their capital city Jerusalem. They had been the most privileged recipients of God's warnings and promises, given over centuries by many prophets until, at last, God sent them His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Nobody had ever taught with such skill and authority, yet in the end only a very few people really took note of what he was saying. They had no time for God and at last He had no time for them. Divine judgement was inevitable. That was why the Lord Jesus wept over Jerusalem – because he knew that God was going to bring punishment of the severest sort. This is what Jesus said:

"The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation" (Luke 19:43,44).

It happened exactly like that when the Roman armies came against Jerusalem some 40 years after the time of Jesus. They surrounded Jerusalem and the city was utterly destroyed. According to the historian Josephus a million people died. God's judgements never fail and if we

have no time for Him then we should be really concerned about what that will mean for us when our world is called to account.

Two Classes

Writing to the believers at Thessalonica, in Greece, the apostle Paul spelled out the choice we have to face. In the two letters he wrote to them, he refers to the Coming of the Lord Jesus in every chapter – it is so important a teaching! For, when Jesus comes, it will mean destruction for all those who oppose him and salvation for all those who are waiting for him. Now that's a choice!

*"It is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire **taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.** These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power, when he comes, in that Day, **to be glorified in his saints and to be admired among all those who believe,** because our testimony among you was believed" (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10).*

These are plain words; frightening to all those "who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ". They are words we ignore at our peril. Do you know God? Do you obey the gospel? Make sure that you are ready for the return of God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ to this earth.

David Caudery



The Only Solution for a Troubled World

Ever since Cain, the son of Adam and Eve, killed his younger brother, Abel, who was more righteous in the sight of God, there has been violence on earth. Soon society became so corrupt that God decided to bring a great flood upon mankind so that all the wicked ones would be destroyed.

The one righteous man, Noah, was told by God to build a huge ark to enable him, his wife, their three sons and their wives and a specified number of animals to be saved from the deluge that was to come upon the earth:

God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth" (Genesis 6:13).

Violence Everywhere

Some things can be very addictive and it was so with violence. Since those early days it has always appealed to certain people as a means of solving their problems. Even nations have engaged in mass acts of violence which we call "war", perhaps to disguise the fact that it requires people to act violently and sometimes brutally.

War has taken a terrible toll of human life since the earliest times and there have been many attempts made to avoid wars. In 1920, after World War I, the League of Nations was formed with its headquarters in Geneva. It was to act as an arbitrator between nations at variance with one another so that a peaceful solu-

tion to disputes could be worked out. But, sad to say, hard as it worked to achieve this ideal the League could not prevent the numerous wars that followed its formation. It has been said, that when it closed its doors for the last time those who had given so much of their time and energy to promoting peaceful relations among the nations emerged in tears, and we are reminded of the words penned by the Prophet Isaiah, who wrote: *"The ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly" (Isaiah 33:7).*

Another Attempt

The United Nations Organization came into being in 1945 at the end of World War II and General Smuts, one of the architects of the Charter, warned the Peace Conference at San Francisco in these terms:

"If San Francisco fails, then I see nothing but stark disaster for mankind. This war has warned us what the new forms of war mean ... Scientific discoveries have been made in this war that have not yet been embodied in war weapons, have not yet materialized in a munitions programme – discoveries which, if any war were to take place in the future, would make this calamity tenfold, or one hundredfold, and might mean the end of the human race."

He was right! Sixty years on, we can now see how dangerous things really are. There are deep ethnic enmities between



peoples, as we have seen recently in Yugoslavia. There are border tensions between such nations as India and Pakistan and hostile acts between North and South Korea. Serious unrest prevails in the Middle East despite many attempts to find a peace plan. The war in Iraq shows no signs of ending and every day brings more news of suicide bombers or casualties from roadside bombs. And all the time those engaged in the so-called “war against terror” warn that terrorists could strike any time, any way and anywhere, while the United Nations is caught up in its own concerns about possible corruption and the need for internal reform.

