

# Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1468



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# Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

122nd Year

106

1468

A monthly magazine published by the Christadelphians (brothers and sisters 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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**United Kingdom** – Cilla Palmer (Mrs), "Highlands", 78 Mildenhall Road, Fordham, Ely, Cambs, England CB7 5NR Tel: (01638) 723959 (24hrs & Fax) cilla@gladtidings.fsnet.co.uk

**Australia** – K.G. Quixley, 22 Narallah Grove, Box Hill North, Victoria, Australia, 3129 gladtidings@optusnet.com.au

**Canada** – Vivian Thorp (Mrs), 5377 Birdcage Walk, Burlington, Ontario, Canada, L7L 3K5

**New Zealand** – Christadelphian Witness, P.O. Box 15-457, New Lynn, Auckland, New Zealand

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

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

**Other Countries** – Geoff Maycock, 8 Hale End, Bracknell, Berks., England, RG12 9YH gmaycock@fish.co.uk

**Local information is also available from:**

**Fiji** – Bible Mission, Box 1012, G.P.O., Suva, Indonesia  
– Bible Mission, Gereja Saudara Dalam Kristus, Kerten RT 01/RW10, JalanMundu 3/40, Solo 57143, Indonesia.

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**India** – T. Galbraith, G.P.O. Box 159, Hyderabad 500001, India

**Bangladesh** – Christadelphian Bible Students, PO Box 9052, Banani, Dhaka 1213

**Editor:** Owen Tecwyn Morgan

26 The Crescent, Hampton-in-Arden, Solihull, B92 0BP, England, UK gladt.tidings@virgin.net

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# Israel at War – Again

The eyes of the world are looking once again towards the Middle East where that inflammable mix of hate and politics has exploded once more.

This time it was the terrorist group Hezbollah who started the fight, apparently quite deliberately, by seizing two Israeli soldiers in a cross-border raid and then firing rockets into northern Israel. Israel hit back hard with a bombing campaign which was first intended to disrupt the terrorist supply lines and then do them severe damage. But airpower alone is seldom enough to win a war and the bombing and shelling has had some severe side-effects, especially for civilians inadvertently caught up in the fighting.

## Family Problems

The roots of this conflict go back to Bible times when the forefathers of today's nations fell out and fought one another. Abraham had two sons (Isaac and Ishmael) who quarrelled; then Isaac had twin sons (Jacob and Esau) who had to live apart. Add in a few more complications, like Abraham's nephew Lot and his children, and you have a mixture of attitudes and animosity that stretches way back.

Abraham's grandchildren had lots of children themselves and, just as the descendants of Jacob formed the nation of Israel, the Arab nations are descended from his other relatives. They didn't get on in ancient times and they don't appear able to live together amicably now.

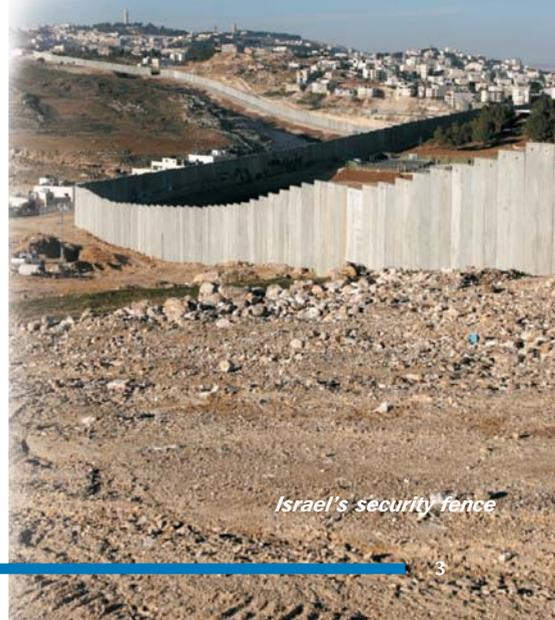
Since the Israeli people re-emerged on the political scene, having been an independent nation since 1948 when the United Nations voted to partition the land between Israelis and Palestinians, there have been several wars and many incidents.

The newborn nation had to fight for its very existence in 1948 when surrounding nations tried to destroy it. There was Israeli involvement in the Suez War of 1956. In the Six Day War in 1967 Israel captured large areas of former Arab territory with devastating swiftness. But in 1973 they were taken by surprise in the so-called "Yom Kippur War," when it took them time to turn things around and push back their enemies.

## Peace with Security

Over the last thirty years many different attempts have been made to find a formula which would enable all the nations of the Middle East to live together in peace. Some of those attempts have worked, including lasting peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, when land was traded for peace.

But Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza seems to have made



*Israel's security fence*

little difference, for it enabled terrorist extremists to get arms they had previously been denied and to launch rocket attacks against Israel, which have in turn triggered violent responses. And Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000 seems only to have given Hezbollah extremists an opportunity to stock up with ever more sophisticated rocketry and to build strong defences.

Even the security wall being constructed between Israelis and Palestinians on the boundary of what Israel considers to be her eastern border will offer little defence against rockets, although it does seem to have brought relief from the spate of suicide bombers that had become a regular problem both for Israelis and Arabs living in Israel.

## **Non-Political Stance**

"Glad Tidings" does not take a political position in relation to these matters for a very good reason. We are not a political organisation. As a community, Christadelphians do not vote in political elections and we take no active part in the political process. From our neutral perspective it seems to us that there are rights and wrongs on both sides, as all the nations involved seem to acknowledge in due course.

People are only human: everybody makes mistakes and human judgement is notoriously fallible. But we do not abstain from worldly politics just because politicians and worldly leaders get things wrong. We keep apart because we have a leader in heaven – the Lord Jesus Christ – who has promised that he will return to earth to sort things out and to rule on earth as King. He is the One we follow and his word is our command.

Now here is the intriguing fact, which is why we are looking keenly at the military events now underway once again

in the Middle East. The prophets long ago predicted that Jesus would return when there was a war taking place in and around Jerusalem. In the next article Lawrence Cave gives more information about those predictions and suggests that world tension is to be expected. It is part of the build-up to the setting up of the Kingdom of God on earth. Then, and only then, will people live together in peace and harmony.

## **Nobody Knows When**

If we knew precisely when all these things were going to happen we could, of course, adjust our behaviour accordingly. Nothing would take us by surprise and we would never need to think things out in advance. But nobody knows when Jesus will return, although many people have tried to estimate it, and have got their calculations wrong! Asked

when he was coming back, Jesus told his followers:

*"Of that day and hour no one knows, no, not even the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matthew 24:36).*

His recommendation therefore was that we should watch and be ready for an unexpected event. We are to keep alert and make sure that our thinking and behaviour is acceptable to God at all times.

We are living in dangerous times, when even the most powerful military nations can do little to ensure lasting peace and when the most persuasive people will be unable to coax warring factions to recognise and respect one another. But out of this uncertainty will come one certain thing.

At a time of crisis and confusion, Jesus Christ will come to save his people and to rescue mankind. You have an opportunity now to prepare for that event. The bad news will not last for ever.

**Editor**



# World Tension Predicted

- ❖ **Our world is full of tensions.**
- ❖ **One major source is the Arab/Jewish conflict.**
- ❖ **This tension was predicted in the Bible.**
- ❖ **The Bible also predicts the solution.**

The Bible has predicted the past accurately – so we can rely on its promises about the future. Give the Bible a chance to speak for itself and you will see that it is relevant to the 21st century. Don't rely on what other people say about the Bible – have a look for yourself.

## **The Jew/Arab conflict**

We are all aware of the tension that exists between the Jews and the Arabs. It dominates world politics. The problem centres on the Middle East, where much of the world's oil is to be found. This means that the whole world takes sides in this situation.

The terrorist problem has its roots in this conflict. Both Jews and Arabs claim a right to the same land. The Jews currently occupy the land in the form of the nation of Israel. The Arabs want a Palestinian state on the same land.

## **Tension – Arabs and Jews**

Both Jews and Arabs correctly

claim the man Abraham as their ancient ancestor. Both claim that they should have the land promised to Abraham.

So we can see the possible tensions when two groups of people believe they have a right to the same piece of land. Thousands of years ago, the Bible predicted that this tension would develop into hatred and cause the international problems that we see today. Before Abraham's son Ishmael was born, his mother was told:

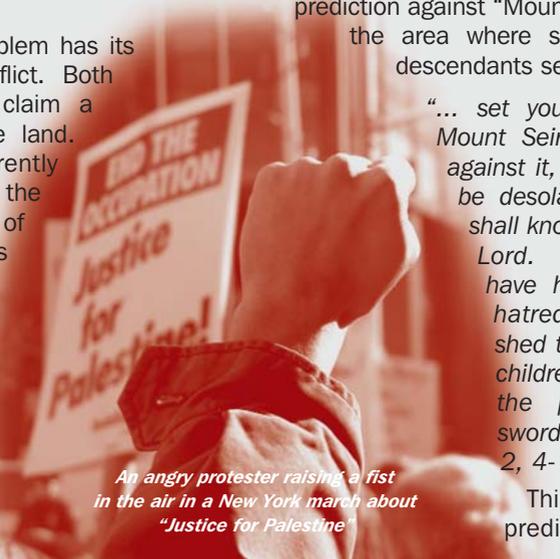
*“You shall name him Ishmael ... his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers” (Genesis 16:11,12 NIV).*

4,000 years ago, problems were predicted among Abraham's children. There are many verses in the Bible which talk of the hatred that the descendants of Ishmael and Esau would have for the Jews, who are Jacob's descendants.

