

Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1476



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Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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A monthly magazine published by the Christadelphians (brothers and sisters in Christ) and available throughout the world. Its objectives are – to encourage 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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When the Time is Right

Sometimes things happen just because we are in the right place at the right time. Or, if it is something bad that happens, because we were in the wrong place at that very time.

What if we had been born at a different time in the world's history? Had she lived more than 200 years ago, the model on this month's front cover might have been a slave. If so, her life would have been very different. Where she lived, how she lived and how long she lived, would have been outside her control. She would not then have been her own person, but would have been owned by someone else.

If you had been born in the Middle Ages, just reading this magazine (had it been around at the time!) could have cost you your life. Many people were executed just because they wanted to read the Bible for themselves. At that time the Church held the monopoly of Bible teaching and you had to believe what they said, or else!

Times and Seasons

We have plenty of reasons to be grateful that we happen to be living in the 21st century and not at a much earlier time. Inventions and discoveries have made life much easier in some respects. We don't have to work quite as hard as our forebears. We have the advantage of electricity and technology, even if we take them for granted

most of the time. And most of us have complete freedom of religious belief and expression, which is a real blessing. But the time we were born wasn't something we had any control over. We happened along when it happened; it was nothing to do with us. We had no say in the matter.

It was like that with the Lord Jesus too. When the time was right, God sent forth His Son having told Mary that she was to bear a child by the power of the Holy Spirit:



“When the fulness of the time had come, God sent forth his son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons” (Galatians 4:4,5).

The time was indeed right for, long before, God had indicated exactly when His Son was to be born. The prophet Daniel prayed earnestly for deliverance and salvation and God had given him a detailed timescale of when the Saviour and Redeemer would come, and what would happen to him. Daniel lived at the time of the Persian Empire and was told that from the time that a command was given for the rebuilding of Jerusalem (and that happened in 457 BC) it would be 69 x 7 years until the coming of Messiah.

If you work that out, it comes to 483 years, and to 27AD, the very time when Jesus announced the start of his ministry in Israel. Then, the angel said, *“Messiah shall be cut off, but not for*

himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined" (Daniel 9:26).

So, even the death of the Lord Jesus was forecast hundreds of years before it happened, and so was his Second Coming, in power and great glory.

When, when, when?

From the very first, when Jesus was teaching and doing wonderful works in Israel, people wanted to know when he would come as a Conqueror, just as the Old Testament promised.

Jesus gave a very clear programme of events as to what had to happen first. He spoke of wars, famines, earthquakes, nations in distress, people worrying about the future, not knowing which way to turn, and the spread of false Christianity and false religion (see Matthew chapter 24; Mark 14 and Luke 21 for the full details). But he also said that nobody knew the precise day and hour of his Return; nobody except God Himself:

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

To this day nobody knows precisely when Jesus will come, except that it will happen when the time is right. For God controls everything: all human history and earthly government is under His command (see Daniel 4:17). But Jesus gave one key indicator, which has now been fulfilled after almost 2000 years. He said that the Jews

would eventually return to Jerusalem (see Luke 21:24), something that only happened 40 years ago, in 1967, when the city came under Jewish control after the Six Days War.

The Time is Right

That's a huge bonus for us, and one we could have done nothing to arrange. All previous generations of believers, watching and waiting for the Coming of Jesus had to focus their attention on the possibility of the Jews returning to the land their forefathers once occupied. As recently as the beginning of the 20th Century that seemed unlikely, for the land was under Turkish control and resident Jews were not even allowed to own land there.

But, step by step, all that has changed. In May 1948 – less than 60 years ago – the nation of Israel was established, albeit in circumstances that suggested it could be a short-lived political experiment; for they were at war at the time against stronger local opposition. Their survival and increase was foreordained, however, in the purpose of God and today the nation of Israel is a force to be reckoned with, and things that happen there frequently lead in news bulletins around the world.

Any time now the Lord Jesus Christ is returning and we need to be ready. For, when the time is right, Jesus will come; and his coming will transform the world. God's Kingdom is to be established once again on earth. The desert will bloom; peace will abound; and at last the earth will begin to give Almighty God the glory that is His due.



Something to Look Forward To

Looking forward to an event is something we have all experienced. For many of us the anticipation is mostly associated with pleasure.