Peace with God

The prophet Isaiah lived in violent times with Jerusalem at the centre of an international dispute. He was in favour of peace, but it was not just political peace that he advocated:

“There is no peace,” says the LORD, “for the wicked” (Isaiah 48:22);

“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you ... LORD, you will establish peace for us, for you have also done all our works in us” (26:3,12);

“The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever. My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places...” (32:17,18)

Isaiah’s message was that we can only really be at peace when we have first made peace with God. We can never make peace by going to war; nor can mankind achieve peace without God’s

help. The Lord Jesus put the whole matter in its proper perspective when he declared, *“Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Matthew 26:52)*, and invited us to come to him instead: *“Come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Mathew 11:29)*.

Not Getting Better

World troubles have increased alarmingly in the last ten years as we have seen in the rapid rise of violent crimes, robberies, child abuse, drug-taking, corruption in high places, immorality, breakdown of marriage and many other social ills. Law enforcement bodies freely admit that the escalating rise of crime has outstripped their capacity to control them. A foundation principle of the theory of Evolution was that man would grow morally better in the process of time. But the reverse has proved to be the case.

Human nature has not changed over the centuries. The Bible account tells of a time when *“everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6)* and that is precisely how people want to live today – with no moral restraints and no criticism. Yet the time spoken of in the Book of Judges brought forth Divine Judgement because the people in question failed to honour the laws of God, which were designed for their good.

The only solution to the mounting troubles of the world lies in the return of Jesus Christ to rule the nations in righteousness, justice and peace. Isaiah, who has so much to say about peace, promises the Coming of someone he calls the *“Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6)*. He tells of a King who will reign in righteousness from



Jerusalem (9:7; 32:1) and of a time when the Law of God is enforced worldwide, to the great benefit and advantage of all (2:1-5). This coming event is keenly anticipated throughout the Word of God. The psalmist tells of a King who will judge righteously, rescue the poor and needy and be acclaimed by people of all lands (Psalm 72:2,12,17).

Troubles First

It is only when people recognise their need that they will appreciate how wonderful these promises really are – and how great and gracious God is to have such a rescue plan for the world. The Lord Jesus once explained that things were going to get worse before they got better. He foretold that turbulent and chaotic conditions were coming, when:

“Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places”; then adding: *“All these are the beginning of sorrows”* (Matthew 24:7,8).

These seemingly insoluble worldwide troubles can only be remedied by Jesus at his return to earth. He is coming to head a World Government that will rule all nations in true righteousness and justice. The reign of Christ will be so wonderful and so equitable that many people will turn to God in humility to learn of His laws, as the Prophet Isaiah so beautifully portrays:

“Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; he will teach us his ways, and we

shall walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (2:3).

Real Hope

Over the years millions of people have prayed for God’s Kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10). They may not have realised what they were in fact asking for – the very things predicted by the prophet Isaiah. They were praying for the Kingdom of God to be established on the earth, so that His sovereign will may be fulfilled among the nations.

The Bible gives us the assurance that when Jesus returns as King, God’s will is to be done and God’s

Kingdom is to be the supreme and only power – a Kingdom based on the true principles of righteousness, justice and peace. First there must be peace with God and then there can be peace among all nations and people.

The Apostle Paul, in his Letter to the believers at Rome, emphasises the certainty of the return of Jesus *“to reign over the Gentiles”* and then adds, *“In him the Gentiles shall hope”* (Romans 15:12). The time that is coming will be a time of unimagined blessedness and peace, for in the Kingdom of God, ruled over by Christ, the hearts of men and women everywhere will be converted to the ways of God. Let’s give the prophet Isaiah the last word, for this is what he says:

“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9)

Dennis M Elliott



The Bible Solution to World Terrorism

9-11 is an abbreviation seared on the minds of people across the world. Who could forget the terror of seeing fully-laden passenger jets being flown into those sky-scrappers?