The prophet Ezekiel makes a prediction against “Mount Seir”, which is the area where some of Esau's descendants settled:

*“... set your face against Mount Seir and prophesy against it, “... you shall be desolate. Then you shall know that I am the Lord. Because you have had an ancient hatred, and have shed the blood of the children of Israel by the power of the sword” (Ezekiel 35: 2, 4- 5).*

This is another prediction of the



*An angry protester raising a fist in the air in a New York march about “Justice for Palestine”*

hatred of the Arabs for the Jews. One of the most amazing comments about this hostility is in Psalm 83. The writer of the Psalm is pleading for help because the Jews are surrounded by enemies.

*“They have taken crafty counsel against your people, and consulted together against your sheltered ones. They have said, ‘Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more” (Psalm 83: 3,4).*

The Psalm goes on to list these enemies, which include most of the nations which surround Israel. It would be difficult to give a more accurate prediction of the current situation – the nation of Israel surrounded by enemies that would like to see Israel removed from the map.

### **Tension – Hamas**

The destruction of Israel is central to the aims of Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement. In recent elections for the new Palestinian parliament, it claimed 76 of the 132 seats, giving it a majority in the Palestinian Authority.

The Covenant (or Charter) of Hamas was published in 1988. The preface to

the charter quotes Imam Hassan al-Banna who said:

❖ *Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it.*

Article 13 of the charter says:

❖ *There is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad. Initiatives, proposals and international conferences are all a waste of time and vain endeavours.*

On April 1, 2006, Hamas’ Foreign Minister Mahmoud Zahar said:

❖ *I dream of hanging a huge map of the world on the wall at my Gaza home which does not show Israel on it.*

The president of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, expressed the same sentiments in October 2005 at a conference in Tehran on the subject, *“The World without Zionism”*. Quoting one of Iran’s past leaders, he said:

❖ *Israel must be wiped off the map.*

While Iran is not, strictly speaking an Arab country, it does have a significant Arab population and has strong ties with Arab countries. It is clear that the



Palestinian Authority as well as Iran wants the nation of Israel destroyed – part of the ongoing fulfilment of predictions made thousands of years ago.

### Tension – Jerusalem

Another aspect of the tension between Jews and Arabs concerns the city of Jerusalem, which Israel confirmed as its capital by passing a special law in 1980. The status of the city has remained a central issue in the dispute between Israel and the Palestinian Arabs.

Both sides constantly repeat that there can be no negotiation on this issue and despite the efforts of many world powers, there seems no answer to this problem.

Interestingly, the Bible predicted this situation several thousand years ago:

*“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 12:3).*

This verse makes it clear that:

- ❖ Jerusalem is going to be a big problem
- ❖ Attempts to solve the problem will fail
- ❖ The result will be that everybody will be against Jerusalem

We can see evidence of the first two predictions regularly in the media. It is not difficult to imagine how the third prediction could occur. Later on in the



prophecy of Zechariah, further details are given about the time when all nations are against Israel:

*“For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity” (Zechariah 14:2).*

It is very unusual for only half a city to be taken in war. But that is what the Bible has predicted will happen to Jerusalem. The Palestinians repeatedly



World tension predicted

#### The Bible correctly predicted –

- ☑ tensions between Arabs and Jews
- ☑ surrounding nations would want Israel destroyed
- ☑ Jerusalem would become a major problem
- ☑ attempts to solve the problem of Jerusalem would fail
- ☑ half of Jerusalem would be in dispute

make it clear that they want East Jerusalem as their capital, which Israel took from Jordan in 1967.

### Whose land is it?

When Abraham was promised the land under dispute, which of his descendants were to be included? The Bible answer to this question has far-reaching implications. The first promise to Abraham says:



*I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed...* (Genesis 12 v 2,3).

Looking carefully at this, we see that lands are not mentioned. Abraham was promised that he would be the father of a large nation, be blessed and protected by God. But note carefully the last part of the promise – that everyone could be involved. People from all nations – Jews, Arabs and others – can be included in the good things promised to Abraham.

Abraham was promised the land on a later occasion. This is what he was told when he was at a place called Beth-el, a few kilometres north of Jerusalem:

*“Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are – northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever”* (Genesis 13:14,15).

But Abraham had a problem – he had no child. Naturally speaking, as he grew older it became highly unlikely that he would have a child. But he continued to have absolute confidence in the promise. The New Testament confirms that this was the case:

*“ He [Abraham] did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was ... fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform”* (Romans 4: 20,21).

