

Glad Tidings

of the Kingdom of God

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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 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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The Kingdom of God

Canals were once an important way of moving things around Britain when the alternative was to use congested roads. Raw materials, food and consumer goods were shifted quietly and efficiently through the country. But those days are over. Now everything goes by road or rail and the canal network is mainly used by pleasure craft or by people who choose to live in barges at canalside moorings.

Looking Back

Travel along a canal and you can be transported back to a time when everything moved at a slower pace and when most people were manual labourers. This was an era before mobile phones, televisions and computers. It was a time when many people were poor and their living conditions basic. Healthcare was limited and life expectancy much poorer than today. For whilst we may be nostalgic about the past, we might be glad we weren't born then!

But the past is important. Marcus Garvey, the Jamaican politician, said that *"A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots"*. And the poet William Wordsworth gave this advice: *"Life is divided into three terms – that which was, which is, and which will be. Let us learn from the past to profit by the present, and from the present, to live better in the future."*

Bible Times

The Bible is the Word of God. It is the way that God has chosen to communicate with mankind. First the word was



spoken, then it was written down and carefully preserved. So when you read what God has to say, you have to access the past; for the last inspired word was written nearly two thousand years ago, and the Old Testament goes back much further than that.

People who lived in Bible times lived in a very different world. It was a time when most of the population worked the land, grew their own food, lived very simply compared with today and had a very precarious existence. People travelled by foot or on horseback. If they sailed, it was quite likely they would suffer shipwreck. If they were soldiers, there was some fierce hand-to-hand fighting to endure. Farmers were dependent upon good weather; merchants would make small profits; even kings could only expect to reign for just a few years.

But there was one nation that was different from all the rest. It had a superior standard of healthcare because its laws were well in advance of the time. It had a moral code too which, if kept, would set it apart. And it had religious practices which were very different from the nations around. For the people of Israel were God's

people and they were invited to live according to His law and were to worship Him alone – the one true God.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart... (Deuteronomy 6:4–6).

Special Nation

There was something else that made the nation of Israel different, but it was something they sometimes failed to live up to. For many years they had no king, because God was their King and He ruled over them. They had prophets who guided them and priests who taught them, but no earthly ruler. And when they demanded a king, to be like other nations, their kingmaker – the prophet Samuel – warned them that hard times would lie ahead and that a king would cost them dearly (see 1 Samuel 8, verses 6–22).

Nevertheless they insisted and kings were appointed by God to rule over His nation, subject to His law, living in His land and eventually occupying His city, Jerusalem. Please note that the nation, the kingdom, the people, the laws, the land and the city were all God's and that the people of Israel were meant to be God's subjects and were to follow Him in everything they did. This was no ordinary kingdom: it was the kingdom of God on earth. Scripture makes that quite clear when King David was about to die and God appointed Solomon as the next king. This is what we are told:

Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him (1 Chronicles 29:23).

Good Kings and Bad Kings

Unfortunately there were more bad kings than good over the 400 years of the Kingdom of God on earth. Those who ruled well, who were faithful to their calling to rule as God's servants, brought peace and prosperity to the people. The bad kings often undid all those improvements and ruled for themselves, not for God. That was a recipe for hard times and insecurity. The nations around made inroads; the weather was problematic; crops failed and income plummeted. At last things deteriorated to such an extent that God ended the Kingdom, declaring this through His prophet to Zedekiah, the last king:

Now to you, O profane, wicked prince of Israel, whose day has come, whose iniquity shall end, thus says the Lord God: "Remove the turban, and take off the crown; nothing shall remain the same. Exalt the humble, and humble the exalted. Overthrown, overthrown, I will make it overthrown! It shall be no longer, until he comes whose right it is, and I will give it to him" (Ezekiel 21:25–27).

The last bad king was exiled to Babylon and the nation never again constituted God's Kingdom on earth. But notice that while it was being dismantled there was a promise of One who would come who will be given rulership over God's Kingdom. That promise was about the Lord Jesus Christ, who is to return as God's appointed King to rule on earth and to establish here a new society.

