

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured **Articles**

White Noise (p. 3)

The Danger of Humanism (p. 5)

Primitive Christianity (p. 16)

A monthly magazine written and 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 mankind; 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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Glad Tidings Distributors for orders and payments

United Kingdom

Becky Collard, 7 Lindridge Close,
Redditch, Worcs. B98 0QJ, UK
Tel: +44 (0)7521 079 190 (24 hrs)
orders-uk@gladtidingsmagazine.org

Australia

Ruth Morgan, 51 Jesmond Road,
Croydon, VIC 3136, Australia
gladtidingsaustralia@gmail.com

Canada

Vivian Thorp, 5377 Birdcage Walk,
Burlington, ON L7L 3K5, Canada
vivianthorp@bell.net

New Zealand

Neil Todd, 14 Morpeth Place, Blockhouse
Bay, Auckland 0600, New Zealand
thetodds@xtra.co.nz

U.S.A.

Pat Hemingray, 1244 Pennsylvania
Avenue, Oakmont, PA 15139, USA
orders-usa@gladtidingsmagazine.org

Other Countries

Andrew Johnson, 22 Hazel Drive,
Hollywood, Birmingham B47 5RJ, UK
orders-int@gladtidingsmagazine.org

Editor

Chris Parkin, 7 Thorntree Lane, Newhall,
Swadlincote, Derbyshire DE11 0LP, UK
editor@gladtidingsmagazine.org

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White Noise

THIS IS one of the most brilliantly simple inventions of the modern age—it’s a white noise machine.

Our world is full of unwanted noise: traffic, machinery, people, people’s music, aircraft noise ... when we yearn for peace and quiet it can be hard to find, and so white noise can be the answer.

White noise is a steady noise in the background. You get used to it, and it effectively helps to mask the noises you don’t want to hear. True white noise is a combination of every audible frequency and sounds like the hiss of an untuned radio, but there are many other sounds available from a huge variety of machines, web sites and phone apps—the sound of wind in trees, rain on a tent, the sea-shore, a coffee shop, a waterfall ...

White noise can be the key to a good night’s sleep in a noisy home, or a productive day in a noisy office. But might we also use it to block out sounds we should be listening to?

The Call of Wisdom

The Bible book of Proverbs paints some brilliant word pictures. This is one of them:

Wisdom calls aloud outside; she raises her voice in the open squares. She cries out



in the chief concourses, at the openings of the gates in the city she speaks her words: “How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? For scorners delight in their scorning, And fools hate knowledge” (Proverbs 1:20–22).

What is wisdom? It’s been defined as ‘the appropriate application of knowledge’. It’s knowing what’s right and letting that knowledge guide your life. Wisdom is essential to Christian life, and the place to get it (of course) is the Bible. Why don’t more people seek it?

Proverbs presents the picture of wisdom as a strident woman, standing boldly on the street corner and urging passers-by to listen to her life-saving message. But the fact is, it would be inconvenient and perhaps a bit embarrassing to stop and listen, so most people block her out and hurry past. They’ve got other things in their lives that are more appealing.

The Call to Repentance

In the 6th Century BC the Jewish nation was heading for destruction. It was increasingly godless, immoral and violent. Jeremiah was one of a number of prophets who were sent by God to plead with them to mend their ways:

I have also sent to you all My servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, ‘Turn now everyone from his evil way, amend your doings, and do not go after other gods to serve them; then you will dwell in the land which I have given you and your fathers.’ But you have not inclined your ear, nor obeyed Me (Jeremiah 35:15).

Jeremiah was an unpopular man, he was resented and mocked, imprisoned and abused because of his message. One of his problems was that he was in competition with other prophets—prophets whom God had not sent, but who were giving the people the false message that everything was alright.

An astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power; and My people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end? (Jeremiah 5:30–31).



The story of Jeremiah’s life showed that the people around him, as a rule, preferred the message of the false prophets who were telling them what they wanted to hear. They blocked out Jeremiah’s warnings. Then, of course, one day it turned out he had been right but it was too late for them.

Bearing Fruit

Jesus told a story to show how different people respond to the Word of God. (You can read it in Matthew chapter 13.) A farmer sowed seed on different kinds of ground. The seed represented God’s word. The seed that fell on good ground grew and produced fruit, but other seed fell on different types of ground and different things happened. One type of ground was infested with weeds, which choked the young plant as it grew and stopped it producing fruit. Jesus explained: “Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful” (verse 22).