The New Testament also tells us that the good things promised will be given to those who have the same kind of confidence or faith as Abraham. It also tells us that Abraham was promised much more than the land under dispute – he is called the *“heir of the world”*:

*“Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be **heir of the world...** through the righteousness that comes by faith ... Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all*



*World tension predicted*

- ☑ *The land of Israel was promised to those who have confidence in what God says*
- ☑ *This includes anyone from any nation*

Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham” (Romans 4:13,16).

So the land which is currently being argued about will be given to those who, like Abraham, have confidence in the promises made by God – not to those who want to take it by political or military means.

### **World tensions resolved**

We now need to find out how the good things promised to Abraham will resolve the present world tension. To understand how this will happen we need to look at another verse which talks about the promises to Abraham:

*“Now to Abraham and his Seed [or offspring] were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ” (Galatians 3:16).*

Here we are told that the promises to Abraham are centred on the Lord Jesus Christ. Before he was born, the Bible promised:

*“He [Jesus] 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 1:32,33).*

The Bible is quite clear that Jesus Christ will return to the earth. When he went, his followers were told:

*“This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).*

There are many Bible verses that talk about the just and fair worldwide government that Jesus Christ will set up when he returns. We are told that he will have the wisdom and power to resolve disputes.

### **Summary**

The Bible correctly predicted:

- Tensions between Arabs and Jews
- Nations surrounding Israel calling for its destruction
- Jerusalem would become an international problem
- Attempts to solve the problem of Jerusalem would fail
- Half of Jerusalem would be in dispute

Based on the Bible's track record we can trust promises not yet fulfilled:

- 📖 Jesus Christ will return to the earth
- 📖 He will have the wisdom and power to solve international problems

### **Lawrence Cave**

For more evidence of this sort, which demonstrates that the Bible can be trusted and should be read carefully, look at the website –

[www.theevidence.org.uk](http://www.theevidence.org.uk)



**World tension predicted**

- ☑ *The Bible predicts that Jesus Christ will return to earth to set up a worldwide government.*
- ☑ *He will have the wisdom and power to resolve all world tensions and to bring lasting peace.*

# The Conclusion of the First Missionary Journey

*This series which traces the spread of the gospel as recorded by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles was last featured in Issue 1464 and now resumes. Paul and Barnabas set out from Antioch in Syria to preach the gospel first in Cyprus and then in Asia. In Antioch they had some encouraging response from Gentiles who gladly received their message but the Jewish reaction was adverse, so they travelled on to preach elsewhere.*

## Preaching in Iconium

When Paul and Barnabas arrived in Iconium (modern Konya, Turkey) they went to the synagogue and proclaimed their message to the Jews and also to the “Greeks”, that is, Gentiles who attended the synagogue services and were known as “God-fearers”. The Apostle’s preaching was well-received by a large number of those present and “a great multitude” became converts to Christianity.

However, the former pattern of events experienced by Paul and Barnabas in Pisidian Antioch was repeated here. The Jews who did not respond to the Gospel message resorted to a technique, which was to become almost routine wherever Paul preached, of stirring up trouble amongst the non-Jewish element of the city. How this was achieved is not specified but we may imagine that they used the same method as proved effective later on in Thessalonica, namely alleging that

“These who have turned the world upside down ... contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king - Jesus” (Acts 17:6-7).

Although it is highly probable that the Jews distorted the Gospel message, the influential citizens of Antioch would be alarmed at the potential disruption of their peaceful lives and would be anxious to demonstrate their allegiance to Caesar.

## Grace and Mercy

Far from being disheartened, the Apostles continued to speak about the grace of God, that is, the undeserved favour that God was prepared to bestow on repentant believers. Grace and mercy are two key components of the Gospel, which the Apostles were preaching, and they represent two aspects of God’s benevolence. Mercy is the withholding of the punishments that we certainly deserve, while grace is the bestowal of blessing that we by no means merit.

The Apostle’s preaching was accompanied by irrefutable evidence of



its authenticity as they performed evident miracles, yet the population was divided with regard to their verdict, for some supported the Apostles while others sided with the Jews. Things came to a head when the Jews, aided and abetted by some of the Gentiles, intended to abuse and ultimately stone them. Before this could begin, the Apostles became aware of what was afoot and, following the command of the Lord Jesus in such situations (Matthew 10:23) they fled from the city, travelling on to the neighbouring cities of Lystra and Derbe and the area nearby in order to preach the Gospel.

## The Healing of a Cripple in Lystra

In Lystra they encountered a man who had been born a cripple and so had never been able to walk (Acts 14:8-10). This man listened to Paul's preaching and was evidently receptive to the message. Paul realised that he had sufficient faith to be healed and, no doubt in order that all those present would be aware of what was about to happen, said loudly "Stand up straight on your feet!" The man did so immediately and then began to leap and walk around.