This special issue is all about that Kingdom and God's coming King.

Editor

What the World Needs

It doesn't matter how you read the news – on your iPad, iPhone, Android, TV or newspaper, the content is the same – destruction and loss of life by:

- ❖ the weather – earthquakes in Nepal;
- ❖ one person – “co-pilot Andreas Lubitz accelerated the plane as he flew it into mountain”;
- ❖ a group – “ISIS loyalists have claimed responsibility for a bomb which exploded at the Moroccan embassy in Tripoli”;
- ❖ accident – “Reserve Deputy was charged with second-degree manslaughter in the death of Eric Harris who was shot and killed during a dramatic arrest ... He thought he was using a Taser on him instead of a gun”.

What Went Wrong?

Who can change such a world? God can! He created it in the beginning, and described it as “very good”. So, how do we arrive at today's problems, if everything began so well? Only the Bible answers this question, by explaining how Adam chose to disobey God and please himself. Adam's decision brought about a changed world – one fraught with disasters that we read about every day. But has God just left man to his own devices, with no future to look forward to? Certainly not!

This really is the message of the Bible in a nutshell. God created man very good; man disobeyed God, and therefore died. The Lord Jesus came to save us from eternal death, and to offer us eternal life in the kingdom of



Earthquake damage in Sandku, Nepal

God. But just like Adam, we have to choose what we want. Life or death?

What's Coming?

First, the Lord Jesus will be King; he will return to the earth, at a time of unbelievable trouble and upheaval, with war in many places, including Israel and the Middle East, Russia and Europe. He will be challenged, but will subdue all his enemies, accompanied by his believers from all ages.

Once he is established on his throne, in Jerusalem, the world will be at peace; not just peace among the nations, but peace of mind as well:

Everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken (Micah 4:4).

All the reasons for war will be removed: with only one king and one system of worship, there will be no need for war, and no one will die! Sounds like a perfect world? It will be! Would you like to be there? Then read on.

Peter Hale

A Certainty – The Coming Kingdom

The return of Jesus is one of the most important elements of the Gospel. Jesus himself promised that he would return and his Second Coming is a key part of the gospel message, as taught by the apostles.

Sometimes it is spoken of in detail and at length while in other places it is mentioned in passing or is the subject of a parable. In total there are more than three hundred verses in the New Testament which refer to the return of Jesus, as indicated in the table below.

The Second Coming of Jesus was an important element in the teaching of the early church and it is one of the main teachings of the Apostles' Creed. But it was downplayed as the church became involved with the government of the Roman Empire, at a time when many wrong ideas began to distort clear Bible teaching.

Evidence in the Bible

The passages in the Bible which refer to the return of Jesus are very clear:

Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:61,62).

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God (1 Thesalonians 4:16).

Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him (Revelation 1:7).

One cannot read these (and so many other) passages without understanding that Jesus and the Apostles taught, absolutely and without reserve, that Jesus would one day return to the earth. Prophecies about the return of Jesus also appear in the Old Testament. Consider the second Psalm. This

Direct References	Mt 16:27,28	Mt 24:3,27-44	Mt 25:1-13,31	Mt 26:64
	Lk 12:40	Lk 17:24,30	Lk 18:8	Lk 21:25-36
	Acts 2:35	Acts 3:20,21	1 Co 1:7	1Co 4:5
	Col 3:4	1Th 1:10	1Th 2:19	1Th 3:13
	1Tim 6:14,15	2Tim 4:1	Tt 2:13	Heb 9:28
	2 Pet 3:3-13	1Jn 3:2	Jude :14,15	Rev 1:7
	Rev22:7,12,20			
	Parables	Mt 13:39-41	Mt 20:8	Mt 22:2-10
Day of Judgement	Mt 13:49	Mt 25:32-46	Mk 6:11	Mk 10:37
	2Th 2:2-7	Jude :6		
End of Age	Mt 24:3	Mt 28:20	Mk10:30	Heb 1:11
Last Day	Jn 6:39-44,54	Jn 11:24	Jude :18	
Day of Jesus	Lk 17:26	1Co 1:8	1Co 5:5	
Misc.	Mt 6:10	Mt 20:21	Mt 23:39	Mt 24:14
	Lk 1:33	Lk 11:2	Jn 5:28	Jn 14:18
	1Co 7:29	1Co 15:51-53	Heb 4:5-11	Heb 12:26
	Rev 21	Rev 22:1-6		