Thousands of innocent people, mostly Americans but including many from other lands, perished along with the eleven terrorists who commandeered a number of planes in the United States that day in 2001.

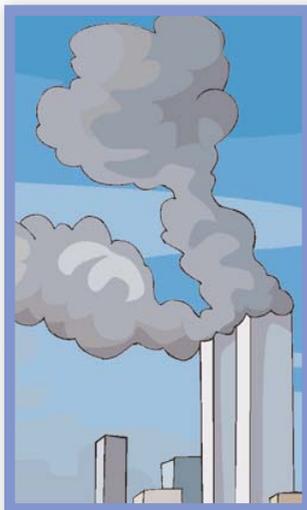
In October the following year, over 200 people – including 88 Australians – were killed in a series of explosions at a nightclub in Bali.

In 2004 there was massive loss of life when terrorists detonated bombs on peak-hour trains in Madrid. In July 2005 the London transport system was targeted when suicide bombers inflicted mayhem on underground trains and a bus. In both Madrid and London locals and people from a range of countries were caught up in the violence. Follow-up raids just a fortnight later failed but clearly had been intended to inflict further casualties.

Long-Standing Problems

Terrorism is not new. Fenian terrorists committed numerous atrocities in the United Kingdom and as far afield as Australia in the nineteenth century. Anarchists were particularly active in Europe and the

United States at the same time and they claimed the lives of a number of national leaders along with innocent civilians. There were many outbreaks of terrorism throughout the twentieth century and Israelis have lived with terrorism since before the establishment of the Jewish state.



Since 11 September 2001 and the launch of the war against terrorism, however, the world has focused on terrorism like never before. Wanton destruction of life in New York, Washington, Bali, Madrid, London and so many other places has shaken the confidence of people across the globe.

Fear is an entirely rational response to the events unfolding in the world. The Olivet Prophecy was delivered by the Lord Jesus Christ in the days just before he died. In that prophecy he warned that at

the time of the end men's hearts would fail them for fear (Luke 21:26). That fear is linked to the myriad insurmountable problems facing the world (verse 25). In recent years the sense of foreboding of which Jesus spoke has been accentuated by fear of terrorism, surely one of the most intractable problems facing the world today.

Why the Rise in Terrorism?

Much of the tension in the world today is rooted firmly in the soil of the Holy Land, in the tensions between Arabs and Jews

over the right to own all or part of Palestine. Opening a conference of the Non-Aligned Movement in Kuala Lumpur in February 2003, Malaysia's then Prime Minister Dr Mahathir described the victims of the October 2002 Bali bombing as "collateral casualties in the war over Palestine". Osama bin Laden has stated repeatedly that a key driver for Al Qaeda's activities is the continued presence of a Jewish state in Palestine and the support of western nations for Israel.

Along with Hamas, Hezbollah, and other extremist organisations, bin Laden refuses to concede that Jews have a right to a homeland in Israel. Some moderate forces on the Arab side are willing to negotiate a compromise with Israel, but the more extreme elements will settle for nothing less than Israel's annihilation.

Why is the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, so intractable? Is it just the irreconcilable differences of Arab and Jewish extremists that prevent peace from being established? Not really. Other groups with intense dislike for each other manage to coexist peacefully. The real reason why there cannot be peace in this region is the fact that the purpose of God requires that there be tension in Israel at the time of the end.

Jerusalem the Key

The Bible tells us that harmony in Israel will be elusive until after Messiah returns to establish God's kingdom:

The burden of the word of the LORD

against Israel. Thus says the LORD, who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him: "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it" (Zechariah 12:1-3).



This message is about Israel, but it is relevant to all. This is not a message from the God of Israel; it is a message from the Creator of all mankind. It is not surprising, therefore, that verses 2 and 3 confirm that all nations will find themselves enmeshed in the turmoil that surrounds Israel in the time of the end.