This miracle is very reminiscent of that performed by Peter in Acts 3:2-10. In both cases the cure was immediate and not only was there a physical restoration of the limbs but the necessary co-ordination, which takes weeks in a growing child, occurred simultaneously also.

## A Case of Mistaken Identity

The effect on the crowd was electric and they began to shout in their local dialect

*"The gods have come down to us in the*

*likeness of men!" (14:11).*

This comment has an interesting historical context. In the eighth book of his *Metamorphoses*, the poet Ovid relates a well-known story of how the Greek gods Zeus and Hermes (the Roman gods Jupiter and Mercury) arrived in this region anonymously and were given hospitality by an old couple, Philemon and Baucis, who were rewarded for their kind-heartedness while their unwelcoming neighbours were inundated by a deluge.

The crowds were, no doubt, concerned that this should not happen once more and so they made preparations to worship Paul, whom they identified with Hermes/Mercury because he was the main speaker, and Barnabas whom they assumed must be Zeus/Jupiter.

Archaeological evidence of the joint worship of these two gods in Lystra was discovered in an inscription at Sedusa dedicating a statue of Hermes to Zeus and also a stone altar near Lystra dedicated to Zeus and Hermes.<sup>1</sup>

## Men Like Us

When Paul and Barnabas realised that they were about to be revered as gods and that oxen were to be sacrificed in their honour they were alarmed and, tearing their clothes as a sign of their distress at the impending blasphemy, they ran into the crowds crying:

*"Why are you doing these things? We are also men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these vain things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea and all things that are in them, who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways" (Acts 14:15,16).*

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<sup>1</sup> See F.F. Bruce (1960) *New Testament Documents* (fifth edn) IVP, London, p.96

The crowds must have been startled by what they heard and perhaps were beginning to feel rather foolish. Paul and Barnabas continued

*“Nevertheless he (God) did not leave himself without witness, in that he did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14:17).*

The people were still inclined to worship the Apostles but eventually were persuaded against this.

### **Modern Equivalents**

The comments of Paul and Barnabas are equally relevant in the 21st century when men and women worship the “vain things” of materialism and “walk in their own ways” rather than in God’s way. The evidence of God’s existence and his benevolence remains so that, in Paul’s words,

*“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and God-head, so that they are without excuse...” (Romans 1:20).*

### **Persecution Again**

Soon the mood of the people changed dramatically. The euphoria that prevailed when they thought they had been visited by the gods changed to disappointment and perhaps even resentment that they had, at least in their own eyes, been deceived by Paul and Barnabas.

At this point Jews from Antioch and Iconium arrived at Lystra and turned the people against Paul. Having failed to stone him in



Iconium, they succeeded in Lystra. Once the grisly task was completed they dragged his body out of the city, “supposing him to be dead”. Later, however, surrounded by his disciples, Paul miraculously recovered and returned to the city. On the following day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

Paul refers to this experience in his letter to his son in the faith, Timothy:

*“...you have carefully followed my...manner of life ... persecutions, afflictions which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra – what persecutions I endured” (2 Timothy 3:10,11).*

It is probable that his comment at the end of his letter to the Galatians, who were living in the very region where he was stoned, refers to this event also:

*“From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus” (Galatians 6:17)*

### **Preaching in Derbe**

The preaching of the Gospel in Derbe was successful and produced many converts without, it seems, any hostility of the kind that accompanied the Apostles in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra. When Paul and Barnabas had completed their work they retraced their steps, visiting the infant churches they had founded in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch.

At each place they encouraged the disciples to be true to their new-found faith in spite of the likely risk of persecution, adding “We must through many tribulations enter the Kingdom of God”. Their own courage in returning to cities where they had suffered was a practical example to the new converts.

Knowing that it might be

some time before they would be able to visit again, it was also necessary to ensure that each church was provided with leadership to continue the work of preaching and to maintain order and discipline. So, “they appointed elders in every church”. The plurality of leadership would help to share the responsibilities and ensure that a consensus was maintained in any decisions. With prayer and fasting the newly-appointed elders were commended to the Lord in whom they had believed.

### Home to Syrian Antioch

The Apostles returned through Pisidia to Pamphylia. In Perga they preached the word, making good their apparent omission on the way into the country. Then they made for the port of Attalia and sailed for Antioch in Syria. Once home in Antioch, from where they had originally been commended to the grace



of God for the work that they had now completed, they gathered the whole church and recounted what had transpired. No doubt there was general amazement and also profound joyful gratitude on

learning how God had been with them and had “opened the door of faith to the Gentiles”.

They remained in Antioch “a long time” with the disciples, possibly because of difficulties that arose from visitors arriving from Judea with views that conflicted with the experiences of Paul and Barnabas. These views were to plague the early church, and Paul in particular, for some time. The next article will explain how the problem was resolved officially, even though it persisted as an undercurrent for decades.