begins with a picture of the nations of the earth raging against God because He has intervened in the world and is replacing human governments with a ruler of His choice:-

As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill (Psalm 2:6).

The king has been set in Jerusalem, the ancient capital of the kingdom of Israel. The identity of the king is also explained in this Psalm. In the next verse the king speaks:

The Lord said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you" (Psalm 2:7).

The king is the Son of God; this is clearly a reference to Jesus Christ.

Why Jesus Will Return

The world is in trouble, whether from the fall of the Roman Empire to the barbarian hordes to the First World War, or from the current wars in Syria and Iraq to the conquests of the Assyrian Empire. Human beings are unable to govern themselves peacefully, or to bring an end to the scourges of war, famine, pestilence and death. The purpose of the return of Jesus is to bring these problems to an end and to create a world without suffering.

The process of removing problems from the world is connected with the problem of eliminating sin, because ultimately it is sin which is the root cause of our problems. Eliminating sin and its effects is not going to be instantaneous. Whilst there will be a very great improvement right from the point that Jesus returns, there is a period during which the world will be put right.

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death... When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

(1 Corinthians 15:22-28)

Direct References	Mk 8:38	Mk 13:26	Mk 14:62	Lk 9:26
	Jn 14:3	Jn 16:16-19	Jn 21:22,23	Acts 1:11
	1Co 11:26	1Co 15:23	Phil 3:20	Phil 4:5
	1Th 4:14-18	1Th 5:1-4,23	2Th 1:7-10	2Th 2:1,8
	Heb 10:37	1 Pet 1:7,13	1 Pet 4:13	1 Pet 5:4
	Rev 2:5,16,25	Rev 3:3,11	Rev 16:15	Rev 19:11-21
Parables	Mt 25:1-30	Mk 13:35	Lk12:35-46	Lk 19:12-27
Day of Judgement	Acts 17:31	Rom 2:16	Rom 14:11,12	1 Cor 3:13
End of Age	1 Pet 4:7			
Last Day				
Day of Jesus				
Misc.	Mt 26:29	Mk 12:36	Mk 13:32	Mk 14:25
	Acts 1:6,7	Rom 8:18	Rom 13:11	1 Cor 6:2
	Rev 3:12,21	Rev 12:15	Rev 19:17-20	Rev 20

The above passage describes the events leading to the time when there will finally no more death. The first step – the resurrection of Jesus – has already happened. The next is the resurrection of “those who belong to Christ” at the point where Christ comes. There is then a period during which Jesus destroys his enemies; and his enemies are the enemies of mankind. The last to be destroyed is death, which means that some people will die after the judgement. However, passages like Isaiah chapter 65 tell us that this will be a time of peace and that suffering will be much reduced.

Finally Jesus, assisted by the faithful who have passed through the judgment, will have brought an end to the world’s problems and at this point the world will be handed over for direct rule by God. Of this final state we know very little, other than that God will be “*all in all*” (1 Corinthians 15:28) and that there will be no more suffering or death (Revelation 21:1-4).

Evidence in the World

The return of Jesus is forecast throughout the Bible. It gives a consistent and fairly detailed picture of what the world will be like when Jesus returns. We are told what to expect before then and what will happen after he is in the earth again. What is really significant is that events in the world around us now fit perfectly the sequence of events that is foretold in the Bible.