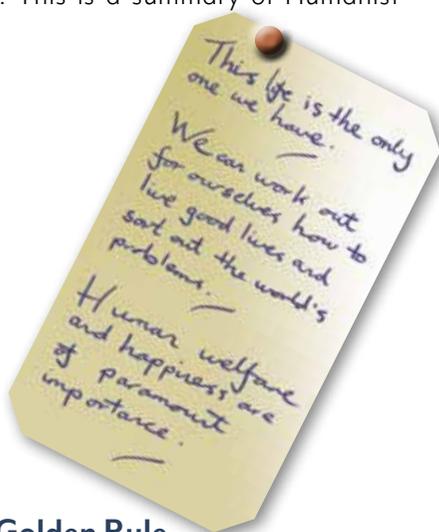
The Call of the Gospel

The most important sound in the world is the sound of the Gospel message—‘Gospel’ means ‘good news’, it’s the Bible’s message of salvation from sin and everlasting life in the Kingdom to come. It’s loud and clear and God offers it freely, it’s what this magazine is about. But so many people don’t listen to it—they block it out with white noise. We’ve looked at three ways this can happen. For some, the Gospel might be embarrassing or inconvenient so they ignore it. Others are led astray by false ideas which seem more appealing. And others are interested, but they’re too preoccupied with the ‘cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches’.

How about you?

The Danger of Humanism

WE OFTEN hear comments like ‘You don’t have to be religious to be good’. Undoubtedly there are many non-believers who seem to be more kind, selfless and empathetic than many professing Christians. This is particularly true of Humanists. Humanism is one of the dominant philosophies in the modern world. This is a summary of Humanist belief:



The Golden Rule

At face value, Humanism and Christianity share important values. In common with many other belief systems, they embrace the moral principle known as the ‘Golden Rule’ which states that people should aim to treat each other as they would like to be treated themselves. The term ‘Golden Rule’ is not in the Bible, but the principle most

certainly is. Centuries before Christianity or Humanism it was in the Law of Moses:

You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the LORD (Leviticus 19:18).

It was later endorsed by Jesus (for example in Matthew 19:19), who enlarged on what it means to his followers, including doing good to our enemies (Matthew 5:44). James in his letter called it the ‘royal law’ (James 2:8).

Humanists argue that the Golden Rule is ‘largely humanist’ and derived from human feelings and experience. But Leviticus 19:18 states that it is a commandment of God.

Opposing Beliefs

One of the main axioms of Humanism is that we can deduce moral principles using empathy and human reasoning. Humanists argue that they use science and reasoning rather than religious thought or holy books to guide them in their lives. They emphasise the importance of experiment to establish truth, and consequently deny both the existence of God and any afterlife. They believe that there is no purpose to the universe and that happiness is to be gained in the pleasures of this life since that is all there is.

Humanism and Christianity are therefore diametrically opposed. This is exemplified in the table below.



Evidence

Humanists state that they prefer critical thinking and evidence to doctrine or faith. They emphasise the fact that human

beings have the ability to ask questions and also believe that we can answer many of those questions ourselves.

Quite clearly we cannot do an experiment to test the hypothesis that there is a God. Nor, however, can we prove that there is no God. The Bible is quite clear that the afterlife it describes is only for those who love and try to obey God—so non-believers are correct: for them there is no afterlife.

Humanists imply that religious belief is effectively 'blind', that is without evidence or logical reasoning. However, true Bible

Humanist teaching	Bible teaching
<i>There is no God</i>	<i>I am the LORD, and there is no other; there is no God besides Me (Isaiah 45:5)</i> <i>The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God" (Psalm 14:1)</i>
<i>The universe has no purpose</i>	<i>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... (Isaiah 45:18)</i> <i>But truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD (Numbers 14:21)</i>
<i>There is no afterlife</i>	<i>For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16)</i> <i>In hope of eternal life which God, Who cannot lie, promised before time began (Titus 1:2)</i>
<i>We can deduce what is right and wrong by using experience and empathy</i>	<i>"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD (Isaiah 55:8)</i> <i>You shall not at all do as we are doing here today—every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes (Deuteronomy 12:8)</i>

students do not blindly follow doctrines, but are encouraged to understand revealed Bible truth using reasoning (John 10:37–38; Acts 17:11; I Thessalonians 5:20–21). They examine the evidence for the truth of the Bible. For example:

- the history of the Jews
- fulfilled prophecy
- historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus.