**John Hellowell**

## The Miracles of Jesus - 3

# Jesus Heals a Man at Bethesda

**The name Bethesda means ‘house of mercy’, an appropriate name for a place where Jesus could perform a miracle. You can read all about it in John chapter 5, verses 2-9.**

The scene at Bethesda was quite different from the other places where Jesus had performed a miracle. It was

located near one of the gates of Jerusalem where there was a pool of water, comparable with the Roman baths, where people came to bathe for health reasons. On this occasion the pool was surrounded, as usual, by a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralysed, waiting for the ‘moving of the water’ (v.3).

These people had been led to believe that: “an angel went down at a

certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had" (5:4).

There is nothing in the rest of Scripture to support such an idea: it was obviously a superstition which had gained credence and to which these poor people clung hopefully as a possible means for their cure.

### **38 Years Sick**

The first thing Jesus did there was to engage in conversation with one of those present who had been there for thirty-eight years: he asked him if he wanted to be made well. This man did not know about Jesus; these people, located as they were in one place, were isolated from news of what went on in the rest of the country. His reply therefore was to tell Jesus that he was not able to get into the water first when the water was troubled, for someone else got there first. Jesus then said to him, "Rise, take up thy bed and walk!"

Immediately the man was made well, took up his bed (a small mattress) and walked (v.9). This miracle was performed on a Sabbath. In this way the man's dearest hope was realised. There was no visiting angel, no disturbance of the water, nor was there a race to get into the water first. It was just the exercise of the wonderful Divine power Jesus was given to heal diseases.

### **Compassion on the Sabbath**

On most occasions when Jesus cured the sick, he expected them to believe that he was indeed able to cure them. In this case, however, Jesus did not do this, nor did he attempt to heal any of the other sufferers who were languishing beneath the five porches of Bethesda. There was an important issue that he wanted to deal with, particularly for the benefit of the Jewish leaders.

The issue was that it is lawful to do good, including healing the sick, on the Sabbath. The Jewish leaders were obsessed with the idea that healing the sick on the Sabbath was 'work' that broke one of the laws included in the Ten Commandments. It was not long, therefore, before someone noticed this man carrying his bed and accosted him saying,

*"It is the Sabbath, it is not lawful for you to carry your bed"* (v.10).

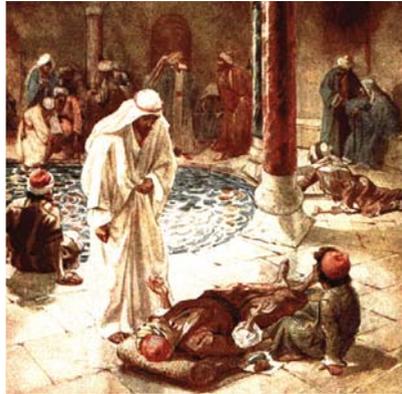
The man replied, "He who made me well said to me, 'Take up your bed and walk'". He meant that he

had been told to walk home with it. If it was lawful to heal a cripple on the Sabbath, surely it would be lawful for him to take his bed home too.

### **Sabbath Law**

What did the law about the Sabbath actually say? Here it is:

*"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor*



*your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it” (Ex.20:8-11)*

The term ‘work’ is defined in Leviticus 23:7,8 by the addition of the adjective ‘servile’ (AV) or in the NKJV ‘customary,’ with the marginal note ‘occupational’. The adjective was added here for clarification because the context of Leviticus chapter 23 included work which had to be done by the priests and Levites and sometimes this had to be done on a Sabbath day. These duties were excluded from the law which forbade ‘work’ to be done on a Sabbath.

With this information we can decide into which category ‘healing a sick person’ belongs. Surely it cannot be regarded as ‘servile’ or ‘occupational’ work. It must therefore rank as ‘hallowed’ in the same sense as work carried out by the priests.

There is another reason why Jesus sometimes healed people on a Sabbath. He knew he would be rejected by the rulers and be crucified so that he would be able to offer to God a perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world (John 1:29). This had to take place. Healing people on a Sabbath

was one of the reasons for the Jews rejecting him and then bringing about his crucifixion.

## **A Final Address**

The remainder of this fifth chapter of John describes how Jesus met this cripple (now cured) in the temple and said to him: *“Sin no more lest a worse thing come upon you.”* The identity of Jesus was then disclosed and the usual opposition to him was aroused. Surrounded by his opponents and probably also by a crowd of other more sympathetic listeners, Jesus then delivered an outstanding address describing his intimate relationship with his Father and what he will do with the marvellous power God had given him.