❖ Israel Restored

This sequence starts with the establishment of a Jewish nation in the area around Jerusalem. This development appears in a range of prophecies, including Isaiah 11, Zechariah 12 and Luke 21. Concerning Jerusalem, Luke 21 reads:

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

Jerusalem fell to the Romans in 70 AD. For a few decades it remained an uninhabited ruin, but when it was rebuilt it was as a Roman city and from this point onwards it was controlled by Gentiles until the middle of the 20th century.

❖ Jews in Jerusalem

However, the prophecy does not say that Jerusalem would be controlled by Gentiles for ever; it was only to be a Gentile city until the time of Gentile rule came to an end. In 1948 the Israeli War of Independence left Jerusalem partitioned between Israel and Jordan and in 1967 Israeli troops took the rest of Jerusalem. It is now under Jewish control.

❖ Middle East Turmoil

The passage in Luke 21 continues with a picture of chaos and trouble in the area before the return of Jesus.



The return of Jerusalem to Jewish control does not solve all the problems, as the prophet Zechariah explains:

Behold, I am about to make Jerusalem a cup of staggering to all the surrounding peoples. The siege of Jerusalem will also be against Judah. On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples. All who lift it will surely hurt themselves. And all the nations of the earth will gather against it (Zechariah 12:2,3).

On that day I will make the clans of Judah like a blazing pot in the midst of wood, like a flaming torch among sheaves. And they shall devour to the right and to the left all the surrounding peoples... (Zechariah 12:6).

Jerusalem a Burden

This shows Jerusalem in a beleaguered state, with opposition from the other nations of the world. It also shows Jerusalem as a flashpoint, a cause of trouble throughout the region around it. There is no doubt that this is exactly what has happened in the Middle East. The troubles of the region have been caused, to a great extent, by nationalism, which is driven by the existence of a Jewish state in an Arab and Muslim area. At the same time the prophecy describes Jerusalem as a burden; those of the surrounding nations who become involved with it do not prosper.

❖ Israel Invaded

Next there is a time of great trouble, ending in a major invasion of Israel. This is described in many Bible passages: Ezekiel 38 gives a list of the invading nations using archaic names; Zechariah 14 tells us that all nations

will be involved in some way. The main point, however, is that the invasion of Israel comes from the north.

You will come from your place out of the uttermost parts of the north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great host, a mighty army (Ezekiel 38:15, see also Joel 2:20).

The situation in the Middle East at present certainly shows power blocs which might become involved in an invasion of Israel. One can imagine a number of scenarios in which these prophecies would be fulfilled.

Final Warning

One must end, however, with a word of warning. The prophecies of the return of Jesus do not include a timetable. There could be a long time before Jesus returns, or the event could happen very soon. The Bible is very careful to warn against attempting to calculate when the return of Jesus will happen. As Jesus said:

“But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Mark 13:32).

We can't know in advance exactly when Jesus will return. But the world, and especially the Middle East, is lining up in a way which can only lead to the fulfilment of the prophecy of his return. It's a certainty that he will come again and that he will establish God's kingdom on earth.

John Thorpe

Quotations from the ESV

Good Government – a Perfect World

When Jesus returns to the earth, he will set up a new world order. Not the despotic regime of a cruel tyrant nor the vacillating weakness caused by constant political pandering. Jesus will be the good, caring king over a united earth, ruling by the principles of God. Perfect government will create a world of wonderful conditions for those privileged to live in it, wherever they are. Let's consider this coming world order in a little more detail.

Good Government

A common theme in political election campaigns is 'good government', or the ability of rulers to apply sound principles across their remit, for the good of all. It seems that many people have lost faith in human governments to achieve this. Turnouts in elections are often very low: 66% in the recent UK General Election was viewed as a 'bumper year'.