We can examine the statements made in the Bible and establish whether or not they are consistent with each other and also test the Bible's predictions against what we can observe. This is exactly the method used by scientists to test theories that are not amenable to formal experiment.

Moreover, the Bible says that God requires faith in things that cannot be proved in order to be acceptable to Him:

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

Hebrews chapter 11 is all about faith—what it is, why it's vital, and the difference it makes to life.

Different Starting Points

We interpret evidence in the context of our fundamental belief system. So nowadays atheists will look at nature and see apparent evidence of evolution, whereas a Bible believer will see evidence of God:

When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? (Psalm 8:3–4).

So it is critically important to make sure that our fundamental belief system is correct. This is where Humanists and Christians differ.

On closer examination, even the Golden Rule is not the same in Humanism and Christianity. According to Jesus it is actually a secondary rule—the primary commandment is to love God.

Then one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, testing him, and saying, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:35–40).



In I Corinthians 13 Paul makes a startling statement about the motivations for our actions. The chapter is well worth reading, but the following verse is hard-hitting:

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing (1 Corinthians 13:3).

The motivation has to be godly, not humanistic. Following the Golden Rule is not in itself enough. A love for God has to be at the centre of all aspects of a Christian's life.



It Does Matter

So despite seeming similar, Humanists and Christians are as 'different as chalk and cheese'. Humanists see themselves as the ultimate authority and their focus is primarily on fellow humans in this life. Christians trust in God's revealed Word, with limited interest in things of this life, seeking a better life (Matthew 6:33; Hebrews 11:13–16) when they can share the divine nature of the God they worship (2 Peter 1:4). Some things are invisible and cannot be inferred from observation (2 Corinthians 4:18). So Christians revere Bible teaching as superior to human deduction.

If the Bible is correct (as we believe) then Humanism is lethal. Conclusions from human reasoning are not necessarily

wrong, but when they contradict the Bible they should be rejected. Humanists imply that Bible-believers are not interested in evidence. This is untrue. But we each need to decide: no decision, or agnosticism, is in fact a decision to reject the offer of eternal life. So we beg you, as a matter of urgency, to investigate the claims of the Bible.

Anna Hart

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.” Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?... Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

(1 Corinthians 1:18–20, 25)

Questions? Comments?

We'd love to hear from you!

e-mail editor@gladtidingsmagazine.org

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Paul the Apostle

This is the fifth in a series in which we examine this fascinating Bible book. You can catch up with the previous articles at www.gladtidingsmagazine.org.

THE PERSON who is perhaps most associated with Acts is the Apostle Paul. Paul is the main character in more than half of Acts; he also wrote at least 13 of the letters which are preserved in the New Testament.

Paul was born in Tarsus in Cilicia (now southern Turkey) of Jewish parents, but unusually for a Jew he was also a Roman citizen. At some point he moved to Jerusalem where he was instructed in Judaism by some of the most prestigious teachers of his day.

Paul's Conversion

Paul's collision with Christianity began in Judea. At this time he went by the name of Saul and was a scholar of the Jewish Law in Jerusalem. He was part of the group who were actively persecuting Christians. He first appears in Acts 7:58 where he assisted with stoning to death Stephen, one of Christ's followers.

He then set off for Damascus to bring persecution to the Christians who had started a congregation there. On the way, however, he met Jesus Christ, who was plainly alive. Paul could not deny Christ's

resurrection in the face of this evidence, and from that point on he proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus wherever he went.



Saul on the road to Damascus

Paul's encounter with Jesus left him blind, but he was taken by his companions into Damascus where he was healed and baptised. He then went into Arabia (which the Romans considered to begin just outside Damascus), where he learned the Gospel directly from Jesus in a number of visions or other encounters. He also proclaimed the resurrection from the dead, doing this with such effect that the Nabateans who ruled that part of the world tried to arrest him, as did the Jews of Damascus.

Paul escaped from Damascus and went to Jerusalem, where he again made such a stir in the city that he was forced to leave. He went home to Tarsus.

He spent several years in Tarsus. We have no direct information on what he did in this period, but much of the suffering he recounts in 2 Corinthians 11:23–33 must have happened during this period. Because the Bible tells us so little about what he was doing at this point, the time is sometimes described as ‘Paul’s silent years’.

In Acts 11:22–24 we read that the disciple Barnabas went to Tarsus to find Paul, and brought him back to Antioch. From there Paul and Barnabas were sent to Judea to bring famine relief, and on this journey they visited Jerusalem. This is known as the ‘famine relief visit’. It is referred to in Acts 11:27–30 and in Acts 12:25.

