

Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1543



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God’s Revelation in the Bible – page 12

Glad Tidings

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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1543



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Its objectives are – to encourage the study of the Bible as God's inspired message to men; to call attention to the Divine offer of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ; and to warn men and women that soon Christ will return to Earth as judge and ruler of God's world-wide Kingdom.

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“Tidings of Great Joy”

When things get you down what do you do? Some people go shopping in the hope that will help. Others eat a bit more and then worry about their waist-line! But sometimes things are so depressing that nothing seems to help.

Really Bad

What must it be like to be living in Syria at present, with the nation being torn apart by opposing factions? Many who fled from Iraq to Syria, when Iraq was at war, are now fleeing back to Iraq, to start their lives all over again. And there are many countries where parents fear that they cannot feed themselves or their children because of the weather, the government, their health and everything else. For many, life is full of uncertainty.

Put yourself in the shoes of a heavily pregnant girl who was told to leave home with her young husband to go and stay with friends many miles away. Transport was difficult and the journey arduous and when they reached their destination their friends couldn't or wouldn't accommodate them. They had to sleep rough and her baby was born that very night with nobody to help. They felt unwanted and unloved, yet they prized that child, as though he was the most special baby ever.

Something Remarkable

Then a group of agricultural workers tracked the young couple down, to the outhouse where they were staying, and knelt before the baby boy. They came with the news that they were out in the field when a company of angels came to tell them that the king of Israel – the Messiah – had just been born. They

came to pay homage for the angel said:

*“Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For **there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.** And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger” (Luke 2:10–12).*

Then an entire company of angels appeared and proclaimed together:

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!” (Luke 2:14).

Great Joy

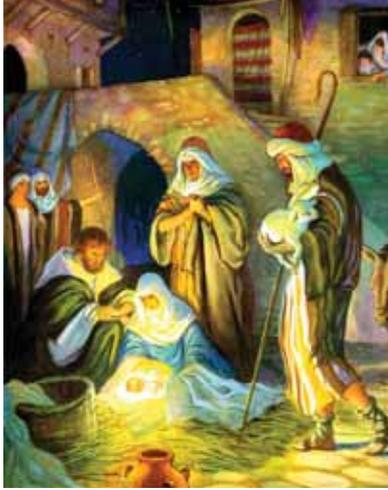
Those marvellous events happened nearly two thousand years ago and it is hard for us to realise just how exciting the news was. The people of Israel were subject to a Roman occupying force – something they hated. They had been waiting and waiting for a promised Deliverer or Saviour.

He was first promised to Adam and Eve, when they were in deep distress; then promises about him had been made to Abraham, Moses and King David. His Coming was often spoken about when God's prophets foretold future events and there were people who lived in daily expectation. But the news that came to the shepherds was completely unexpected and unlooked for.

You sense their appreciation, however, in their readiness to leave their sheep and go into Bethlehem, to seek out a child who had just been born there and to pay their respects. And the record says that: When they

had seen him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds (Luke 2:17–18).

They just couldn't stop talking about it, and understandably so. These were tidings of great joy for them, as indeed they are to "all people".



in the First Century people wanted deliverance from the obvious things – oppression, taxation, illness, hunger and death. But they didn't think about the underlying problem: the indirect cause of all those things. The real problem is sin – disobedience to, and rebellion against, the law of God. Solve that and you solve all other problems.

A Saviour

Angels no longer appear as they did in Bible times, at least if they do we are unaware of the fact (Hebrews 13:1). The Romans are no longer a conquering race, so nobody is now looking for a Conqueror to get rid of them. Nor can we ever again expect that a child will be born to a virgin: that was a once for all happening for the child was the "only begotten Son of God" (John 1:18).

As things worked out, Jesus had not come to conquer the Romans, or to be crowned as King of Israel, ruling from Jerusalem over God's worldwide kingdom. That time will come, but he had first to accomplish a much more demanding deliverance – something needed by every person, in every nation and in every age.

This is what Joseph, his foster father, was told by the angel:

*She (Mary) will bring forth a Son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for **he will save his people from their sins***" (Matthew 1:21).

It was sad, but understandable, that

What of Us?

The issues that now confront us are rehearsed every day by politicians and pundits who are anxious to get our vote or our money. All the time we hear about the world's economic problems. We see how unstable our world is and how easily a nation can slip into chaos. There are daily news bulletins about crimes, mistakes, lies and deceptions. But you hardly ever hear about the underlying problem – which is still sin!