Although verse 1 says this is the burden for Israel, the focus is primarily upon the city of Jerusalem. That city is to be a burdensome stone and a cup of trembling for all nations. Verse 3 implies that all nations will be drawn into the vortex that is Jerusalem and Israel at the time of the end. The wave of terrorism that has engulfed the world in recent years demonstrates how the tentacles of the Jewish-Arab conflict in the Middle East reach to all parts of the Earth.

Zechariah's words are consistent with other Bible prophecies such as Joel chapter 3 and Ezekiel chapter 38, which also speak of many nations being drawn into conflict in the Middle East and, in particular, the conflict over who should occupy the land now occupied by Israel.

Recent Peace Initiatives

In recent months the Israeli government has sought to alleviate the tension between Israel and the Palestinians by evacuating all its settlements in the Gaza Strip and a few in the West Bank also. Zechariah 12 shows, however, that this will not be sufficient. Control of Jerusalem is still a key cause of tension, although it is not the only source of tension.

Hard-line Palestinians and their supporters want Israel destroyed. They are not interested in peaceful co-existence. The main Palestinian body is the *Palestine Liberation Organisation*; they are not called the “West Bank and Gaza Strip Liberation Organisation”!

The PLO charter which, in spite of promises to the contrary, has never been amended, calls for the “elimination of Zionism in Palestine” (article 15) and requires Palestine to have “the boundaries it had during the British mandate” (article 2). The charter of the extremist Palestinian group Hamas calls for the slaughter of the Jews (article 7) and declares “There is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad. Initiatives, proposals and international conferences are all a waste of time” (article 13).

When will Terrorism be solved?

The vital information the Bible provides us about the Middle East is never factored into the schemes and plans of the United Nations, the United States government, or even of the Israeli government. And of course it is ignored altogether by the Moslem extremists that appear to be exerting stronger and stronger influence over the Arab world and the Palestinian administration.

The world is blind to what the Bible says about the Middle East and elsewhere. For this reason its attempts to address the scourge of terrorism are ham-fisted at best. The war against terrorism can enjoy only a measure of success while its architects are forever blind to the underlying causes of the terrorism against which they fight.

The Olivet Prophecy – that said we would be living in a time of trouble – goes on to declare that at this very time the Lord Jesus Christ will return to establish God’s kingdom on earth. Then and only then will there be an end to the scourge of terrorism.

Assurance for Today as well!

People are frightened of terrorism and their fears are entirely rational. It is only the insight into the unfolding drama that we gain from the prophets that allows us to overcome these fears and face the future with hope. And the Bible also helps us to face the challenges of today with confidence.

Psalm 34 tells us that we ought not to expect to be untouched by tragedy and trial, but reassures us that we shall be delivered from trouble: *‘Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all’ (Psalm 34:19).*

Trials will come. We will suffer, perhaps as victims of terrorism, but we will not be overcome. The Lord will deliver us from all threats and difficulties, even if we do suffer in some way in the meantime. The terrorism that afflicts the world does not mean that God has forsaken the planet. On the contrary, these troubles are in fact part of the evidence that God is working out His plan and purpose with the earth.

Geoff Henstock



Jerusalem's Peaceful Future

The name Jerusalem means "foundation or city of peace". There is some uncertainty about the first part of that meaning but not about the second: it definitely means "peace".

Yet, as we know only too well today, far from living up to the meaning of its name, news bulletins constantly remind us that Jerusalem is a city of tension and hostility.

Epicentre of Enmity

The capital city of the nation of Israel has become the epicentre of enmity between Jews and Arabs because the Palestinians are determined that Jerusalem should be their capital city, and that aspiration is abhorrent to Israelis.

Underlying this situation is the Palestinian extremists' determination to drive Israel out of their land altogether. Very many Arabs in the surrounding nations, supported by Islamic fundamentalists in other nations, are vehemently opposed to the right of the state of Israel to exist.