In popular surveys, politicians seem to be less recognised and less trusted than celebrities! Many families and individuals throughout the world are struggling with life and want support from their government in the basics: paying the bills, educating their children, being looked after if they are ill. If that support seems absent, they will inevitably become cynical. The great news is that good government is at the core of the kingdom which is coming. And not just 'good': the rulership will be God-given and follow His principles.

When Jesus returns, he will set up the worldwide government of the Kingdom of God:

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him..." (Matthew 25:31–32).

We are given a picture of the quality of the government in Isaiah 11:1-2:

There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:1–2).

This form of rulership is not like today's leaders, however well-intentioned they may be.

❖ Justice

If we continue to read Isaiah chapter 11 (vs. 3–4), we shall see that this results in justice for everyone. Jesus will not be fooled by clever lawyers or influenced by the wealthy and powerful, but will judge with true fairness, providing support for all who need it. He will not be weak though, and he will not tolerate wickedness or opposition to his benign rule. The impact of this is amazing:

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

Now that really is a world to live in!

❖ Education

Education is really important. Having education provided is a great benefit,



and the quality and content of that provision is a big talking point for those who have children or are just interested in the development of young people. So in the coming Kingdom, what will people be learning about? One place we can look for the answer is Isaiah 2:1–3. Here we are presented with a picture of the peoples of the world coming to Jerusalem, to learn from God’s appointed king. The ‘sylabus’ is described as follows:

Many people shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:3).

The people of the world – young and old – will be learning about God, His laws and His purpose. Putting these into practice will contribute to the perfect world in which they will live.

❖ **Defence**

Defence tends to be a huge preoccupation for most governments. Foreign policy is fundamental to their rulership, and the ability to fight and make war is a major spending area (the UK is forecast to spend £45 billion on defence in the current finan-

cial year). This clearly will be different in the Kingdom of God. With no competing rulers or countries, the need for foreign policy and weaponry will be eliminated. As Isaiah foretold:

He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore (Isaiah 2:4).

With Jesus in charge, the weapons of the world can be put beyond use or be turned into agricultural tools. In fact, the people of the world will no longer learn the so-called ‘art’ of warfare. This will be a world at real peace.

❖ **Environment**

We are right to worry about the environment, whether it is changing weather patterns, global warming or the pollution of our air, rivers and seas. There are various views on the causes, but all agree that our environment is less clean, less safe and less stable than it used to be. Reading Isaiah 35:1–2 gives us insight into what the earth will be like in the Kingdom of God:

The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, even with joy and singing... They shall see the glory of the Lord, the excellency of our God (Isaiah 35:1–2).

All of this will happen because the glory of God is present. The world will be blossoming, clean, healthy and productive, as we see throughout this chapter. Verses 6–7 contain a graphic

picture of springs in the desert and pools of water in the driest of places.

❖ **Health**

With the power of God in play, we also see in Isaiah 35 (especially verses 3–6) that illnesses and disabilities of all sorts will be healed. There will be no need for a health service or for medical insurance; doctors and nurses will not be needed to care for the sick; *“and sorrow and sighing shall flee away”* (v10). This will be accompanied by a great long life (Isaiah 65:20) where someone dying at 100 years old would be considered ‘a child’. Ultimately, death will be removed altogether, as we shall see later.

❖ **Security**

An important part of any government or social order is people’s need to feel safe. This could apply to going out at night, to the threat of crime or oppression of some other sort. Without this type of security, it would be hard to enjoy the benefits of the coming age. Please read Isaiah 65:17–25, which includes the verse mentioned above.

The existence described here is very different from today. The mood is one of rejoicing and peace. The inhabitants of the Kingdom will be able to live in

complete security, occupying their houses and enjoying the fruits of their labours. They will live with a special relationship to their God, where peace reigns throughout the animal and human kingdom, a truly blessed existence, as Isaiah describes it.

A World at Peace

The descriptions we have looked at show the effects of the good government of Jesus: a world at peace, with plenty for all, and the citizens enjoying a special relationship with the God who created everything.