Jesus declared, among other things:

*“The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear his (the Son of Man’s) voice and come forth — those who have done good to the resurrection of life and those who have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation” (John5:28-29).*

This means that those who have done good will enjoy a Sabbath of rest for 1000 years, in the Kingdom of God, which Jesus is coming again soon to establish on earth.

**Ralph Green**

# **Sabbath Celebration**

When Jesus healed someone or allowed his disciples to feed from the standing corn on the Sabbath he was in fact showing us the essence of the Sabbath’s celebration, a day for praise and thanksgiving with a true sense of fellowship with the Almighty. It was a day which demonstrated that the Sabbath was made for man and not vice versa. It was also an acknowledgement of God’s sovereignty in all things and His special relationship with people.

**David Nightingale** *Come and See*

# Nebuchadnezzar

*In this series Cynthia Miles offers us an insight into the thinking and attitude of some of the characters in the Bible. This month her subject is one of the mighty men of ancient history – the ruler of the Babylonian empire which, in its day, was a hugely powerful dominion led by a monarch who could exercise absolute power.*

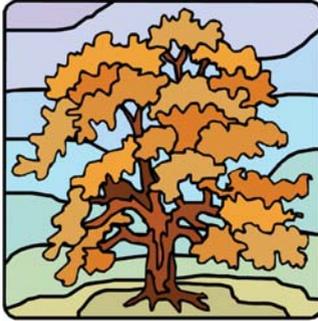
## Mighty Monarch

You don't become the most powerful man in the world without having a streak of steel in your personality and I am the most powerful person in the whole of the known world.

I have everything, an empire gained from conquest, a strong economy and all the trappings of wealth and power, not just palaces and the most stunning hanging gardens but the power to control every aspect of people's lives in many countries. Put simply I am the greatest living man. Yet I have learned a very hard lesson and I have had to recognise that there is a power even greater than mine.

I've had Daniel in my court for a long time. As a member of the ruling family of Judah he was brought to my palace when we conquered that little kingdom several decades ago. He soon made his mark for he was able to tell me the meaning of a dream I experienced when all the other astrologers in my court had miserably failed to know what I had dreamt, never mind its meaning.

Daniel claimed that it was the Jewish God of Heaven who had revealed all the information to him. Since that time we have had many conversations for he has become one of the political leaders of my court,



though he is always very gentle and unassuming. He keeps to his own religious practices and meditates a lot.

## Nightmare

It wasn't so much a dream this time that made me send for Daniel, more of a nightmare. There was a huge tree in the middle of my country, so immense that the

sky couldn't be seen. It was a strong tree covered in beautiful lush leaves, weighted down with fruit. Birds sang in its branches and many animals sheltered beneath its leaves from the heat of the sun.

Suddenly, I heard a voice demanding that the tree be destroyed and be left in the middle of the field with nothing except its bronze bound stump. Then the nightmare changed and talked about a man, covered with dew and living with the animals and plants for seven years until he learned that God rules in the kingdoms of men. I woke terrified sending immediately for my astrologers, who were useless. It was time to call Daniel again.

Daniel was silent for a while, more I think because he did not want to tell me the meaning rather than that he did not understand the dream. I reassured him of my favour and finally he told me that



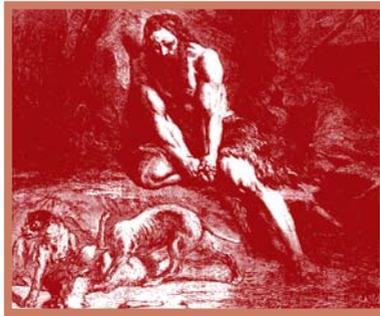
the dream related to me and would make my enemies happy.

I was the tree, the success and power of my kingdom was all the prosperity created during my reign. What Daniel was predicting was my downfall, a punishment from his God for my arrogance and failure to recognise that all I had came from the Great God of Heaven.

### **Nightmare Experience**

I did try to follow Daniel's advice for a time, help the poor, be more considerate, but the dream evaporated and I forgot it as the months passed. I was out in my beautiful garden one morning, contemplating my achievements. There was plenty to boast about and I called out, "look what I've achieved".

No sooner were the words out of my mouth than the voice came from heaven, "power is taken from you". I'm



not sure quite what happened next. They tell me now that I suddenly went mad, insisting on living outside, like and with the animals, for seven years, unable to rule. I was certainly cut down to size.

My mind has healed now and my power has returned, but my attitude has changed. I know I was punished for utter arrogance. God does rule in our earthly kingdoms, he creates Presidents, Prime Ministers and Monarchs bringing to power or removing anyone he wishes. We answer to God not God to us. Daniel has helped me to understand him much better now and I glorify the God of Heaven who is right and just.

The day I heard His voice challenging my attitude was the day I learned just how small even the most powerful man is.