As children we looked forward to Christmas or birthdays or holidays. But not all experiences fall into that category. A visit to the dentist is probably the most obvious, though even that is much less painful than it used to be.

These may all be childhood memories; young or old however we all like something which we can look forward to with pleasure. It may be the realisation of a personal aim or ambition. As a parent, it might be centred on a family event: a wedding or the birth of a grandchild. Later in life it may be a new home or even retirement. All these events are ones we enjoy

Cause for Concern

Over the last twenty years or so something has happened that makes looking forward a lot less pleasurable. Today the prospects for both young and old are very different. For those of employable age there is the constant anxiety over continuity of employment and an equal worry over the proper provision of a pension for old age. For the rising generation, as if these things were not enough in themselves, there is the additional anxiety over what sort

of world they will inherit.

The current major cause for anxiety seems to be global warming. Already we are being told that it will lead to a more extreme climate and a rise in sea level. The South of France, it has been said, may become so hot and dry as to be uninhabitable. The rise in sea level will endanger millions who live on the fertile flood plains of some of the world's great rivers

Disharmony

Added to these things can be the problems posed by man's inability to live in harmony with his neighbours, in Africa for example; in the Middle East, where continuing tensions aggravate feelings of great bitterness; in remote areas where envy of the western material way of life gives rise to a hatred that fuels barbarous acts of terrorism; anxieties over South Korea; unrest in South America.

Wherever one looks there is trouble. Put all these things together and one can quite understand the attitude of some young people known to me who said that "*We don't think this is a fit world into which to bring children.*"

That is very sad. It is also very depressing for it clearly shows that from a human point of view they do not think the world holds out anything positive to which they can look forward with any pleasurable anticipation. Is this really so?



Cause for Rejoicing

Are things really so gloomy? For some people the answer is a resounding "No!" There is a glorious future in prospect. It has been known about for a long time and has been a real comfort and an exciting prospect for many people.

To sort out the problems facing the world a leader is needed who combines two things. The first of these is a moral authority that all the inhabitants of the world recognise and respect. The second requirement is the possession by such a person of immense power the like of which has never before been seen.

There has only ever been one person in the history of the world who has ever displayed such qualities. That person was, and is, the Lord Jesus Christ. Consider his record. He was spoken of by the Old Testament prophets. Parts of his life were predicted in great detail. Born in the poorest of circumstances he was nevertheless aware of his mission in life from the age of twelve onwards.

Man Apart

From then till the age of about 30 he remained in the family circle waiting for the time to reveal himself to the people. When that moment arrived, almost his first words were "*preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God.*" (Mark 1 verse 14). From that time on Jesus began both to tell and to show people what the kingdom of God would be like.

All four gospel writers recount many

instances of Jesus showing remarkable powers to cure the mental and physical problems that have beset human beings all down the ages. He could perform acts of healing beyond the capabilities of even the cleverest of doctors today.



More surprising to some of his followers, he was even able to calm the storm that was threatening to swamp the boat in which they were sailing. "*Who then is this that even the wind and sea obey him?*" (Mark 4:41). Control over the forces of nature was evidence of a power they had never imagined.

His moral teaching was of such a quality that if it were put into effect there would be no more violence, greed, fraud or any other crime.

Cause of Conflict

Whilst all Jesus said and did appealed to the ordinary people, his exposing of the dishonesty and hypocrisy of their rulers brought him into direct conflict with them and they plotted his destruction. With the aid of a traitor, they eventually succeeded in crucifying him. Through the infinite wisdom of God that murderous event was made to be an atonement for sin. It serves too as an illustration (there could be no stronger one) of the Creator's love for a disobedient creation.

The appalling shock, horror and apparent finality of the crucifixion were enough to knock the bottom out of the disciples' world; so much so that they considered reverting to their previous occupations. So they would have done had it not been for one thing. They were reunited with their risen Lord.

That, and only that, could have wrought the transformation. From a beaten, dispirited group, they became a dedicated group of men who carried the good news of the Kingdom of God far and wide. As well as the gospel records the New Testament is taken up with the spread of the gospel and with assurances that:

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

Speaking of that event in words that his disciples did not understand at the time, Jesus described the troubles that will overtake mankind. He then went on to say *“And then they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory” (Luke 21:27).* With that power he will put down all opposition and by that power all problems like global warming will be dealt with effectively. All the wrongs in the world will be redressed – permanently.

