

Glad Tidings

Of The Kingdom Of God



Featured **Articles**

The Creator (p. 3)

Bible Toolbox (p. 6)

When God Swore Oaths (p. 13)

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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The Creator

THE MORE WE LEARN about the universe, the more we're amazed at its intricacy and its vastness—from the functioning of a living cell to the unimaginable magnificence of space. The Bible tells us God made it all (Genesis 1:1).

Through the Microscope

The phenomenon of life has always been a source of wonder, but it's only relatively recently that we've started to learn just how spectacularly complex it is.

In the 17th Century, with the invention of the microscope, it was discovered that living things contain tiny components which were named cells. By the 19th Century it had been established that cells are the basic building blocks of all living things, and scientists were discovering the bewildering array of different kinds of cells which perform different functions in every organism, from plants to plankton to people. During the 20th Century we learned to look inside the cell and we've now realised that each one is like a highly sophisticated microscopic city, with factories and a transport system, power plant and defence force. The human body is thought to contain around 30 trillion cells.

Contemplating the miracle of life, David the Psalmist prayed to God: *"I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;*

marvellous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well" (Psalm 139:14). If only he had known what we know!



An animal cell

Through the Telescope

People have always wondered at the splendour of the night sky—but for most of history nobody really understood it. For a long while it was thought that the earth was the centre of the physical universe. In the 17th Century it was realised that the earth and the other planets orbit around the sun. During the 20th Century it was discovered that the sun itself is one in a galaxy of 10 billion stars; and then that there are other galaxies, so many the number could well be infinite.

In its account of creation the Bible notes that God *"made the stars also"* (Genesis 1:16), which has been called the greatest throw-away line in history. The question arises—why is the universe so unimaginably vast? Perhaps it was necessary in order to put in place the physical laws such as gravity which enable life to exist on earth;

perhaps we should just accept that the infinite God is infinitely creative, and He has only told us what our minds are able to comprehend.

Contemplating the miracle of the universe, David prayed: *“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). If only he had known what we know!



The Andromeda Galaxy

In The Bible

What do our observations of the universe tell us about God? That He is unimaginably powerful; that His intellect is infinitely superior to ours; that He rejoices in beauty. It’s a marvellous thing to observe God’s handiwork. But however much we learn, we cannot really get to know Him that way. And He wants us to know Him—which is why, in addition to everything else He has created, He has given us His word:

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).

Only in the Bible do we see the character and personality of God. Only there can we really learn about Him, in order that we can get to know Him. And only there do we discover what life is about, and what we need to do about it: *“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).

The Increase of Knowledge

In the Bible book of Daniel there are many prophecies, about the history of the world that was future to Daniel and about the culmination of history—the establishment of God’s Kingdom. In its last chapter of the book an angel says to Daniel, *“You, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase”* (Daniel 12:4).

From other prophecies in Daniel and the rest of the Bible we believe that we are living in the ‘time of the end’. Here the angel identifies two characteristics to look out for at the time of the end: a boom in travel, and a boom in knowledge. Isn’t that a perfect summary of our day?

There is an irony in the fact that the modern age, in which we are learning ever more about the marvels of the universe, has been marked by a decline in respect for its Creator. In the words of Jeremiah, this is an age in which ‘wise people glory in their own wisdom’. But what is important is to know God and to worship Him.

Which God Do You Mean?

IF SOMEONE ASKED you if you believe in God, you may say "yes". But if they asked you "which god?", what would you say?

We live in a world where it is popular to downplay the distinction between different religions: to adopt the comfortable notion that all faiths lead to God in different ways. It's an appealing and comforting idea, but it is not true—at least not as far as the Bible is concerned.

In Psalms 145 and 146 we have an excellent summary of who God is, or in other words the name He goes by. Here is an excerpt:

Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God, Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; Who keeps truth forever, Who executes justice for the oppressed, Who gives food to the hungry. The LORD gives freedom to the prisoners. The LORD opens the eyes of the blind; the LORD raises those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous. The LORD watches over the strangers; He relieves the fatherless and widow; but the way of the wicked He turns upside down (Psalm 146:5–9).

Let's consider some things we learn about God from these few verses:

- He is the "God of Jacob"—that is, Israel. Are you aware of the key role of Israel in God's purpose with the world and with you?
- He is the God "Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them". Do you believe this, or are you swayed by the popular modern notion that it all happened by natural processes?
- He is the God "Who executes justice for the oppressed". He is not the beneficent old gentleman of popular thought who is kind to the good and indulgent with the bad.
- He "loves the righteous" (those who try to be like Him). He does not therefore love the unrighteous.
- He "watches over the strangers; He relieves the fatherless and widow; but the way of the wicked He turns upside down". His concern is for the disadvantaged and afflicted, and He is against those who contribute to their disadvantage and affliction.