The great news is that Jesus has died to set us free from sin and death. Soon he will come from heaven to rule on earth as King and to solve all our other problems. But, like the shepherds, we must be diligent to search and seek out the Lord.

Reading the Bible regularly is a big help to get to know the Saviour of the world. That is why we have included a Bible Reading table in this issue, so that you can read God's Word right through the coming year, if the Lord remains away. Don't miss the opportunity!

Editor

Why you Must Believe God

Not believing

Young Wilfred was helping his father, working with his best tools. The father warned his son 'Be careful how you handle this one. Hold it exactly like this or you will hurt yourself'.



A few minutes later, when his father's back was turned, Wilfred let out a cry: he had misused the tool and hurt his hand. Wilfred had not truly believed his father, and he suffered the consequences. We need to make sure that we do not make this mistake with the Almighty Father.

Eve did not believe God

In the Garden of Eden, God had told Adam and Eve that if they ate fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil then they would die: "... but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:17). Eve was tricked by the lying words of the serpent. "Then the serpent said to the woman 'You will not surely die'." (Genesis 3:4). Sadly, Eve believed the serpent, rather than God, and suffered the consequences.

There is a clear lesson for us all. It is not sufficient to believe in God; Eve

believed in God, Wilfred believed in his father. We must believe what God has said and try to obey it.

Jesus always believed God

The supreme example of belief in God is Jesus, God's Son. In everything he did he obeyed his father, the Lord God. In Matthew chapter 2, when he is tempted he always fends off the temptation with the Word of God, always saying: 'It is written...', and then quoting from the Old Testament Scriptures. In the Psalms we have a beautiful description of how Jesus treasured his father's commandments, for the Psalmist wrote prophetically of Jesus:

"Then I said 'Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me. I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is written in my heart'" (Psalm 40:7-8).

Hebrews chapter 10 tells us that these words are about God's Son, Jesus. They show how the commands of God were so precious to Jesus that he describes them as being 'in his heart'. It was his joy to do what his father asked of him – even though this sometimes involved horrendous suffering.

A Friend of God

No-one else has ever loved God's commands and obeyed them like Jesus did. But there are notable people in the Bible who did try to obey God. One example is Abraham, who is described in James 2:23 as a 'friend of God'. What a lovely testimony! What had Abraham done to warrant this?

The scripture says:

“Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness” (James 2:23).

God had asked Abraham to offer his only son Isaac as a sacrifice. This is recorded in Genesis 22. Abraham and Sarah his wife had waited years for a son, and God had promised that from Isaac would come a great nation and one who would eventually be the Saviour and Ruler of the world.

Abraham was prepared to do exactly what God asked of him and was willing to sacrifice his son (although an angel stopped him at the last minute), because he believed that God would do what He had promised. If only we could be like this!

Unchangeable

We cannot change God’s Commandments. Time and again we are told that it is very important to follow exactly what God says, and not to use our own ideas.

King Saul, the very first king of Israel made this mistake. God told King Saul to utterly destroy the Amalekites – a nation of people who had treated the Israelites very badly. God said to him:

“Go and attack Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them” (1 Samuel 15:3).

Saul did go to battle, as he was told, but he did not destroy everything.



“But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs and all that was good” (1 Samuel 15:9).

God was very angry with Saul. Saul tried to justify what he had done:

“...the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God” (1 Sam. 15:15).

This may seem like a very good reason, but

God was angry with Saul and the consequences were very serious. Samuel the prophet says to him:

“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to heed than the fat of rams ... Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king” (1 Samuel 15:22-23).

Aim to Believe

All these examples given us in the Scriptures of truth show us plainly that we must aim to believe God. Many people believe in God. They may also believe that He will give them eternal life. Are they right? The Bible clearly teaches that although we must believe in God, this is not enough. We must try to find out exactly what He wants us to do, and to obey as best we can, and then to commit our lives completely to His ways. This alone is how we truly believe God, and it is the only way to be saved.

Anna Hart

The Witness of Stephen

It was perhaps inevitable that as the Jerusalem congregation of the young church grew quite large there would be some, and so there were.

Some of the members felt neglected, especially widows from the Greek-speaking areas, who felt they were not getting their fair share of the welfare money. The Apostles did not wish to leave the preaching work they were doing to attend to the issue, but clearly something had to be done.