Jerusalem is, of course, a city which has great importance to Christians as well as to Jews and Muslims. Above all, Jerusalem is of enormous importance to God, and that is the aspect we will be concentrating on. Our aim is to take a Biblical point of view, not a political one. For look-

ing at Jerusalem from a Biblical point of view, it's evident that God's plan of salvation for mankind involves this very city. We can't have a proper understanding of the gospel of the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ without Jerusalem coming into the picture.

God's Kingdom on Earth

God made a very important promise to King David just after Jerusalem had become the capital city of the newly united nation, nearly 1000 years before Christ's birth. It's detailed in 2 Samuel 7:12-16 and 1 Chronicles 17:11-14, and this promise is an essential foundation block of the gospel. These are the relevant verses from 1 Chronicles 17:

"When your days are fulfilled, when you must go to be with your fathers ... I will set up your seed after you, who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be my son; and I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took it from him who was before you. And I will establish him in my house and in my kingdom forever; and his throne shall be established forever" (17:11-14).

This is God's unconditional promise of a descendant of King David – who would also be God's Son – who would build a house for God and then occupy David's



throne in Jerusalem for ever. The New Testament makes it clear beyond doubt that this promise refers to Jesus, for the angel promised Mary:

*“Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and **the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end**” (Luke 1:31-33).*

David’s throne was in Jerusalem and it is destined to become Christ’s throne. So Jerusalem is evidently central to God’s purpose with His own Son and that is to be understood in a physical and literal sense. If you need further confirmation, look at Psalm 89, verses 3-4 and 35-36.

God made a solemn covenant with King David – one which could never be broken, because God never breaks His Word – and both Old and New Testaments recognise that it is only a matter of time before this is fulfilled in its entirety.

New-Made World

God is going to fill the earth with His glory, by allowing it to be inhabited by men and women who choose to obey Him and to follow His direction and guidance. Lots of Scriptures combine to declare that great truth (for example, look at Numbers 14:21; Isaiah 11:9; 45:18; Habakkuk 2:14 and Psalm 72:19).

Taken together with the promise made to David about a long-term occupant of his throne, it is clear that a glorified earth is God’s intention, not a desolate earth.

But our focus is upon the role that Jerusalem is destined to play in this new world and it may be best to bring several passages together to provide an overview of what things will be like when a King rules again from the city of peace. So here goes:

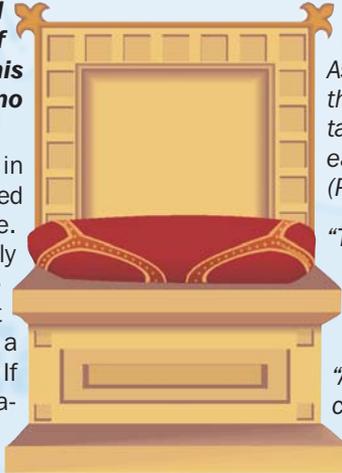
“I have set my king on my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to me, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you’. Ask of me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession” (Psalm 2:6-8);

“The LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and before his elders, gloriously” (Isaiah 24:23);

“At that time Jerusalem shall be called ‘The Throne of the LORD’, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem; they shall walk no more after the stubbornness of their evil heart” (Jeremiah 3:17);

Many people shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; he will teach us his ways, and we shall walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isaiah 2:3,4);

Thus says the LORD: “I will return to Zion, and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth,



the Mountain of the LORD of hosts, the Holy Mountain” (Zechariah 8:3);

“The LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be – ‘the LORD is one’, and his name one” (Zechariah 14:9).

Topographical Changes

If you were to read through the whole of Zechariah chapter 14, you would find that Jerusalem is named no less than ten times and that important topographical changes affecting it are also described.

The Mount of Olives, to the east of Jerusalem, is to be split to north and south by an earthquake; the city area will be raised in elevation; and rivers of water will flow from the city westward into the Mediterranean and eastward into the Dead Sea. For the city of Jerusalem is to be beautified and glorified so that it can become a fitting dwelling place for the Lord Jesus and those who share that new world with him in glory.