Wonderful Prospect

The wonderful and exciting thing about this is that to everyone who wants to be a part of this coming era, who

would like to have everlasting life in a perfect world that will be exactly as God the Creator planned it would be, the offer is open.

There is a story in the New Testament of a man whose world was collapsing around him. Through no fault of his own he thought the prisoners in his charge had escaped. Naturally he feared for his life. Turning to the apostle Paul who was in the prison with him, he said *“What must I do to be saved?”* The apostle’s reply was *“Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.”* The record goes on to show that the jailer and his family were all baptised. It is just the same for us. We need to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be baptised, just as that jailer at Philippi was.

Just think of it: no more worries over pensions, pollution and the exhaustion of natural resources; no more advancing age and decreasing mental and physical ability. Instead everlasting life lived in a perfect world with perfect health and perfect company. Now that really is something to look forward to.

Michael Buckler
Quotations from the RSV

Patience



When problems overwhelm us, and we ‘ve forgotten how to smile,
We must remember God is ever near
It’s futile then to worry, if we tell Him all our cares,
And ask His help to lift away our fear.

For life is ever changing, and our problems come and go,
And we are growing through our joys and pain;
Like plants, we need variety – the coldness and the warmth,
And, as faith grows, we’ll be at peace again.

Colleen Simons

Good News in Philippi

*Having travelled for the second time through Asia Minor, Paul and his companions have now reached Europe, only to run into trouble in the Roman Colony of Philippi. They had been accused of malpractice, because they had cured a girl who was being used as a fortune teller. It looked as if everything was going wrong but, as **John Hellawell** now explains, everything was due to work out very well indeed, under the hand of God.*

Prisoners in Philippi

Paul and Silas were dragged off to the market place and were charged before the magistrates. The charge was not what one might have expected. Nowadays we would think in terms of compensation for the loss of earnings, now the fortune teller was better and could not act as she once did.

But this would mean that her owners would have had to admit that Paul's powers were real and effective and that he possessed some greater power than the "spirit" which they reckoned had once "possessed" the slave girl. Or it might have been argued, by the defence, that she had regained normality quite spontaneously. So the actual charge they put forward was one which was far more likely to convince the magistrates:

"They brought them to the magistrates, and said, 'These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe'" (Acts 16:20-21).

"These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city" would have been

sufficient grounds for concern. Had not their fellow-citizens in Rome suffered from this troublesome race and had not their divine Emperor Claudius banished them for this very reason? But they added, for good measure, that the teachings of Paul and Silas were illegal and an affront to their Roman dignity.

It was an open and shut case: there was no need to hear the accused men's defence. The magistrates commanded that the lictors, whose badge of office was a bundle of rods and an axe, should beat them with their rods. They did not 'spare the rod' but, the records says, they *"laid many stripes on them"* (16:23).

With their clothes torn and their backs bleeding they were then handed over to the jailor to be kept securely. He put them in the inner prison which was, no doubt, the most unpleasant damp and airless place and, for greater security, put their feet in the stocks. It is said that these Roman stocks were of an ingenious design in that it was virtually impossible for the victim to adopt a comfortable position and so they inflicted subtle torture as well as providing security.



The Midnight Earthquake

The behaviour of Paul and Silas must have caused the other prisoners to question their sanity for instead of declaring their innocence and complaining about their unjust treatment they prayed and sang hymns. The record says that *“the prisoners were listening to them”* when one might have expected that they would complain about the noise and stress their own need for sleep. There must have been something about their prayers and the words of their hymns which made the others listen attentively.

Suddenly there was a great earthquake, a not uncommon event in that region. However, this was quite unusual because in spite of its magnitude, the prison was not destroyed nor the inmates injured. In fact, only the prison doors were opened and the prisoners' chains loosed.

The Jailor Awakes

The earthquake also wakened the jailor. He saw the doors open and anticipated that all the prisoners had escaped. Drawing his sword he was about to commit suicide, when Paul shouted that he should not harm himself as all the prisoners were still there. Why the prisoners did not flee is not explained, though it may be that, since the night's events had been most unnatural, they felt safer in the company of Paul and Silas rather than risk the effects of aftershocks.

The response of the jailor also was unusual. Calling for a light, he ran into the prison and fell down trembling at

the feet of his latest prisoners. On bringing them out of their cell he asked: *“Sirs, what must I do to be saved”* and was told *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household”*.