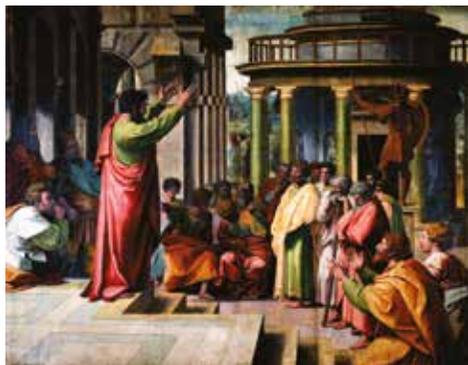
From this point on Paul started to make major journeys throughout the Eastern Mediterranean area to proclaim the Gospel. These journeys are known as Paul’s ‘missionary journeys’.

The Missionary Journeys

The first of Paul’s missionary journeys is described in Acts 13 and 14. Paul and Barnabas, with John Mark as a companion, set out from Antioch and arrived in Cyprus. Having proclaimed the Gospel in Salamis and through villages in southern Cyprus, they arrived in Paphos, the capital of Cyprus. Here they had a major success: Sergius Paulus, the Roman governor, converted to Christianity. Paul travelled

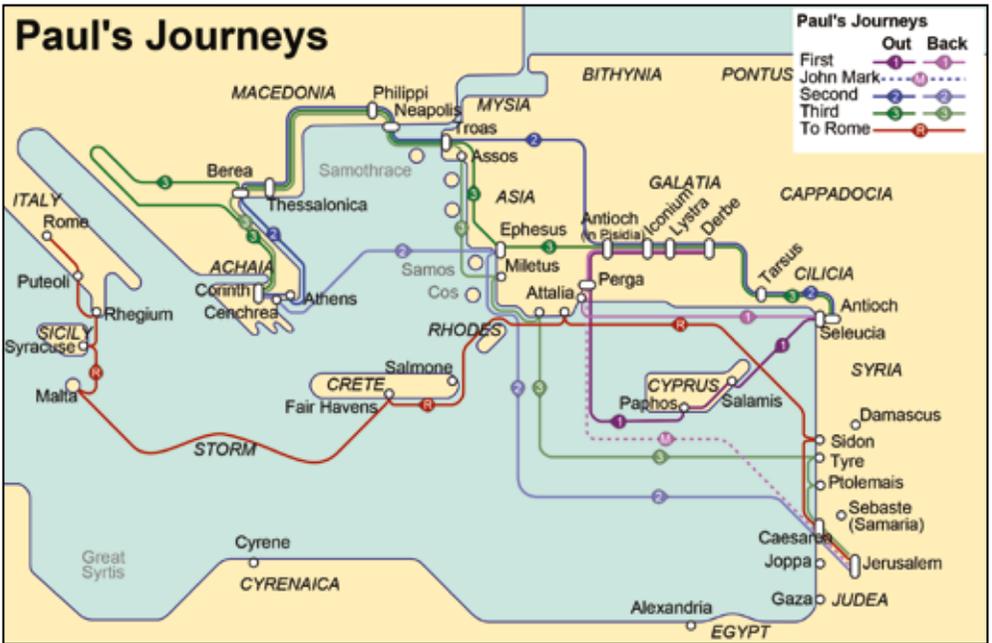
to Asia Minor, where he apparently had the intention of proclaiming the Gospel to more Gentiles (non-Jews).

At Perga in Pamphylia Mark left them and went back to Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas went on to Antioch in Pisidia. From now on Paul took the lead in proclaiming the Gospel. He preached in Antioch. He was driven out by Jewish opposition, and moved on to Iconium, Lystra and Derbe, pursued by vigorous opposition. In each of these towns he founded a congregation containing both Jewish and Gentile members.



Paul preaching at Athens

When Paul returned to Antioch he found that news of his exploits had gone before him, and some Jewish disciples who were unhappy that he was preaching to the Gentiles had come from Jerusalem to challenge him (Acts 15:1). Paul went to Jerusalem for a council of apostles to settle the issue. The decision was that Gentiles could enter the Christian community with



(From an idea in J M Hellowell: *Beginning at Jerusalem*.)

only minimal restrictions on their behaviour, they did not need to convert to Judaism.