Zealous Opponents

Seven men were specially appointed for the task. One of these was Stephen, who comes to our notice because he soon became involved in the preaching work as well as looking after the daily distribution to those in need. He seems to have upset some from the synagogue of the Freedmen, who would have liked to oppose what he was saying, but found it impossible to refute his arguments. So they resorted to the tactics of the mob, stirred up a commotion and then dragged Stephen before the Jewish Council.

They knew that any charges they brought would not stand up before the council, so they arranged for false witnesses to say:

“This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us” (Acts 6:13–14).

That serious accusation meant that Stephen was on trial for his life before the High Priest and Jewish Council.

Stephen’s Defence

Instead of refuting the charges made about him, Stephen went right back to the times of Genesis chapter 12, when the Lord God asked Abram to leave Ur of the Chaldees and to move to the land we now know as Israel. He explained about the promises God made to Abraham, the way Isaac was born and how the line of descent continued through Jacob and his twelve sons. He talked about their time in Egypt, and the way Moses, “*instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians*”, led God’s people out of Egypt. He reminded them of how God had performed wonders and signs in Egypt, and at the Red Sea.

Now he was ready to deal with the issue of whether Jesus would change the customs delivered by Moses, for he now introduced the promise that God made by Moses that He would “*raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers*” (Acts 7:37). This was a very clever move, for it is recognised that the Lord Jesus was the prophet like Moses, but it was not possible for High Priest or Council to acknowledge this, even though the followers of the Lord Jesus would do so.

Then Stephen turned to the time when the people of Israel were in the wilderness. Far from keeping faithfully to the commands and laws which God had given them through Moses, whilst he was away from them receiving God’s law, they had made an idol of

gold in the shape of a calf and worshipped it. This was possibly the lowest point in Israel's history, but there were other low points.

History Lesson

Continuing to trace Israel's history, Stephen talked about their worship of God, first a tabernacle or tent, made in the wilderness then a permanent Temple constructed in Jerusalem in the reign of Solomon. God had not asked for such a building, but King David had wanted to build it as a place in which to worship God. Stephen now quoted the prophecy of Isaiah, where God asks:

"Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest?" (Isaiah 66:1)

Then God explained that He is the Creator of everything, and what He wants is people with the right attitude of mind and heart.

Stephen contrasted God's expectation with the attitude of those who resisted the claims made by Jesus Christ, the Son of God:

"You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers (Acts 7:51-52).

In a masterly way, Stephen had shown that God's people were always wayward, forsaking the commands which God had given them. Time and again God had sent prophets to call them back to the right way, but the response had been to persecute and kill them. The prophets had spoken

about the coming of the "Righteous One", a clear reference to the Lord Jesus. Stephen showed that the opposition to the Apostles and to the rest of the congregation of believers was just like the hostility shown towards God all through the history of Israel. His final rebuke to the Council was stinging:

"You are the men who have received the Law of God miraculously, by the hand of angels, and you are the men who have disobeyed it" (Acts 7:53, J.B. Phillips).

Stephen's End

Stephen's defence was a comprehensive rebuke of the Jewish nation, who should have been the guardians and keepers of a law which was years ahead of any other such code, and which should have ensured the blessings of the Lord God, generation after generation. That it had not done so was entirely due to their failure to observe its wise provisions, in particular their failure to faithfully worship the Lord God.

Sadly, those who heard this spirited defence took absolutely no notice. They were so incensed by what he had said that they threw him out of the city and stoned him to death, becoming the first to suffer such a fate after the death of the Lord Jesus himself. Just before they stoned him, Stephen saw a vision: *"the glory of God, and Jesus*



standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55). He told them what he saw, but they just "*stopped their ears*". They did not want to hear what Stephen was saying for they felt sure they knew God's will better than him. In fact they ignored one who really could have guided them to a better relationship with God, by their acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord.

This whole incident provides a powerful lesson for us. Stephen was inspired by God to explain important aspects of Israel's religious history, so that his hearers would not rely on their traditions, but would learn instead to accept God's truth. But they weren't

prepared to listen and would not follow his argument, or reason things through. Yet he was clearly speaking the truth, and was a man approved of God, as his vision of the Lord Jesus demonstrated. How careful we too must be not to rely upon human tradition, or the things we have always believed unthinkingly. The Scriptures give us the opportunity to read for ourselves what God wants of us. By reading them on a regular basis, we can ensure that we fully understand the whole counsel of God. What a blessing that can bring!

Mark Sheppard

Help with your Daily Bible Reading

Use The World Wide Web to help you to do your daily Bible readings (using the reading tables on pages 10 & 11). This is the 13th year in which this Christadelphian web site has been available to help people understand the Bible message.