In order to do this, the jailor and his household (that would probably include his slaves) needed to understand what they must believe. So Paul and Silas *“spoke the word of the Lord to him and all who were in his house”* (16:32).

The jailor then attended to their wounds before he and his household were baptized. Once more we note the invariable New Testament pattern: first believing and understanding the Gospel message;

then being baptised by immersion, as a sign of the changed life which is required.

Finally, they all shared a meal which may have included a breaking of bread after the pattern set by the Lord Jesus at the Last Supper.

Roman “Humble Pie”

Next day the lictors were despatched by the magistrates to release Paul and Silas. The jailor conveyed the good news to them but Paul refused to leave. He replied that the magistrates had beaten uncondemned Roman citizens publicly and now they wished to be rid of them in secret. Paul demanded that the magistrates appear in person and escort the prisoners out.

Once this demand had been conveyed to the magistrates they realised that they had made a terrible mistake. In a Roman colony, that prided itself in upholding Roman legal procedures, two Roman citizens had been denied



justice, had been unlawfully beaten, and were consigned to the worst dungeon and held in the stocks! Not only was it a dreadful disgrace but it could have serious repercussions should these men take the matter higher. No wonder: *“they came and pleaded with them and brought them out, and asked them to depart from the city”* (Acts 16:39).

Here was an interesting dilemma: as Jews they should be banished but, as Roman citizens, they had every right to stay. In asking them to depart the magistrates no doubt believed that the scandal would eventually be forgotten. However, it is almost certain that Paul decided to ‘stand on his dignity’ for the

benefit of the infant church and not for his own sake. From now on the magistrates would be less likely to prejudge cases affecting the disciples in Philippi and could readily be reminded of their previous errors if they did.

Before the missionary party left Philippi they said their farewells at the house of Lydia, encouraging their new converts, and then they set out along the Egnatian Way, that great Roman military road which ran right through the centre of Philippi, heading in the direction of Amphipolis, Apollonia and towards Thessalonica. The great work must go on!

John Hellowell

The Teaching of The Master – 2

More about the Moral Standards of Jesus

*In this two-part article, **Dudley Fifield** examines what Jesus has to say about a lifestyle that will be right with God in his Sermon on the Mount. In the last article we saw that what we think is as important as what we do, but now Jesus turns his attention to our speech and our attitudes.*

Mean What You Say!

Jesus says that what we say is really important. If we say “Yes” we should mean “Yes”, for our speech should always be reliable (Matthew 5:34-37).

“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord’” (verse 33).

It was the custom in those days to swear on oath to give greater force to one’s words. The implication was that a simple “yes” or “no” was not as binding as an oath; especially if you

were to swear, for instance, by heaven or by Jerusalem. Now the teaching of Jesus was very clear about this practice, and it has implications for us today, if we are going to follow him and obey his commandments:

The Lord Jesus said *“do not swear at all”* (verse 34); then he added: *“let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’”* (verse 37).

In other words, Jesus was saying, let your ‘yes’ or ‘no’ be as binding as the most solemn oath; for that is the standard of honesty that God expects from those who seek to serve Him.

What about 'My Rights'?

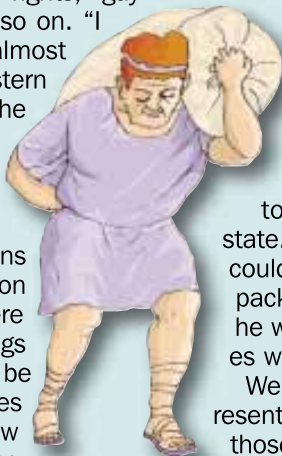
In the next section of Matthew chapter 5 (verses 38-42) Jesus explains what attitudes we should try to develop if we are to please God and follow his example. We live in an age of rights – human rights, women's rights, gay rights, animal rights, and so on. "I know my rights" has almost become the slogan of Western society. People rush to the courts to sue, to obtain a full recompense as soon as they think their 'rights' have been denied.

Now the Lord Jesus turns these human standards on their head, for he says there are more important things for the servant of God to be concerned about. He does this by referring to the law that was then in existence in Israel – the law God had given to Moses, which contained a provision allowing for personal recompense. If something bad was done to you, you were allowed under the law to do the same back – the same but no more. So, Jesus said:

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'" (5:38).