Most of the Bible verses we have used here come from the book of Isaiah. This is unsurprising as the prophet spends large parts of his prophecy describing the kingdom of God in remarkable detail. However, the same picture emerges from across the Bible, in both Old and New Testaments. Take, for example, the Psalms. Many Psalms deal with the kingdom of God in subtly different ways, but they are consistent in describing the characteristics of Jesus’ government, the conditions in which his subjects will live and the certainty that it will happen.

Psalm	Description
v1, 19	The Kingdom is God’s and fulfils promises God made to David
v2	The King will show true justice and not be biased or discriminate against the weak
v3–4	Conditions of social justice and equality
v7	Liberty and the right to live good lives
v9	Opponents given the opportunity to submit, but not allowed to oppose the King
v10–11	The rulers of the world honour King Jesus and worship God
v12–14	The rule of law and protection of the innocent from oppression and violence
v15, 17	The majesty of the King witnessed by all nations
v16	Plenty for all and a fair distribution of wealth

Revelation 21	Description
v1-2	A poetic description of a new world order being established, the picture follows patterns set down elsewhere in Revelation
v3, 7	The end state of that special relationship between God and His people: He will actually be able to live amongst them on the earth (as sin will have been eradicated)
v4	With all pain and death removed, and no more sorrow or crying, we have a lovely picture of God wiping away tears
v5	This is a new start for all creation

It is worth spending time reading Psalms 2, 22, 45, 89, 110 and 145, to catch glimpses and see more detailed pictures. However, in Psalm 72 we have perhaps the fullest portrayal of the kingdom, as we see summarised on the previous page. King David wrote the Psalm, initially about his own son Solomon who succeeded him, but ultimately about Jesus his descendant, and the complete fulfilment of the prophecy in God's Kingdom.

There is More!

The New Testament also tells us about the return of Jesus and the establishment of his kingdom with the authority of God. For example, in Luke 21 we are told that just when the state of the world is at its worst and mankind fears for its survival, *"Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory"* (Luke 21:27). Then Jesus added this pointer:

"So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near" (Luke 21:31).

Yet as we read, we find that the wonderful conditions we have considered are actually part of a process; a process of changing the world into

something even more marvellous. Reading Revelation chapter 21, we are given an insight into the final state of the world and its inhabitants.

Coming Soon!

So, the Kingdom of God is a wonderful new world order, where men, women and children can live in peace and safety, culminating in an even more awe-inspiring situation, where God lives with His people who never suffer and never die. And the Kingdom is going to be established on earth, as we read in Revelation:

The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever! (Revelation 11:15).

We have the opportunity to be in that Kingdom, to enjoy its conditions and look forward to the splendour of its final state. To be a part of it, God asks that we believe Him, are baptised to show that we do, and then live God-centred lives of purpose, preparing for it.

That's not much to ask is it?

Andrew Hale

A Place for All

One of the amazing things that we know about the Kingdom of God is that it will bring together both young and old, black and white, faithful believers both dead and alive, from all corners of the globe. It's an incredible promise when we think about it – and it takes faith to believe it will happen.

Young and Old

Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with his staff in his hand because of great age. The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets' (Zechariah 8:4–5).

This is one of my favourite Bible passages, because it gives us a vision of a happy, peaceful time when people will live in a society that has families living together as they were designed to – in harmony. It is a very different picture from the society of our western world which we live in now; and to imagine this happening on the streets of war-torn Jerusalem is wonderful!

Here's another description of people enjoying God's Kingdom:

"No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; for the child shall die one hundred years old ... They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, and My elect shall long enjoy



Christadelphians in Sale, Manchester, UK

the work of their hands" (Isaiah 65:20–22).

We can see from this lovely passage in Isaiah that mortal life in the Kingdom will be very much like the time before the Flood, when men and women lived much longer lives.