You may be thinking that this all sounds very strange. Surely, you might think, the place of reward for faithful people is in heaven. However, the doctrines of the immortality of the soul and heaven-going are not in the Bible. They actually tear the heart out of the true Gospel taught in the Bible.

The Bible builds a consistent and graphic picture of the future very real glory of Jerusalem integral to God’s future Kingdom on earth. It teaches that God’s new-made world will last for ever. In its first one-thousand year stage it will involve subject peoples, a worldwide dominion, a king with rulers to assist him, and a capital city at the natural crossroads of the earth. The immediate prelude to its establishment will be the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth, together with a resurrection and judgement following his return.

These prophecies about Jerusalem are firmly connected to the Second Coming of Christ, a great event which is promised often in the New Testament and which was believed in fervently by first century Christians.

Christ’s Second Coming

The return of Christ was longed for by those early believers, and they were not mistaken in their understanding. It was properly based on Old Testament Scripture and has been many times endorsed and elaborated on by Christ and his Apostles. Yet the majority of professing Christians today find no meaningful place for this central teaching of the Bible. What is he coming for? The Bible tells us that Jesus will:

- ✧ *raise the dead (all those who are accountable to God);*
- ✧ *judge mankind (at which some will be accepted and others rejected);*
- ✧ *establish God’s Kingdom on earth – a time of restoration and blessing;*
- ✧ *rule the Kingdom from its capital city Jerusalem;*
- ✧ *rule with his immortal saints – so it is evident that their place of reward will be on the earth, not in heaven.*

The New Testament clearly teaches the literal and personal Second Coming of Christ to the earth and the coming Kingdom of God as a time of refreshing and restoration. And the Bible clearly places Jerusalem right at the centre of God’s purpose. It is the city of the great king (Matthew 5:35) and it is here that Jesus will restore again the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6; Micah 4:8).

Will you be found watching out for the King when he comes? Will you be ready and waiting to welcome him into the city?

Mark Sawyer

God and His Son

The Bible is the wonderful revelation of God Himself. He invites us to search its pages and find Him there. Men and women who choose to read the Bible can thus learn about God . Too often we come with our own prejudices and personal convictions. If we are to please God, we must try to leave behind those views as we open His Book and learn what we are told there.

Concerning God

God is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ who was begotten by God when the Holy Spirit overshadowed a virgin. That is what the Bible teaches in uncomplicated and clear terms, for the angel Gabriel explained to Mary how it was to happen:

“Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest” (Luke 1:31-33).

It is true that by now there are differences of belief among Christians. Many churches teach that there is a Trinity of the Godhead and there are complicated Church creeds that say that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are One and that together they constitute the three persons of one Godhead, who are co-equal and co-eternal.

♦ God is One

The important thing, of course, is to know what the Bible teaches. This is the Book in which God reveals vital truths about Himself and His gracious purpose. The Bible has to be preferred to mere Church creeds if the two are in opposition.

It is unmistakably clear that the Bible teaches the Oneness of God. There is but one God – the Creator of all. This

was a key teaching of Moses:

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:4,5).

And Jesus himself confirmed the Unity of God when he declared this saying to be the most important commandment in the entire Law:

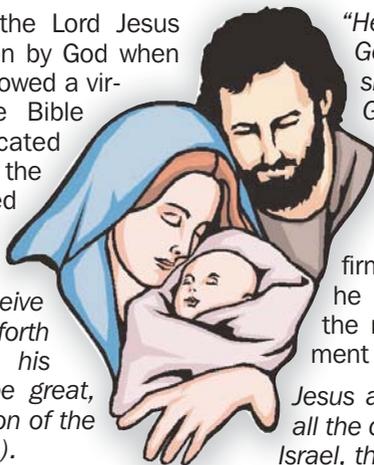
Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one ... This is the first commandment (Mark 12:29,30).