There are over 24,400 comments, charts and tables from over 50 different Christadelphians.

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- * Search for comments on specific chapters – a real aid to Bible Study.

The object of the site is to encourage personal Bible reading.

The site can be viewed at <http://www.dailyreadings.org.uk/>

For further information either visit the site and click on CONTACT US or e-mail bible_truth@thebiblesite.co.uk or peterf@thebiblesite.co.uk

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26	...	11, 12	...	5	...	3, 4
27	...	13, 14	...	6	...	5, 6
28	...	15	...	7	...	7
29	...	16	...	8	...	8
30	...	17	...	9	...	8

MAY

1	Deut.	18	Eccl.	10	Acts	9
2	...	19	...	11	...	10
3	...	20	...	12	...	11, 12
4	...	21	Song	1	...	13
5	...	22	...	2	...	14, 15
6	...	23	...	3	...	16, 17
7	...	24	...	4	...	18, 19
8	...	25	...	5	...	20
9	...	26	...	6	...	21, 22
10	...	27	...	7	...	23, 24
11	...	28	...	8	...	25, 26
12	...	29	Isaiah	1	...	27
13	...	30	...	2	...	28
14	...	31	...	3, 4	Col.	1
15	...	32	...	5	...	2
16	...	33, 34	...	6	...	3, 4
17	Joshua	1	...	7	1 Thes.	1, 2
18	...	2	...	8	...	3, 4
19	...	3, 4	...	9	...	5
20	...	5, 6	...	10	2 Thes.	1, 2
21	...	7	...	11	...	3
22	...	8	...	12	1 Tim.	1, 2, 3
23	...	9	...	13	...	4, 5
24	...	10	...	14	...	6
25	...	11	...	15	2 Tim.	1
26	...	12	...	16	...	2
27	...	13	...	17, 18	...	3, 4
28	...	14	...	19	Titus	1, 2, 3
29	...	15	...	20, 21	Philemon	...
30	...	16	...	22	Heb.	1, 2
31	...	17	...	23	...	3, 4, 5

JUNE

1	Joshua	18	Isaiah	24	Heb.	6, 7
2	...	19	...	25	...	8, 9
3	...	20, 21	...	26, 27	...	10
4	...	22	...	28	...	11
5	...	23, 24	...	29	...	12
6	Judges	1	...	30	...	13
7	...	2, 3	...	31	James	1
8	...	4, 5	...	32	...	2
9	...	6	...	33	...	3, 4
10	...	7, 8	...	34	...	5
11	...	9	...	35	1 Peter	1
12	...	10, 11	...	36	...	2
13	...	12, 13	...	37	...	3, 4, 5
14	...	14, 15	...	38	2 Pet.	1, 2
15	...	16	...	39	...	3
16	...	17, 18	...	40	1 John	1, 2
17	...	19	...	41	...	3, 4
18	...	20	...	42	...	5
19	...	21	...	43	2 & 3 John	...
20	Ruth	1, 2	...	44	Jude	...
21	...	3, 4	...	45	Rev.	1, 2
22	1 Sam.	1	...	46, 47	...	3, 4
23	...	2	...	48	...	5, 6
24	...	3	...	49	...	7, 8, 9
25	...	4	...	50	...	10, 11
26	...	5, 6	...	51	...	12, 13
27	...	7, 8	...	52	...	14
28	...	9	...	53	...	15, 16
29	...	10	...	54	...	17, 18
30	...	11, 12	...	55	...	19, 20

OCTOBER

1	1 Chron.	15	Ezek.	27	Luke	24
2	...	16	...	28	Gal.	1, 2
3	...	17	...	29	...	3, 4
4	...	18, 19	...	30	...	5, 6
5	...	20, 21	...	31	Eph.	1, 2
6	...	22	...	32	...	3, 4
7	...	23	...	33	...	5, 6
8	...	24, 25	...	34	Phil.	1, 2
9	...	26	...	35	...	3, 4
10	...	27	...	36	John	1
11	...	28	...	37	...	2, 3
12	...	29	...	38	...	4
13	2 Chron.	1, 2	...	39	...	5
14	...	3, 4	...	40	...	6
15	...	5, 6	...	41	...	7
16	...	7	...	42	...	8
17	...	8	...	43	...	9, 10
18	...	9	...	44	...	11
19	...	10, 11	...	45	...	12
20	...	12, 13	...	46	...	13, 14
21	...	14, 15	...	47	...	15, 16
22	...	16, 17	...	48	...	17, 18
23	...	18, 19	Daniel	1	...	19
24	...	20	...	2	...	20, 21
25	...	21, 22	...	3	Acts	1
26	...	23	...	4	...	2
27	...	24	...	5	...	3, 4
28	...	25	...	6	...	5
29	...	26, 27	...	7	...	7
30	...	28	...	8	...	8
31	...	29	...	9	...	9