Isaiah talks about a time when there will be a peaceful, agricultural society, where farming will be an integral part of life. This is really something to look forward to, in today's world where many children and adults spend much time indoors with artificial light and looking at computer and TV screens. What we see here in Isaiah is an outdoor life style of growing crops and enjoying the fruit. It is an idyllic picture of contentedness as God intended life to be in the beginning.

All Faithful Believers

My heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Sheol ... You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:9–11).

This is a concept that really should encourage us and provide a vision to motivate us in our lives now – it is a wonderful promise! Evidently, King David believed in the resurrection. So did all the faithful men and women that we read about in the Scriptures, believing in the promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – that after their death, they would be raised to life once the Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth to set up God’s Kingdom.

What a wonderful promise this is from the Father. He has said that people who believe His Word can be re-united with people who shared that faith throughout the ages. All this will be made possible thanks to God’s grace.

I never got to know my father – he died suddenly on my 3rd birthday, aged 30. What an amazing thing there is to look forward to in the Kingdom, to meet him and tell him about my family, and for him to meet all his wonderful new brothers and sisters in Christ!



For All Nations

His name shall endure forever; his name shall continue as long as the sun. And men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed (Psalm 72:17).

One clear point about the Kingdom is that all nations will be gathered together in Christ for the Kingdom of God is open to all. Earlier in Psalm 72 we learn how the Lord Jesus will champion the poor and the needy. There will be no injustice or inequality. What a privilege to meet with faithful people from all corners of the globe, from different backgrounds and circumstances!

Unifying Characteristic

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5:3–5).

What must we do to be a part of this amazing promise? The scripture says that we have to keep God’s commandments. God’s covenants with the faithful of old have been conditional on the believer keeping their side of the agreement. In keeping God’s laws, we can be joined together by having the same “mind of Christ” and so, by God’s grace, look forward to a future time of everlasting peace and happiness.

He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned (Mark 16:16).

David Bradshaw

The Better Life

Are you hoping for a letter from the Queen or head of state congratulating you on reaching your centenary?

If you want to live a long life, research suggests you need to belong to a family that has genes favouring long life because this is the main factor in people living to 100. Certainly a better diet and a healthy lifestyle help in a general way, but belonging to a family of people that live long is the main element.

In today's world there is increasing emphasis on seeking solutions to problems by scientific research, and indeed progress has been made in many areas in preventing and treating certain diseases. Nevertheless the more we discover the more we realise how amazingly complex life is and, as Albert Einstein, one of the world's greatest scientists, said: "The more I learn, the more I realise how much I don't know."

Reality Check

The sad reality is that sooner or later we all get ill and die and if that was all there is, then life would be bleak indeed. However the true answer to living a long and happy life lies in a different direction – in the moral sphere. Moral living – according to God's standards as revealed in the Bible – will have consequences on what will happen to us both now, in this life, and eternally in the age to come when God sets up His kingdom on earth at the return of His Son the Lord Jesus Christ who is coming to rule for Him as king.



The Material World

As human beings we tend to promote and value the material things of life: how we look, what we wear, what we do, what we own. God however is a moral being and moral issues are the priority to Him. God's priority is seen in His plan for His creation as revealed in the Bible which in essence is found in two passages which when taken together summarize God's great purpose in creation:

For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens, who is God, who formed the earth and made it, who has established it, who did not create it in vain, who formed it to be inhabited: "I am the Lord, and there is no other" (Isaiah 45:18).

Clearly, God's plan is to one day fill the earth with inhabitants. But what kind of inhabitants? The second passage tells us:

"But truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Numbers 14:21).

In today's world, God's name is not honoured or glorified. In fact it is increasingly used as a curse or an oath. How often do you hear people use the name of God? It has become a common expression often said without thought. But, one day God's name will be honoured and his glory will fill the earth.

God's glory is the moral character that He declared to Moses when Moses asked if God would show him His glory:

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..." (Exodus 34:6-7).

These are all moral characteristics and God is going to fill the earth with people who will also one day display these attributes and be rewarded with long life: not just a 100 years but eternal life in a cleansed and beautified earth.