These are some things we learn from these five verses. In the Bible we see the character of God unfolded in detail. How well do you know Him?

Robin de Jongh

Read It For Yourself

The Bible can be a daunting book. In this series we look at what it is, and how to read it.



For the Bible isn't just one book, but a collection of 66 books, written by different authors over a period of something like 1400 years. It is a remarkable collection of books, not least because they all share the same message. Despite the multiple writers the message is consistent from one book to the next.

How Is The Bible Put Together?

The first obvious division in the Bible is that of the *Old Testament* and the *New Testament*. There are 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament and they have quite different characters.

The Old Testament Books

The books in the Old Testament can be divided into several sections, as laid out on the facing page. The Old Testament was written well before the birth of Jesus, primarily to the people of Israel. All the writers of the Old Testament books are Jews with one or two possible exceptions, such as the book of Job and a few passages scattered through some of the other books. They are mainly written in Hebrew, with a few sections of the later books having some passages written in the similar language of Aramaic. Our English version of the Old Testament is a translation from these original languages.

IF YOU REALLY want to understand the Bible, the first thing you must do is read it. By reading the text you will become familiar with it. When you read one part it will begin to remind you of something you have already read. As your familiarity with the book increases so will your understanding. As the Bible says itself, "*Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Romans 10:17).

Understandably this may seem to be quite a daunting task, the Bible is after all a very large book. It is therefore helpful to have a bit of an overview of what it's all about.

Section	Names of books	Outline of the section
The Law (the Torah)	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy	These books are attributed to the authorship of Moses. Genesis takes us from creation to the death of Joseph in Egypt, and Exodus deals with the Israelites' escape from Egypt, to the giving of the Law of Moses in the wilderness of Sinai. Numbers, Leviticus and Deuteronomy relate events surrounding the wilderness journey and details about the various laws and rituals Israel were commanded to keep.
History	Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther	<p>These books take us from Israel's entry into the Promised Land in about 1400 BC, through to the period of the Persian empire around 400 BC. There are three main sections:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The period from the entry into the land, to the period of the Judges when Israel had no king. 2. The period of the kingdom, until the captivities. 3. The period following the Jews' return to the land from their captivity, during the Persian empire.
Poetry and wisdom	Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations	These books contain advice for life. Job is difficult to categorise: the book is historical but it consists of a conversation between five men, in which God intervenes. The Psalms are poetry. Many are written in the context of some of the events described in the historical books, and many are also prophetic. Proverbs and Ecclesiastes contain many wise sayings to contemplate. The Song of Songs is an unusual book which talks of the love between a king and his bride. Lamentations is a poetic book, bewailing the fall of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians.
Prophecy	Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkak, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi	The prophetic books detail the messages delivered by the men of God after whom each book is named. The books were written during the period described by the historical books. They are a mixture of history, prophecies of the future (some short term and some long term), and pleas for God's wayward people to turn back to Him.

The New Testament Books

The books in the New Testament can similarly be divided into sections as shown below. The New Testament was originally

written in Greek—not classical Greek but the everyday Greek of the common people.

Our English New Testament is a translation from the Greek original.

Section	Names of books	Outline of the section
The Gospels	Matthew, Mark, Luke, John	These four books, known as the Gospels, contain the accounts of witnesses to the ministry, the death and the resurrection of Jesus. Mark is thought to be the earliest of the accounts and John the latest. Luke also wrote the Acts of the Apostles which follows on directly from the events of his Gospel record.
History	Acts of the Apostles	The Acts describes the spread of the Gospel from its very beginning in Jerusalem through to its spread throughout the Roman empire. In particular it follows the preaching of the Apostle Paul. Luke is present himself in parts of the record, as can be seen when the narration switches from “they” to “we”.
Letters	Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2 & 3 John, Jude	The letters contain information about the Gospel message in great detail, often about specific events or problems. You can work out when they were written by referring to the book of Acts. Some letters are written to congregations in various parts of the Roman empire; others are written to individuals. Some are more general in character, written to be copied and passed on.
Prophecy	Revelation	Revelation is a prophetic book of sign and symbol and details events that are future to the writer, culminating in the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

The Bible C

These tables contain three portions of the Bible for each day of the year. They will enable you to read the Bible daily.