NOVEMBER

1	2 Chron.	30	Dan.	10	Acts	10
2	...	31	...	11	...	11, 12
3	...	32	...	12	...	13
4	...	33	Hosea	1	...	14, 15
5	...	34	...	2	...	16, 17
6	...	35	...	3	...	18, 19
7	...	36	...	4	...	20
8	...	37	...	5	...	21, 22
9	...	38	...	6	...	23, 24
10	...	39	...	7	...	25, 26
11	...	40	...	8	...	27
12	...	41	...	9	...	28
13	...	42	...	10	Colos.	1
14	...	43	...	11	...	2
15	...	44	...	12	...	3, 4
16	...	45	...	13	1 Thes.	1, 2
17	...	46	...	14	...	3, 4
18	...	47	...	15	...	5
19	...	48	...	16	...	6
20	...	49	...	17	...	7
21	...	50	...	18	...	8
22	...	51	...	19	...	9
23	...	52	...	20	...	10
24	...	53	...	21	...	11
25	...	54	...	22	...	12
26	...	55	...	23	...	13
27	...	56	...	24	...	14
28	...	57	...	25	...	15
29	...	58	...	26	...	16
30	...	59	...	27	...	17
31	...	60	...	28	...	18

DECEMBER

1	Esth.	9, 10	Janah	1	Heb.	6, 7
2	...	11	...	2	...	8, 9
3	...	12	...	3	...	10
4	...	13	...	4	...	11
5	...	14	...	5	...	12
6	...	15	...	6	...	13
7	...	16	...	7	...	14
8	...	17	...	8	...	15
9	...	18	...	9	...	16
10	...	19	...	10	...	17
11	...	20	...	11	...	18
12	...	21	...	12	...	19
13	...	22	...	13	...	20
14	...	23	...	14	...	21
15	...	24	...	15	...	22
16	...	25	...	16	...	23
17	...	26	...	17	...	24
18	...	27	...	18	...	25
19	...	28	...	19	...	26
20	...	29	...	20	...	27
21	...	30	...	21	...	28
22	...	31	...	22	...	29
23	...	1	...	23	...	30
24	...	2	...	24	...	31
25	...	3	...	25	...	1
26	...	4	...	26	...	2
27	...	5	...	27	...	3
28	...	6	...	28	...	4
29	...	7	...	29	...	5
30	...	8	...	30	...	6
31	...	9	...	31	...	7

By courtesy of The Christadelphian

God's Revelation in the Bible

Throughout history people have often sought some Being greater than themselves – sometimes to worship, at other times to blame for anything they didn't understand!

When in trouble, it was therefore natural for them to turn to that great Being to champion them, first in battles between tribes and later in wars between nations.

The Enlightenment?

Things changed dramatically in the 17th century. The dawn of modern science brought answers to a whole range of questions which had previously been regarded as unfathomable mysteries. Man's knowledge about himself, the earth and the universe grew hugely and the need for a god to "fill in the gaps" in his understanding became far less urgent. Despite this there were many scientists in that period who viewed their discoveries and work as something that revealed more about the might and power of God: something that added to what He had revealed about Himself in the Bible. Other leaders of men also saw the Bible as God's revelation:

- ◆ *"It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible"* – George Washington (1732-1799), the first US president.
- ◆ *"I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good from the Saviour of the*

world is communicated to us through this book" – Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), sixteenth US president.

- ◆ *"There are more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible than in any profane history"* – Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727), one of the greatest scientists of all time.
- ◆ *"The existence of the Bible, as a book for the people, is the greatest benefit which the human race has ever experienced. Every attempt to belittle it is a crime against humanity"* – Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), German philosopher.
- ◆ *"The New Testament is the very best book that ever was or ever will be known in the world"* – Charles Dickens (1812-1870). English novelist.

Science and Religion

It was later still in the 19th century after the work of Charles Darwin that some thinkers proposed a new idea altogether. They argued that science and religion present two different concepts about the earth and indeed the universe. They are equally true, they said, but they do not overlap. They are the two sides of the same coin. One shows us how things are and how they work, the other tells us why they are and what the purpose of it all is.