♦ Jesus is God’s Son

Jesus is God’s only begotten Son, miraculously conceived by the power of God – God’s Holy Spirit. Jesus was a very real human being and it is a remarkable truth that, to save mankind, God was willing to give birth to a Son and then let him die so that His rescue plan could be put into effect:

“No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him” (John 1:18);

“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” (3:16).



♦ **The Holy Spirit is God's Power**

The Holy Spirit is God's almighty power which proceeds from Him. It is God in action. That is why Mary was told:

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

Father and Son

How is it, then, in the light of such clear Bible teaching, that people have become so confused about the precise relationship of Father and Son?

Let's examine two passages of Scripture which, at first glance, may be difficult to understand. In so doing we hope to bring out what is true Bible teaching concerning God and His Son.

Here's a passage frequently quoted to prove the Unity of the godhead. Jesus once said:

"My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one" (John 10:29,30).

And here's a second, also from John's gospel:

"If I do not do the works of my Father, do not believe me; but if I do, though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him" (10:37,38).

Now ask yourself, do these passages teach the co-equality of Jesus with the Father? Both of them explain that God has empowered His Son, and that Father and Son are working together

with a common aim and purpose. But Jesus is always careful to differentiate and distinguish His Father's accomplishments from what he undertakes. In John chapter 14, Jesus declares himself to be the only way to the Father, which leads his disciple Philip to ask if they might see the Father himself. What Jesus said in reply was that he and his Father were acting as a partnership: they were in perfect harmony:

"Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does the works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me, or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves" (14:10,11).

Again it is clear that Jesus was not claiming equality, for in the same conversation he adds:

"You have heard me say to you, 'I am going away and coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for my Father is greater than I" (14:28).

Jesus - Like Us

This partnership between Father and Son is quite wonderful. God asked His Son to volunteer his life and Jesus willingly consented. Nobody forced Jesus to die as a sacrifice for sin: he did it willingly. As he said himself:

"Therefore my Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take



it again. This command I have received from my Father” (John 10:17,18).

He chose to suffer and die and Scripture says that was part of his personal path to perfection:

“For it was fitting for him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason he is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Hebrews 2:10,11).

Jesus chose to be like us so that we could become like him. The unity which Jesus has with His Father is one of Purpose. He declared it was his meat and drink to do the will of his Father in heaven. Looking at Jesus we can see God made known in a man’s life, but we look in vain for co-equality.

Jesus was mortal as we are; he died the same as we do; the very strength he possessed was derived from God. He said he did not his own will but that of the One who sent him. Jesus calls upon the disciple to follow this example. He said:

“A little while longer and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you” (John 14:19,20).

Thus, in a sense, we can be “in Jesus” as he is “in God”. And we can be one with God as Jesus was with his Father. For that was what Jesus prayed might happen:



“And the glory which you gave me I have given them, that they may be one just as we are one: I in them, and you in me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that you have sent me, and have loved them as you have loved me” (John 17:22,23).

If we were to take Jesus’ words “I and my Father are one” to mean co-equality, then we would have to argue that the disciples are co-equal in the Godhead. But the truth is perfectly clear. We are called upon to follow Jesus, and if we too are willing and obedient then we can also be one with God – one in unity and purpose. We too can become God’s fellow-workers and members of His family.

“Christadelphian”

That’s what the word Christadelphian means. Derived from a Greek word that sounds just like it, it means “*brothers (and sisters) in Christ*”. It is a constant reminder of the promise contained in one of the passages referred to above – that Jesus suffered for us, so that he might make us holy and thus acceptable in God’s sight. Because he has died to save us, and because we can be baptised into his saving name, “*both he who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason he is not ashamed to call them brethren*” (Hebrews 2:11).

Jesus is the first member of the family of God, the first of many. All that he did, he did for us. Now we should live for him.

Ken Quixley

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Son of Man

Jesus, in order to carry out his great work of sacrifice for sin, had to be of the same nature as those he came to save. And in order to be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God (Hebrews 2:17), he had to have experience of all human temptations. This is a great truth embodied in the life experience and the death of Jesus.



Fred Pearce

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