Paul then set off on a second journey. He visited the congregations that he founded on his first journey and then moved on, ending in Troas. Here he had a vision of a man asking him to come to Macedonia. He obeyed the vision and went, and founded congregations in Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. At each of these he encountered opposition, from the local people and from the Jewish community. To escape this opposition he travelled to Athens in Greece and then to Corinth, founding two more congregations. After a long stay in Corinth he visited Ephesus on the way back to Jerusalem, and then Antioch.

On his third journey Paul again visited Galatia and then arrived in Ephesus, where he spent more than two years. He finally left for Macedonia, where he continued as far as Illyricum (modern Albania and Montenegro). He spent the winter in Corinth and returned overland to Philippi, where he spent the next winter. He then proceeded by ship to Jerusalem, where he was arrested.

Journey to Rome

Paul remained two years in prison in Caesarea, during which he explained the Gospel to Roman governors and to King Agrippa II. He was under threat from the Jewish religious establishment in Jerusalem, but was safe in Caesarea. Finally, he

appealed to Caesar and was sent to Rome to face trial.

On the voyage to Rome Paul's ship was caught in a storm and wrecked on the island of Malta. Here he spent another winter under guard before he was put on board a grain ship and taken to Italy, and hence to Rome.



Paul's shipwreck

Paul arrived in Rome in the early spring. He was allowed to hire a lodging in Rome, but was under house arrest there for two years. During this time he was able to have visitors and to proclaim the Gospel in the city.

The Book of Acts ends with Paul in prison, waiting for his appeal to be heard. This must have happened fairly soon after Acts was completed; we have three letters from Paul (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) which show that he must have been released shortly after this. Paul then spent two more years travelling before he was arrested again and sent to a prison in Rome. He would almost certainly have been there when Nero's persecution began, and

would almost certainly have died in that persecution.

During his busy life Paul wrote his letters, some of which we have in the Bible. These are important because they deal with the problems of the various congregations and individuals to whom they were written and provide further information about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The problems addressed by the letters have reappeared over and over again during the course of history and Paul's letters are an indispensable guide to the management of problems and to the conduct of Christian congregations.

The speeches of Paul also give us a picture of the Gospel that he carried throughout the world where he went. The Gospel is exactly the same as that proclaimed by the other apostles, and it matches the detail given in Paul's letters. What is interesting is the way that while the message never changed, the way that Paul delivered it did vary, depending on whom he was speaking to.

The Acts coverage of the Apostle Paul takes us from the start of his career as a persecutor of Christianity to his arrest for proclaiming the Christian Gospel and his captivity in Rome because of this. The fact that such an opponent of the faith became a powerful advocate for it is, in itself, a witness to the truth of the Christian message. Acts is very concerned to present this message.

John Thorpe

Isaiah

IN THIS lovely book we learn of the holiness of God and of His promise of a Saviour and King for all nations in the future age when Jerusalem will be His capital city.



The Suffering Servant

Isaiah prophesied the birth and life of Jesus, 800 years in advance: he is referred to as Immanuel (7:14); the Son of God (9:6); the Suffering Servant (42:1–3; 52:13, 14 etc.); the Lamb led to the slaughter (53:7), a Saviour who was to suffer and die in order to conquer sin. The second half of the book (chapters 40–66) opens with the words, “Comfort, yes, comfort My people! says your God” and brings hope of salvation not only to Jews but also to Gentiles (42:6; 60:3 etc.). Chapter 53 contains an accurate and moving description of the sufferings of the Messiah—a vivid prophecy of what actually happened to the Lord Jesus Christ.

God’s Kingdom

The book was written during the reigns of four kings of Judah, against the

background of attempts to overthrow God’s kingdom by the Assyrians. The early chapters pronounce doom—and hope—on Judah; but the prophet also has to deliver God’s judgements upon nearby nations (chapters 13–23). The prophecy looks forward to the ultimate restoration of the kingdom, “new heavens and a new earth” (65:17; 66:22) when Christ will rule Israel and the world.

Norman Owen

By kind permission of ‘The Christadelphian’

“He is despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was despised, and we did not esteem him... But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed.”

(Isaiah 53:3, 5)

Some interesting links with other parts of the Bible

- ◆ Isaiah 2:3—see Zechariah 14:17; Matthew 5:35.
- ◆ Isaiah 8:20—see Luke 16:29.
- ◆ Isaiah 53:5—see Romans 5:6; 1 Peter 2:24.



Where Are You Going?

ON THE MORNING of August 24th 79AD, the top of Mount Vesuvius in southern Italy split apart with a thunderous explosion. Smoke mushroomed into the sky darkening the sun. A rain of volcanic cinders and ash began to sift down amid terrific crashes and terrifying flashes of light.