You could demand a full and complete restitution, and there were people who did just that. But, Jesus now said:

"I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two" (verses 39-41).



In other words, he was saying, do not claim your rights and if men seek to make demands of you, do even more than they ask. When he spoke of people who might compel you to go a mile, he was talking about something that could happen in an occupied country. At the time, Israel was

occupied by the Romans. For the Jews this was a most unacceptable situation. In general terms they hated the Romans. Yet under Roman law a Jew could be compelled to undertake service for the state. A Roman soldier, for instance, could compel a man to carry his pack for a mile along the road and he was forced to comply. No excuses were accepted.

We can imagine the bitterness and resentment this would have caused in those who were compelled in this way to carry out such a distasteful task. Yet the Lord Jesus says "Don't be bitter and resentful; be so willing to comply that you will go not just one mile but two".

The lesson is that if men intrude into our rights, if they make what we regard as unreasonable demands upon us, there must be no bitterness or unwillingness shown. We should be prepared to do even more than they ask.

New Lifestyle

This, of course, is quite contrary to human nature; it is not how we think or act. Was there more behind this teaching of the Lord Jesus than the simple act of denying our own will and symbolically crucifying it, for his sake? We believe there is. In the Epistle to the Hebrews there are three words used to describe the life of a believer.

❖ He is a **sojourner** (Hebrews 11:9);
for

- ❖ Like Abraham, **he looks for a city that has foundations** (11:10);
- ❖ He is a **stranger and a pilgrim ...** for he desires a better country (11:13-15).

- ✓ *A **Sojourner** is a man who does not have a permanent dwelling in the land where he lives. Instead he is a temporary resident.*
- ✓ *A **Stranger** is literally a 'foreigner'. He is someone who does not belong to the society in which he lives. He is not a citizen of that country, but of another one.*
- ✓ *A **Pilgrim** is a man who is on a journey; who has a vision before him, a goal that he desires to achieve.*

In other words, the Christian has no permanent home in this world. The reality is that he has no real citizenship here, for he is a citizen of God's coming Kingdom. As a pilgrim he is travelling through life with the vision of that Kingdom before him.

Consequently, in this life, he has no rights, no lasting abiding place and no real citizenship, for he belongs in God's Kingdom. He trusts instead in that eternal inheritance which God will provide when the time is right. So he is prepared, if necessary, to forego all rights to the things that this world has to offer and to put his trust and confidence in God.

Perfect Example

Jesus didn't say one thing and do another. He lived by those very principles; his was a life of selfless obedience and wholehearted service. Chapter 13 of John's gospel records that on the night of his betrayal Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. As he

did so he said:

"You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you" (13:13-15).

To wash the feet of another was the most menial task. In the houses of the rich it was a duty usually carried out by a slave. In so doing, the Lord Jesus, their Lord and Master, had elevated them to the status of honoured and valued guests; whereas he humbled himself and took the role of a slave. So, just think what the disciples would have understood him to mean when, with newly washed feet, they heard him say:

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34,35).

It was a new commandment all right. The law commanded men to love their neighbour as themselves. But the Lord Jesus went further. He said "regard them as better than yourself. Treat them as though they were your Lord and you were their servant (or slave)".

This remarkable quality of service to others is what the Lord Jesus demands of those who would be his disciples: if they are to be his followers. That is the challenge of following Jesus in this life, if we are to be part of God's purpose in the life to come. Nobody said it was going to be easy, but love makes all the difference!

Dudley Fifield

More Small Print



In article 3 of this series **David Nightingale** explained that the closer you look at the Bible the more reason you have to be impressed by its accurate detail. Jesus said that he had come to fulfil even the smallest details – the jots and tittles – and so it has proved to be. Look at some of the details about his life to see how accurately they were predicted.

A Son is Born

When reading about the events surrounding the birth of Jesus, a fascinating phrase keeps cropping up. Here's one occurrence:

Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 'Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call his name Immanuel ...' (Matthew 1:22,23)

Notice that "the Lord," God Himself, had told the writer what to say or write.

In other words the reason why there is such a close correspondence between the life of Jesus and what was written in the Old Testament is because God had revealed it and caused men to record it. In the first two chapters of Matthew we have several such examples.

The Virgin Birth

The one referred to above – about a virgin bearing a child – is a direct quotation from something that was written more than 600 years before, by the prophet Isaiah (see Isaiah 7:14) and it was perfectly fulfilled when the Lord Jesus was born to Mary, by the power of God's Holy Spirit.