Things have moved on again so that today man thinks he knows the answers to pretty well all of the questions that can be thrown at him. Some

men have become insufferably proud of their achievements and think they can do without a God. Some even deny His existence.

But all is not lost, even today. One Christian writer of the last century, who was also something of a philosopher, made the following points in one of his books.

“Suppose, for a moment, that there was no intelligence behind the universe, no creative mind. In that case, nobody designed my brain for the purpose of thinking. It is merely that when the atoms inside my skull happen for physical or chemical reasons to arrange themselves in a certain way, this gives me, as a by-product the sensation I call thought. But if so, how can I trust my own thinking to be true? It’s like upsetting a glass of milk and hoping that the way the splash arranges itself will give you a map of London. But if I can’t trust my own thinking, of course, I can’t trust the arguments leading to atheism; therefore I have no reason to be an atheist, or anything else. Unless I believe in God, I can’t believe in thought, so I can never use thought to disbelieve in God” (C S Lewis).

Bible Revelation

I hope I’ve said enough to at least set your minds thinking about the idea of God. As Christadelphians, we have come to believe that there is an Almighty God and that He has revealed Himself and His purpose with His creation and that revelation is uniquely to be found in the book we know as the Bible. This is very

much in accord, as we have seen, with the thinking of some men of earlier generations. So let’s look at some Bible passages to see what it tells us.

◆ **The Bible tells us that God is the Creator and Sustainer of all things. He dwells in the heavens in unapproachable light. He is the personification of wisdom and power:**

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day (Genesis 1:1–5).

“To whom then will you liken Me, or to whom shall I be equal?” says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power; not one is missing (Isaiah 40:25–26).

He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honour and everlasting power. Amen. (1 Timothy 6:15–16).

◆ **The Bible tells us that God’s power is limitless and so He is everywhere present by His spirit. He**

uses His power for special purposes. Some, by their very nature, are unique occasions:

Prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:21).

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

(Jesus) was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:17–19).

Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:2–4).

◆ **The Bible tells us that God has not only revealed Himself to mankind through His Word but also in the person and the life of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ:**

While he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:20–21).

When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law (Galatians 4:4).

For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things he (Jesus) had to be made like his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself has suffered, being tempted, he is able to aid those who are tempted (Hebrews 2:16–18).

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Hebrews 1:1–3).

What is God Like?

But you will want to know what the God of the Bible is like as a person, given that it's possible to think of Him in that way. Is He vengeful or forgiving? Is He full of anger or of love? Does He have

a quick temper, like so many of us, or is He incomparably patient?

One of the great leaders of the Jewish people – Moses – asked these questions of the Lord God Himself who, in reply, revealed this to him:

The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation" (Exodus 34:6–7).

If you ask why God should speak with a man who was a leader of the Jews, and not some other nation, have a look at the article about the Return of the Jews to their own land. They are the people whom God has chosen and we do well to remind ourselves that Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, was born of a Jewish woman.

Why is God like that?

Why is God merciful, gracious and longsuffering? Why has He all these wonderful characteristics? We need to think about this for a moment. God created man in the beginning describing His creation as "very good". Yet He gave man a thinking mind and the ability to exercise choice. Would man choose to worship and obey God as God intended he should, or would he rebel? History tells us the answer to this question time after time. This state of human rebellion is called sin and it leads mankind to death and oblivion. So we ask, "What about those who really want to worship God and be obedient?" What will happen to them?

Have a quiet read of Psalm 103:8-18. Here is God's gracious mercy in action. The Creator has, through the sacrifice of His Son, made it possible for honest, repentant men and women to turn to Him and not to perish at death. Meditate a while on the following Bible passages (John 3:16; 1John 4:9-11 and 2 Peter 3:9).

At death, men and women who make a covenant relationship with God are asleep in Christ, unconsciously waiting for the day of resurrection (see 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, 51-57). For the Bible tells us that God, although high and lifted up, almighty and immortal, is yet loving and merciful towards weak and rebellious mankind. As the crown of His creation we need, as individuals, to show God that we realise how weak and failing we are. We must then turn to Him with repentant hearts seeking forgiveness for our wrongdoings, as says the prophet:

"Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:6–7).

This gracious, kind and loving God is the majestic person that the Bible uniquely reveals to us. We all need to turn to Him through His Son, and what gracious words of invitation Jesus

Also spoke:

Come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:28–30).