Violence descended on the two nearby cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii. Herculaneum was engulfed by an avalanche of volcanic mud. In Pompeii the terror came by ash and cinders, coupled with clouds of suffocating sulphur fumes. Destruction of all life was sudden and complete.

The cities remained buried under volcanic rubble for almost 17 centuries, until they were uncovered by archaeologists and the picture of their terrible end was realised.

The ruins of Pompeii were quite different from the ruins of a city which has withered away or even been buried in mud. When the city died its inhabitants were about their everyday business. The baker in his cookhouse, mourners at the last rites of the deceased, whole families gathered in their homes, all died together.

Cause for Reflection

It's frightening to read of the fate of these people. Destruction came suddenly, and life's book was closed for them all. Wealth was valueless—slave and noble perished together. When we think about this there are lessons to be learnt. One reaction might be “*Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!*” (*Isaiah 22:13*); but surely there's more to life. What of the time beyond tomorrow? The Bible speaks of life after death, and surely this is something to investigate.

Shortly before he died, Jesus had words of warning for his disciples:

But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man (Luke 21:34–36).

He was speaking of his return from heaven to establish his kingdom. Would they be ready for it? Will you and I be ready for it? Your direction depends upon important factors of mind and intent.

There were religious leaders in Jesus' day called scribes and Pharisees. Most people viewed them as good and upright, but Jesus called them "whitewashed tombs" which looked clean and smart outside but inside were full of dead men's bones (Matthew 23:27). God looks beyond our outward appearance and sees what is in our heart. *"There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account"* (Hebrews 4:13). And to Him the objective of our lives is important. He has told us so.

Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD (Jeremiah 9:23–24).

The objective of our lives is to develop a character like God's, so that He may use us in His future service.

Power for Life

The dynamic force behind the Christian life is the Word of God. It will transform our thinking and shed light on our path. The natural world—so to speak—is in darkness. We must come into the light, a process which demands the repudiation of the old life and acceptance of God's way. The Apostle Paul said to his fellow believers: *"For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone*

in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6).

The shining of this light in our hearts gives rise to pure thinking as well as outward goodness—unlike the scribes and Pharisees.

Christ will come back to the earth with the same kind of suddenness that brought swift destruction to the inhabitants of Pompeii. At his coming, our life will be complete—as it is at that moment.

Where Are You Going?

In John Bunyan's allegorical story *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian and Hopeful are walking towards Mount Zion when, to their surprise, they see another person coming towards them from that direction. His name is Atheist and he asks them where they are going. Christian answers, "We are going to the Mount Zion." Atheist laughs and tells them they are wasting their time, because "There is no such place as you dream of in all this world." He says he has been looking and has not found it.

We all meet sceptics like this. They claim to be 'searching' but are going nowhere. It's far better to seek to have true simple faith in God and His Son, as expressed by Jesus:

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you (Matthew 7:8).

Ken Quixley

Primitive Christianity

SOMEONE once said to me, “You Christadelphians are the only church I know that preaches ‘primitive Christianity’. It’s a pity you’re so small!”

I wasn’t worried about the comment on our size as a community, as history shows that true believers have always been a minority. But what did he mean by ‘primitive’? Was he suggesting that we’re outdated and we need to develop a more mature set of beliefs? Was he accusing us of being fundamentalists, with all the negative connotations attached to the word?

He explained that ‘primitive’ literally means ‘the origin of something’, so ‘primitive Christianity’ is getting back to the basics of the Christian faith, the original Gospel as taught by Jesus and the First Century apostles. I took that as a compliment!

Well, does that make us perfect Christians? Absolutely not, for make no mistake, arrogance is a terrible failing for anyone calling themselves a follower of Jesus Christ. Some of his harshest words were for those who thought themselves better than others (for example Luke 18:9–14).

So, what do we mean by ‘primitive Christianity’? It is perhaps easier to say what it is not! It is not a Christianity which has been modified to fit the convenience, expectations and ideas of society.

Back To the Source

If we could listen in on the preaching of the First Century apostles we may be surprised by some of the things we heard. The fact is that we can listen to their preaching, through the Bible in our hands; when we read it, we listen to the words of Jesus and the apostles. And we hear some uncompromising teaching.