Born in Bethlehem

Matthew explains to his Jewish readers that the birthplace of Jesus – the little town of Bethlehem – had long been predicted:



And when (King Herod) had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. So they said to him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel"' (Matthew 2:4-6).

The prophet Micah had indeed predicted:

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to me the one to be ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2).

Mary was living in Nazareth but the Romans had made a decree that everyone must return to their original family home for the census and taxing.

That was how she came to be at Bethlehem when Jesus was born. Otherwise she would have given birth in Nazareth.

Herod's Persecution

King Herod had come to hear about the birth of Jesus from the wise men who called at the Palace asking for directions and, in his twisted spite, he ordered that all baby boys, two years old and under, were to be killed. Remarkably, Matthew was able to record that this too was a fulfilment of Scripture.

"Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: 'A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they were no more'" (Matthew 2:18 and see Jeremiah 31:15).

Notice that King Herod, who was a really wicked man, the Romans, and Joseph and Mary were all involved in fulfilling these words from the Old Testament at a time when Jesus himself, as a baby, could have had no control over those happenings at all.

Christ Crucified

Precisely the same thing happens at the end of the life of the Lord Jesus. He was put on trial for his life and eventually was crucified. Why not check this out for yourself by reading two passages of Scripture, to see the remarkable similarities.

Psalm 22 was written by King David, the Psalmist, about 1000 years before the death of Jesus. But what he said was a remarkable portrayal of the horrors of crucifixion, long before the Romans had perfected the technique

of public torture and death, which they used as a way of subduing and terrorising an occupied people. At the time David wrote a criminal would have been executed by stoning, which was a very different sort of death from the one portrayed.

Matthew 27, verses 29 to 46, gives an account of the crucifixion of Jesus. Bear in mind that the things that happened were the result of the actions of other people. Jesus had no control over their behaviour and much of it was completely unpredictable, humanly speaking.

Crucifixion Foretold

Here are just a few extracts from the Psalm, but the whole account is well worth reading.

"I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it has melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue clings to my jaws; you have brought me to the dust of death ... They pierced my hands and my feet" (Psalm 22:14-16 and see Matthew 27:35 and 48).

"All those who see me laugh me to scorn; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, 'He trusted in the LORD, let him rescue him; let him deliver him, since he delights in him!'" (Psalm 22:7,8 and Matthew 27:29-43).

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, and from the words of my groaning?" (Psalm 22:1 and Matthew 27:46).

"They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast



lots" (Psalm 22:18 and Matthew 27:35).

The dreadful events that Matthew records mirror the words of the Psalm as it also unfolds the graphic detail of Jesus' suffering. It has been well said that God must have revealed to the psalmist, in an earlier age, the very words which Jesus would need to use from the cross before he died. Notice again the involvement of other people in the crucifixion.

Bible Prophecy

Jesus fulfilled in his life what the Old Testament said about him. The two stand or fall together. Since however what was written about him was recorded years before the events the correspondence is truly remarkable and we must say that only God could have known it would happen in the way it did.

We have of course taken a very limited number of examples; there are many more and it is worthwhile searching out and following, as it were, the life story of Jesus as it is foretold in



the Old Testament.

This is, of itself, a wonderful proof that the record is true and above all reliable. Could the gospel writers, in some very devious way, have woven together the stories we have in the New Testament about Jesus, using the Old Testament as their source material?

1. *Secular history does tell us something about Jesus of Nazareth, sufficient to add to the truth of those writers.*
2. *The four gospel accounts, obviously written with slightly different purposes in mind, are exactly like the accounts that might be given by four witnesses to the same events. They have the ring of truth about them.*
3. *The more we place the accounts under the microscope, the more they corroborate one another. In all the detail that is provided, rather than being able to find errors we find support. And the closer we get to the accounts the more we get to know the real Saviour at the heart of the record.*

That is another good reason why we need to start listening to the voice of the Master.

David Nightingale



Readers will be sorry to hear about the death of John Norcross who for many years was a member of the *Glad Tidings* team. He worked for Jarvis North West Print, our printers, and was responsible for much of our design work, including the new format introduced in 2000 and the change to full colour last year.

John was a keen mountaineer and is pictured here at the Everest base camp. Sadly, he died in a mountaineering accident in Wales just a few weeks ago. We miss him greatly and send our love to his wife, Sue, and all the family.