Trevor A Pritchard

The Return of the Jews

In AD70 the Jewish nation came to an end when the Roman army conquered Jerusalem, killed many of its inhabitants and scattered the survivors throughout all the nations of the world.

Prophecy Fulfilled!

This was a remarkable fulfilment of Bible prophecy, one which foretold their scattering being in Deuteronomy chapter 28, a prediction given by Moses over a thousand years earlier. And some forty years before it happened, ‘*the prophet like Moses*’ – the Lord Jesus – had foretold this event as part of the extensive prophecy he gave on the Mount of Olives:

They (the Jews) will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (Luke 21:24).

Jewish Dispersion

So it was that, following the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70, the Jews began a long period of dispersion throughout all the nations of the world, having no homeland of their own, and often being moved on as anti-Semitism led to persecution and pillage. This period of dispersion lasted for more than 1800 years until near the end of the 19th century when a movement toward national recovery and resettlement in the land of their forefathers began.

Between 1918 and 1939 there was a steady trickle of Jews back to the land, mainly into the area around Tel

Aviv. Many of these were fleeing from persecution in Russia. It was, however, the holocaust during the Second World War which turned the trickle into a flood. Since then, there has been a regular return of Jews to the land of their forefathers. It is a national recovery which is unique among the nations, for throughout the long period of dispersion, despite the many persecutions which they suffered, the Jews kept their distinct national identity.

Modern Miracle

In the return of the Jews to the land and the establishment of the State of Israel as a Jewish State, we see a modern day miracle which also fulfils Bible prophecy. For just as their dispersion was prophesied, so was their restoration. These prophecies also give compelling evidence to the veracity and reliability of God’s Word. Here are some of the prophecies of return and restoration, taken from the prophecy of Jeremiah.

“Therefore behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord, “that it shall no more be said, ‘The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,’ but, ‘The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them.’ For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers. “Behold, I will send for many fishermen,” says the Lord, “and they shall fish them; and afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and every

hill, and out of the holes of the rocks. For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity hidden from My eyes (Jeremiah 16:14–17).

For behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord, 'that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah,' says the Lord. 'And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it' " (Jeremiah 30:3).

Behold, I will bring them from the north country, And gather them from the ends of the earth, Among them the blind and the lame, The woman with child And the one who labors with child, together; A great throng shall return there. They shall come with weeping, And with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, In a straight way in which they shall not stumble; For I am a Father to Israel, And Ephraim is My firstborn. "Hear the word of the Lord, O nations, And declare it in the isles afar off, and say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him, And keep him as a shepherd does his flock.' (Jeremiah 31:8–10).

God's Work – God's World

Although all of the above quotations are from the prophecy of Jeremiah, he is not the only one who foretells these momentous events. The return is a work of God. It is He who is in control. It is for His Holy Name's sake, and as a vindication of His Word, that these events are taking place, not because of any righteousness displayed by the Jews. In fact they are returning in unbelief and generally are quite ignorant of the hand of God at work in their lives. This is what He declares through

His prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah:

"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God: "I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord," says the Lord God, "when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. (Ezekiel 36:22–24).

"Thus says the Lord: 'If My covenant is not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth, then I will cast away the descendants of Jacob and David My servant, so that I will not take any of his descendants to be rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For I will cause their captives to return, and will have mercy on them.' " (Jeremiah 33:25–26).

The Jews in general think they are acting on their own initiative and skill in returning to the land of their forefathers, and in their ability to remain established in the land. This is how it also appears to the nations of the world, but nothing could be further from the truth.

The Jewish people are back in the land of their forefathers in fulfillment of Bible prophecy, and in these prophecies of the return we have seen and are seeing the Word of God being fulfilled before our very eyes.

John Shepley

Jonah and the Whale

Jonah came from Galilee, where Jesus later grew up. He was a prophet to the Ten Tribe kingdom. Like Amos and Hosea, he lived during the long reign of King Jeroboam the Second and what we learn from the record in the account in the historical record is Jonah was a very willing prophet when he thought that his nation would benefit from his prophecies.