Primitive Christianity makes demands upon us which we may find difficult to accept, and even more difficult to put into practice. It is in many ways out of step with modern society, and in many ways it’s out of step with our natural inclinations—because at the heart of Christianity is the teaching that we are astray and we need to change: *Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me (Matthew 16:24).*

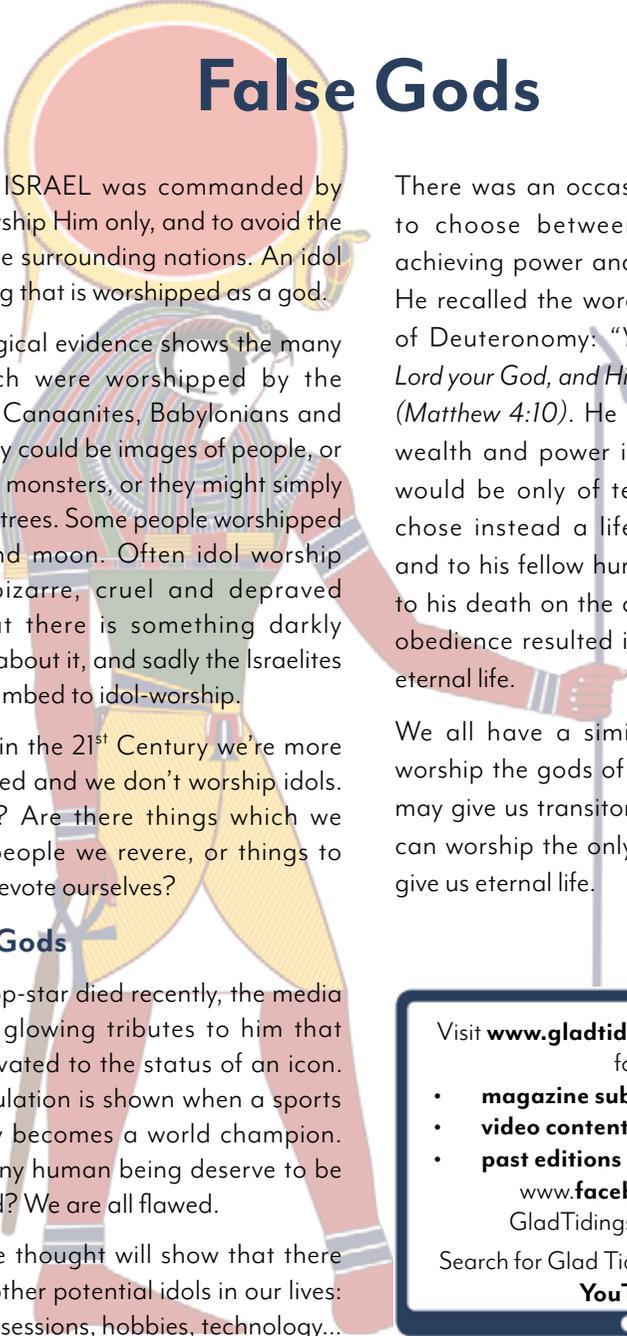
Here are a few of the distinctive teachings of primitive Christianity which set it apart from some more ‘comfortable’ varieties:

- It demands our acceptance that we are by nature sinful and in need of the redemption that can only come through the Lord Jesus Christ. It challenges the theories of many sociologists and those who believe that the human race is capable of improving and perfecting itself (Romans 7).
- It recognises God as the Creator of the world (Genesis 1), and the majesty and supremacy of Jesus Christ as God's sinless only son, the saviour and the world's coming king (Hebrews 1:3) Both Father and Son must be treated with utmost reverence.
- It insists that the Bible is the infallible Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16–17). If other sources appear to conflict with the Bible, it is they who will be ultimately proven wrong.
- It puts great emphasis on the imminent return of Jesus Christ to the earth—Christians are to live in a state of constant readiness (Luke 21:34).
- It teaches that death is the end of consciousness—we cease to exist, no part of us lives on, and the hope of life after death is at the return of Christ (John 5:28).
- It teaches that we all have different abilities, but we're all of equal value in God's sight (1 Corinthians 12:12–1). There is no place for a priesthood in the Christian church (Matthew 23:8–10).
- It elevates marriage above all other human relationships, and insists that sexual relations must only be within marriage (Hebrews 13:4).
- It teaches that men and women are not the same, and although they are of equal value they have different roles in the family and the church (Ephesians 5:22–33).
- It insists that adult baptism is essential for a disciple of Christ (Romans 6).
- It requires that faith is translated into action—it demands a life of service (Luke 19:11–27).