John's hope was firmly fixed upon the Lord Jesus and His teaching. He now sleeps awaiting his Return.

The Abolition of Slavery

Ask anyone in Britain what they know about slavery and the chances are that the one person they will recall is William Wilberforce. He is widely regarded as the person who achieved abolition by persuading the British Parliament to pass a Bill, in 1807, which banned the British slave trade, and which led to the release of all British slaves in 1833 (the year that Wilberforce died).

“Crime against Humanity”

As it is now 200 years since “*The Abolition of Slavery Act*” there has been a lot of heart-searching in Britain about what happened. And, once again, it has stirred up a lot of bad feeling in those nations which were most affected, notably in Africa and the Caribbean. Some terrible things were done by many nations, and huge profits were made by snatching people away from their homes and forcing them to work for nothing on plantations far from home.

Between 10 and 30 million people were taken as slaves. Many died en route, in cramped and awful travelling conditions, and when they arrived the slaves were treated despicably. They had no human rights. In some places it was made lawful to kill slaves who ran away; branding and rape were commonplace; they could be punished for rebellion by being nailed to the ground or by being burned gradually, starting at the feet and hands and then progressing up to the head. No wonder right-minded folk wanted to abolish this horrible abuse of people.

Not So Simple

Things are seldom as simple as they seem and it was so in this case. William Wilberforce did not abolish slavery by him-

self: far from it! There were very many contributory factors.

Slaves rebelled from the start, the first rebellion being in 1570 and at least 250 rebellions were recorded on board ship. In 1760 there was a rebellion in Jamaica of some 30,000 slaves and in 1793, when British troops tried to capture the French territory of St Dominique (now Haiti) they were quite unable to overpower the slaves who opposed them, and more than 12,000 British redcoats were killed.

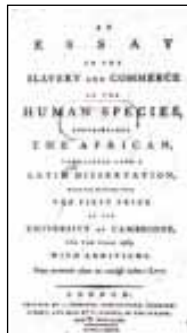
That’s the reason why UNESCO officially recognise August 23 – the anniversary of the St Dominique rebellion – as slavery’s official Remembrance Day.

Joint Effort

Meanwhile, in the House of Commons in London, Wilberforce was affected by a prize essay, written in Latin and submitted to Cambridge University, by a young man named Thomas Clarkson.

The topic was “*Is it Lawful to Enslave the Unconsenting?*” and Clarkson concluded that it was not lawful. As part of his research into the topic, he had met and interviewed those with personal experience of the slave trade and slavery. It changed his life for thereafter he became devoted to the cause of abolition.

Joined by Quakers, who were already working towards that end,



Clarkson and others were able to meet with Wilberforce and to give him support as he ventured to bring legislation before Parliament. Wilberforce was not a well organised man, and relied heavily upon his supporters. Clarkson became his organiser and is said to have travelled some 35,000 miles by horseback during the first seven or eight years after 1787, throughout England, Scotland and Wales.

He organised local committees, gathered the testimonies of seamen about the slave trade, and wrote and edited a long stream of books, leaflets and pamphlets on the subject, which he also distributed. He was the person who had made the crucial alliance with the Quakers, which brought financial support to the movement, and he also mustered a network of volunteers across the country. All of that was vital to the success of the legislation.

A Devoted Life

Thomas Clarkson died in September 1846, at Ipswich, and was buried in Playford, Suffolk where this memorial stands, to signify that he was the Friend of Slaves. Another memorial, at Wadesbridge, reads: *“On this spot where stands this monument in the month of June 1785 Thomas Clarkson resolved to devote his life to bringing about the abolition of the slave*



Thomas Clarkson as painted by Carl Frederik

trade”.

Of course, the greatest memorial is the fact that, 200 years on we can rejoice that slavery has been abolished. Or has it?

Slavery Today

Recent research suggests that slavery still exists, in one form or another, in many parts of the world, where people are being forced to do things against their will, often being held

as captives to prevent their escape. Some have suggested that there are as many as 27 million forced labourers worldwide, and that Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa have the highest incidence of forced labour in relation to their population.

Forced labour affects millions of people around the world. It can be found in every region, in almost all countries

and in every kind of economy, according to the UN. It is defined as work which is exacted under the menace of a penalty and undertaken involuntarily. Forced labour can be imposed by the state or private agents and takes different forms, including debt bondage, chattel slavery and prison labour.