Physical Consequences

In the beginning God created the world and in Genesis 1:31 declared it to be "very good". But when the first pair Adam and Eve sinned by rebelling against God's commandment, it was a moral issue and the physical consequences of sin were catastrophic and have affected the whole of creation ever since.

One day that curse will be lifted, but until then we live in a world marred by sin and the consequences are physical: a world characterised by "sorrow". Yes, it is still a beautiful world even though it is presently under the curse and there are happy times and joys,

To the woman He (God) said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:16-19).

but it is limited and sooner or later we experience pain and suffering and hardship and death. In this present age God has limited our life span to 70-80 years or a little more:

The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away (Psalm 90:10).



The Curse Removed

The whole of creation that at present is subject to the cycle of birth, growth, decay and death will one day be released.

Romans chapter 8 says that the whole of creation is as it were waiting for release from that cycle of futility:

For we know that the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body (Romans 8:22–23).

That word ‘redemption’ means “a deliverance, a release by payment of a ransom” and that ransom has been paid by Jesus Christ:

For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time (1 Timothy 2:5–6).

The Way to Eternal Life

Yes, God has provided a way for our lives to be extended indefinitely and with perfect health. But this only applies to those who belong to a particular family. The good news is that we can be adopted into that family – the family of Jesus Christ.

We can become part of his family by:

- 1 Belief in the Gospel which is about; those things concerning the Kingdom of God and the things concerning the name of Jesus Christ, and
- 2 Being baptised into Jesus Christ. In this way we associate ourselves with him and his righteousness.



A new day will dawn for the world when the curse is removed.

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:26–29).

Yes, there are wonderful promises made by God in the Bible. It contains the offer of everlasting life in a perfect world, and all this is freely available if we read and understand the Bible and then respond as God asks by believing and being baptised into the saving name of Jesus:

His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (2 Peter 1:3–4).

Tony Bradshaw

“Thy Kingdom Come”

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray he said they should ask God to provide for their daily bread and for the forgiveness of their sins. But there was something more important.

The Lord’s Prayer begins with the words: “*Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name*”, and then comes the first and foremost petition: “**Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven**” (Matthew 6:9–10).

Kingdom Issues

The Lord’s explanation of what the Kingdom will be like is that God will then be obeyed and revered on earth as He is now in heaven.

Other articles in this issue have shown what the Bible teaches about life in that new society – a transformed and beautified earth. People will live together in peace and safety. Health-care will be vastly improved; there will be free education for everyone; one religion will bring mankind into perfect harmony with the one true God.

Jesus, however, views the coming Kingdom from the divine perspective. It will be a time when the world that God has created responds to its Creator by obeying His will and worshipping Him as He deserves. That is a major change compared with nowadays, when society glorifies mankind and often denies the very existence of the Almighty.

Kingdom Values

Jesus taught several parables about a master who would be absent for a while but who would then return to see how his people had fared. The parable

of the Pounds begins with these words: “*A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return*” (Luke 19:12). He entrusted ten servants each with a sum of money and told them to use it wisely pending his return, whereupon he assessed their work and rewarded them accordingly.

Seek First ...

That parable is typical of the teaching of Jesus about the coming Kingdom, which was something right at the heart of his message. For him, the Kingdom was the most important thing in the world, hence these words:

Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you (Matthew 6:33).

The Lord did not have to explain what the Kingdom will be like. His Jewish audience knew their Scriptures and were familiar with all that the prophets had taught. They were looking for a King who would establish that Kingdom there and then, and free them from Roman oppression. Jesus patiently explained that what really matters is that we need to become the people that God wants in His Kingdom: those who learn now to do His will and who live to give Him the praise and the honour that is His due, both now and “forever” (Matthew 6:13).

That challenge has now come to us. Are we the people God wants to be in His Kingdom? Have we made the quest for the Kingdom the centre of our lives?

Tecwyn Morgan

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