Christadelphians do not claim to have all the answers or a perfect understanding of the Bible. We fail as much as others trying to follow the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our preaching of primitive Christianity is the result of our certainty that we have in the Bible the knowledge of salvation.

Jesus gave his disciples a solemn command before he left them to go to heaven: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:15–16). It is in obedience to this command that we preach the Gospel of ‘primitive Christianity’. Our daily prayer for each other and for all who will hear us is that God will bless our endeavours to understand His word, obey it and put it into practice in our lives.

Nigel Hammet



False Gods

ANCIENT ISRAEL was commanded by God to worship Him only, and to avoid the ‘idols’ of the surrounding nations. An idol is something that is worshipped as a god.

Archaeological evidence shows the many gods which were worshipped by the Egyptians, Canaanites, Babylonians and others. They could be images of people, or animals, or monsters, or they might simply be rocks or trees. Some people worshipped the sun and moon. Often idol worship involved bizarre, cruel and depraved rituals. But there is something darkly appealing about it, and sadly the Israelites often succumbed to idol-worship.

Of course in the 21st Century we’re more sophisticated and we don’t worship idols. Or do we? Are there things which we worship—people we revere, or things to which we devote ourselves?

Modern Gods

When a pop-star died recently, the media paid such glowing tributes to him that he was elevated to the status of an icon. Similar adulation is shown when a sports personality becomes a world champion. But does any human being deserve to be worshipped? We are all flawed.

And a little thought will show that there are many other potential idols in our lives: money, possessions, hobbies, technology...

There was an occasion when Jesus had to choose between serving God, or achieving power and glory in this world. He recalled the words of the Bible book of Deuteronomy: “*You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve*” (Matthew 4:10). He knew that acquiring wealth and power in the present world would be only of temporary value. He chose instead a life of service to God and to his fellow human beings. This led to his death on the cross, but his perfect obedience resulted in his resurrection to eternal life.

We all have a similar choice: we can worship the gods of this world, and they may give us transitory satisfaction; or we can worship the only true God, who can give us eternal life.

Marion Buckler

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Across

- 1 Paul was previously known as this (4) (*Acts 13:9*)
- 3 Paul called here on his first missionary journey (5) (*Acts 13:13*)
- 5 Paul healed a crippled man here (6) (*Acts 14:8*)
- 6 At Jerusalem, false brothers did this to Paul (3) (*Galatians 2:4*)
- 7 Paul stayed at Tyre on his third missionary journey for this number of days (5) (*Acts 21:4*)
- 10 A defect, as Paul explained to the Romans (5) (*Romans 9:19*)
- 12 Following Jesus' return, his followers will be changed in the twinkling of this (3) (*1 Corinthians 15:52*)
- 14 Paul did this when he was before King Agrippa (6) (*Acts 26:2*)
- 15 Paul boarded a ship here on his third missionary journey (5) (*Acts 20:14*)
- 16 Having appealed to 9 down, Paul was taken to this city (4) (*Acts 28:16*)

1			2		3			4	
5									
							6		
7	8					9			
					10				11
12				13					
				14					
15						16			

Down

- 1 He accompanied Paul on his second missionary journey (5) (*Acts 15:40*)
- 2 Claudius Lysias wrote this to Felix about Paul (6) (*Acts 23:25*)
- 3 Paul asked the Thessalonians to do this for him (4) (*1 Thessalonians 5:25*)
- 4 Paul preached this in Derbe (6) (*Acts 14:21*)
- 8 This sorcerer tried to turn Sergius Paulus away from Paul and Barnabas (6) (*Acts 13:8*)
- 9 Following the accusations made against him, Paul appealed to this man (6) (*Acts 25:11*)
- 11 On his third missionary journey, Paul stayed in Greece for this number of months (5) (*Acts 20:3*)
- 13 On his journey to 16 across, Paul stayed at Syracuse for three of these (4) (*Acts 28:12*)

Colin Jannaway

(These clues use the New King James version of the Bible. If you're using another version some words may not be quite the same.)

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B28 8SZ, UK
requests@cbm.org.uk

The Americas

CBMA, 567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley, CA
93065, USA
cbma.treasurer@gmail.com

Caribbean

CBMC, Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280, 101
Avenue, Surrey, BC, Canada V3R 0J7
philsnobelen@shaw.ca

India

T Galbraith, GPO Box 159, Hyderabad,
500001, India
tim@galbraithmail.com

South and East Asia

ACBM, PO Box 152 Cobbitty NSW,
Australia 2570
galway280@gmail.com

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