A growing proportion of forced labourers are victims of human trafficking. It requires another Thomas Clarkson or William Wilberforce to achieve the



emancipation of these poor people, and there is such a change in prospect.

The Friend of Slaves

The Lord Jesus Christ devoted his life to doing the will of his Father. He totally surrendered himself to that end, being willing to travel wherever there was work to do, putting himself out to satisfy the needs of others, and putting their welfare and requirements before his own. He once said:

"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Matthew 8:20).

And it was said of him that:

"Though he was rich (being the Son of God), yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Jesus gave his life to set men and women free from the bondage of sin and death. For, although it may not look like it, we are all in fact slaves of sin and death. We sin and therefore we die, and only Jesus can set us free.

"Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves as slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered" (Romans 6:16,17).

We can become free men and

women, liberated by the redeeming work of Jesus, when we become believers and are baptized into his saving name. He offers us freedom from sin in this life and in the life to come, everlasting life.

Jesus is Coming

When he returns to earth, Jesus will bring liberty and salvation to all those who are oppressed and distressed by the ways of this world. He is coming to set up a world government which will right all present and past wrongs. He, and only he, will be able to take away the hurts and scars of so much suffering and injustice. For Jesus knows at

first hand what it is like to be cruelly treated, wrongfully arrested, and rejected as useless. So he is the One to put things right and that is what the Scripture promises:

"Give the king your judgments, O God, and your righteousness to the king's Son. He will judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice. The mountains will bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness. He will bring justice to the poor of the people; he will save the children of the needy, and will break in pieces the oppressor..." (Psalm 72:1-4).

No monument was ever erected near the burial place of Jesus, for he is still alive, having conquered death, and he will come again as promised. We honour him, and remember him, in the way we should, not by erecting pillars, but by dedicating our lives in his service and by seeking to follow his commandments and teachings.



Israel – Blessed or Not?

Many people have asked the question: “Why have the Jews had such a tough time?” The simple answer is that God said that would happen if they were disobedient to Him. However, a little more investigation is needed.

Covenant Agreement

When God brought Israel out of Egypt, He made an agreement with them. If they were faithful He would bless them; if they were unfaithful He would curse them. Hearing that, the national representatives agreed. That was how it would be.

Deuteronomy 27:15-26 lists some of the commandments of God. and the people agreed with God’s terms. Deuteronomy chapter 28 lists the blessings that would flow if Israel were obedient; then verses 16-68 list the curses that would come if Israel were unfaithful. Looking at some of them, we can see how the curses were fulfilled

Deuteronomy 28:22 ‘The Lord shall smite thee with ... blasting and mildew’ which was fulfilled in the days of Amos – See Amos 4:9

Deuteronomy 28:25 ‘Thou shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the world’ – which was fulfilled when Israel were taken to Babylon – see Lamentations 1:8.

Deuteronomy 28:53 ‘Thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body’ – which was fulfilled in the time of the kings – see 2 Kings 6:29.

Deuteronomy 28:65 ‘Among these nations shalt thou find no ease’ – which has been Israel’s experience all round the world. They have suffered persecution in most places on earth.

Purposeful Punishment

This was not simply mindless punishment from God. There was a purpose in all of it. God was looking for Israel to repent and turn to serve Him. The problems they faced were prompts to help them do just that. A recurring message in the prophet Amos, who quotes the curses, is that those curses should have brought about repentance.

Amos 4:7-8 ‘I have witholden the rain ... **yet have ye not returned unto me**’

Amos 4:9 ‘I have smitten you with blasting and mildew ... **yet have ye not returned unto me**’

Amos 4:10 ‘I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt ... **yet have ye not returned unto me**’

Amos 4:11 ‘I have overthrown some of you (like) Sodom and Gomorrah ... **yet have ye not returned unto me**’

God is not vindictive. Rather, He seeks obedience so that He can bless. This is true for us as well as for Israel. God wants to give us eternal life in the kingdom of God when Jesus Christ returns. However the offer is not unconditional. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16) .

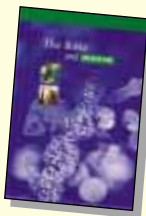
Notice the condition. There is everlasting life for all those who believe. How about you?

Peter Forbes

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