The date would be about 780 BC, and this is what we read:

*And (Jeroboam II) did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin. He restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, **which He had spoken through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet who was from Gath Hopher** (2 Kings 14:24–25).*

Jonah the Prophet

Prophecy about the expansion of Israel was one thing but then Jonah received an extraordinary request from God. He was told to go to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, and call on the people there to repent. It is hard for us

to imagine the impact on him. As a Jew, Jonah had always kept himself at arm's length from all Gentiles (non-Jews). They worshipped idols, and were unclean. How, he asked himself, could Israel's God have anything to do with such people? Besides, the Assyrians had powerful kings, and could easily bring trouble for Israel (thirty years later they would indeed invade Israel and take captives). Nineveh was 700 miles away to the north east. Jonah decided God was making a big mistake. He went to the shipping company office at Joppa, bought a ticket, and sailed off in the opposite direction.

No Escape!

You cannot run away from God. After a while a great storm blew up, and the ship was in danger of sinking. The superstitious mariners cast lots to decide whose fault it was, and the lot fell on Jonah. He admitted he was running away from God. But, to his credit, he volunteered to sacrifice himself to save them from drowning. "Hurl me into the sea", he said, "then there will be a calm".

So they picked him up and threw him overboard. The irony is, the sailors were Gentiles. Jonah had been forced





to realise that Gentiles have feelings, just like Jews. They did not want to die. And he had been prepared to give his life to save them! Perhaps he was beginning to see that God was right after all.

Mercifully, God did not let him die. A great fish saw him fall through the water and gobbled him up. It was probably a whale – they have been known to swallow men alive when chased by harpoon boats, and they breathe air like men. The second chapter of Jonah records his amazing prayer to God from the darkness and terror of his underwater prison. God heard it from the depths of the ocean and had pity on him. Three days later the whale threw him up on a Mediterranean beach.

A Second Time

Again God commanded the prophet to go to Nineveh. And this time, grumpily, he went. The Assyrian capital was a huge metropolis – it took three days to cross on foot. Jonah cried to the people that if they did not repent from their violence and their wicked ways Nineveh would be overthrown. Remarkably, the king set an example, clothed himself in

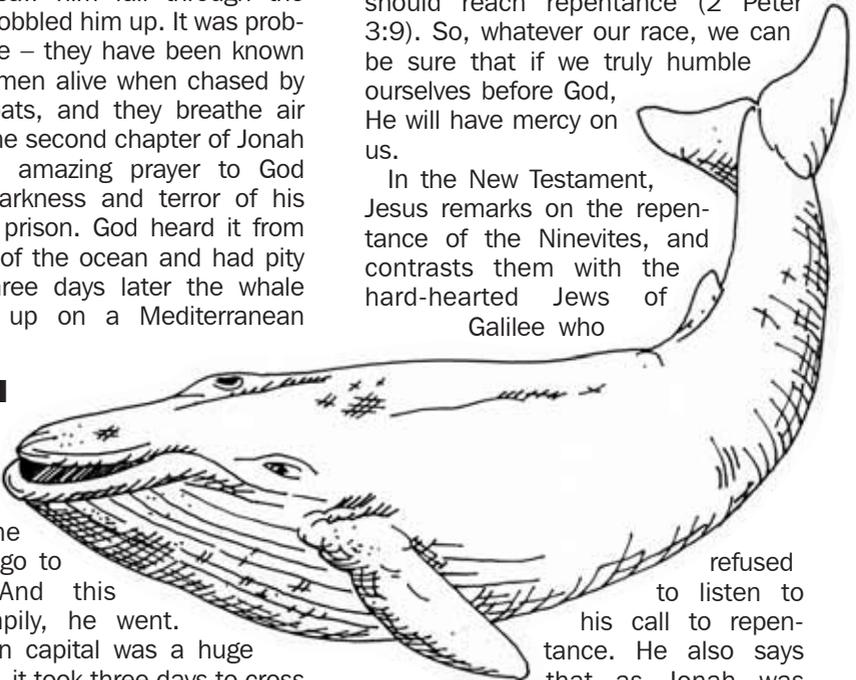
sackcloth as a sign of mourning and started praying to the God of Israel.

Jonah sat down outside the city to wait for the outcome. He was really peeved when God told him the capital had been saved. But God reproved him.

“Should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left (presumably He meant little children) – and much livestock? (Jonah 4:11).

As the apostle Peter writes in the New Testament, God does not wish that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance (2 Peter 3:9). So, whatever our race, we can be sure that if we truly humble ourselves before God, He will have mercy on us.

In the New Testament, Jesus remarks on the repentance of the Ninevites, and contrasts them with the hard-hearted Jews of Galilee who



refused to listen to his call to repentance. He also says that as Jonah was three days in the belly of the whale, he would be three days in the tomb, and then rise again.

David M Pearce

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