**Cynthia Miles**

## **Your Example**



Choose well the path you take, for this you know  
That many eyes are watching where you go;  
No matter what you choose, another will  
Follow in your path, for good or ill.

No matter how obscure your life may be,  
No matter how you shun publicity,  
No man lives to himself; the things you do  
Guide others on the way, as well as you!

So live your life that, were each action known,  
You would be proud to call them as your own;  
Let your example help another see  
The proper way to gain eternity.

**Author unknown**

## Have You Read?

# About Mary Magdalen

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### Who was she?



*How Mary might have looked  
before she met Jesus*

Mary Magdalene is one of a group of women who followed Jesus during his earthly ministry. Her name indicates that she came from a city on the Sea of Galilee (120 miles north of Jerusalem) and also that she was unmarried; if she had been married she would have taken her husband's name (e.g. Mary wife of Simon). After the resurrection she is not mentioned in Scripture by name, but Acts 1:14 (cp Luke 8:2) would indicate that she was with the disciples at Pentecost. Some non-Biblical sources have for many years put forward ideas about Mary that have attracted attention and stirred the imagination of fiction writers. What do the New Testament gospels tell us about her?

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### When did she live?

Her appearance in the gospels is probably somewhere between 29 and 33 AD. The chronology at the time of Jesus is unclear as the calendar got a little mixed up when attempts were made to establish the precise time of Jesus' birth.

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### Where can I read about her?



- ◆ During Jesus' ministry: Luke 8:1-3;
- ◆ At the crucifixion: Mark 15:40-41, Luke 23:49; John 19:25.
- ◆ Burial preparation: Luke 23:55-56
- ◆ At the burial of Jesus: Matt.27:55-61; Mark 15:47
- ◆ At the resurrection: Matt. 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-11; Luke 24:1-11; John 20:1-2
- ◆ Meets her resurrected Lord: John 20:10-18

# ***What should I look out for?***



## **Her gratitude**

Mary was drawn to care for her Lord after Jesus cured her from a severe, possibly mental, illness<sup>1</sup>.

## **Her generosity**

Mary, along with other women<sup>2</sup>, provided Jesus with practical help<sup>3</sup>, giving what they could to support him financially. Since Jesus 'had nowhere to lay his head'<sup>4</sup> he was dependent for his physical care on the goodwill of women like Mary.

## **Her courage**

At a time when Jesus' own disciples were in hiding for fear for their lives, she stayed with his mother, Mary, at the foot of Jesus' cross<sup>5</sup> no doubt comforting both. She followed Joseph of Arimathea to note where he took Jesus' body for burial<sup>6</sup>. Later she went there with the other women to anoint Jesus' body. (Since he died on the eve of the Sabbath Jesus' burial was hasty and no anointing was performed.) Fearless for their known connections with a man condemned for his claims, Mary Magdalene and these faithful women insisted on performing this rite that involved the touching of a dead body, making them ritually unclean<sup>7</sup>.

## **Her faith**

She was the first person to whom Christ appeared after his resurrection<sup>8</sup> and it was to her that Jesus gave the instruction to tell the others that he was alive<sup>9</sup>, indicating his trust in her faith and integrity.

## **Is it true that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute?**

Although she is mentioned in all four gospels, not one of them says that she was. An old Jewish text indicates that the city of Magdala was famous for its fornication so her name may have been wrongly associated with this. The gospel of Luke first mentions Mary Magdalene just after recording the incident of the sinful woman<sup>10</sup>, leading some to make a connection.

A sixth century pope once preached that Mary Magdalene, Mary the sister of Martha<sup>11</sup> and the unnamed sinner in Luke chapter 7 were the same person. Although in 1969 this unfounded conclusion was rescinded, the idea has endured in some areas. However, even if it were shown that Mary Magdalene had been involved in prostitution, she would not be the first such person recorded in the Bible to be redeemed.<sup>12</sup>

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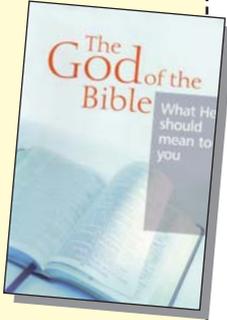
<sup>1</sup> Luke. 8:2; <sup>2</sup> Luke 8:2-3; <sup>3</sup> Mark 15:40-41; <sup>4</sup> Matthew 8:20; <sup>5</sup> John 19:25; <sup>6</sup> Matthew 27:57-61; <sup>7</sup> Numbers 19:13; Luke. 23:55-24:1; <sup>8</sup> Mark 16:9; <sup>9</sup> John 20:11-18; <sup>10</sup> Luke. 7:36-50, 8:2; <sup>11</sup> John 11:1-2; <sup>12</sup> Joshua 2

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