January		February		March	
1	Genesis 1, 2	1	Exodus 5, 6	1	Leviticus 5, 6
2	3, 4	2	7, 8	2	7, 8
3	5, 6	3	9	3	9
4	7, 8	4	10	4	9, 10
5	9, 10	5	11, 12	5	11, 12
6	11, 12	6	13, 14	6	12, 13
7	13, 14	7	15	7	14
8	15, 16	8	16	8	15
9	17, 18	9	17, 18	9	16
10	19	10	19, 20	10	17, 18
11	20, 21	11	21	11	19
12	22, 23	12	22	12	20
13	24	13	23	13	21
14	25, 26	14	24, 25	14	22
15	27	15	26	15	23
16	28, 29	16	27	16	24
17	30	17	28	17	25
18	31	18	29	18	26
19	32, 33	19	30	19	27
20	34, 35	20	31, 32	20	Numbers 1
21	36	21	33	21	2
22	37	22	34	22	3
23	38	23	35	23	4
24	39, 40	24	36	24	5
25	41	25	37	25	6
26	42, 43	26	38	26	7
27	44, 45	27	39, 40	27	8, 9
28	46, 47	28	41	28	10
29	48-50	29	42	29	11
30	Exodus 1, 2	30	43	30	12, 13
31	3, 4	31	44	31	14

July		August		September	
1	1 Samuel 13	1	2 Samuel 18	1	2 Kings 6
2	14	2	19	2	7
3	15	3	20, 21	3	8
4	16	4	22	4	9
5	17	5	23	5	10
6	18	6	24	6	11, 12
7	19	7	1 Kings 1	7	13
8	20	8	2	8	14
9	21, 22	9	3	9	15
10	23	10	4	10	16
11	24	11	5	11	17
12	25	12	6	12	18
13	26, 27	13	7	13	19
14	28	14	8	14	20
15	29, 30	15	9	15	21
16	31	16	10	16	22, 23
17	1 Samuel 1	17	11	17	24, 25
18	2	18	12	18	26
19	3	19	13	19	1 Chronicles 1
20	4	20	14	20	2
21	5	21	15	21	3
22	6	22	16	22	4
23	7	23	17	23	5
24	8, 9	24	18	24	6
25	10	25	19	25	7
26	11	26	20	26	8
27	12	27	21	27	9
28	13	28	22	28	10
29	14	29	23	29	11
30	15	30	24	30	12
31	16	31	25	31	13, 14

January		February		March	
1	Psalms 1, 2	1	Psalms 58, 59	1	Psalms 105
2	3-5	2	60, 61	2	106
3	6-8	3	62, 63	3	107
4	9, 10	4	64, 65	4	108, 109
5	11-13	5	66, 67	5	110-112
6	14-16	6	68	6	113, 114
7	17	7	69	7	115, 116
8	18	8	70, 71	8	117, 118
9	19, 21	9	72	9	119 v. 1-40
10	22	10	73	10	v. 41-80
11	23-25	11	74	11	v. 81-128
12	26-28	12	75, 76	12	v. 129-176
13	29, 30	13	77	13	120-124
14	31	14	78	14	125-127
15	32	15	79, 80	15	128-130
16	33	16	81, 82	16	131-134
17	34	17	83, 84	17	135, 136
18	35	18	85, 86	18	137-139
19	36	19	87, 88	19	140-142
20	37	20	89	20	143, 144
21	38	21	90, 91	21	145-147
22	39-40	22	92, 93	22	148-150
23	41-43	23	94, 95	23	Proverbs 1
24	44	24	96-99	24	2
25	45	25	100, 101	25	3
26	46-48	26	102	26	4
27	49	27	103	27	5
28	50	28	104	28	6
29	51-52	29	105	29	7
30	53-55	30	106	30	8, 9
31	56, 57	31	107	31	10

April		May		June	
1	Numbers 15	1	Deut. 18	1	Joshua 18
2	16	2	19	2	19
3	17, 18	3	20	3	20, 21
4	19	4	21	4	22
5	20, 21	5	22	5	23, 24
6	22, 23	6	23	6	Judges 1
7	24, 25	7	24	7	2, 3
8	26	8	25	8	4, 5
9	27	9	26	9	6
10	28	10	27	10	7, 8
11	29, 30	11	28	11	9
12	31	12	29	12	10, 11
13	32	13	30	13	12, 13
14	33	14	31	14	14, 15
15	34	15	32	15	16
16	35	16	33, 34	16	17, 18
17	36	17	Joshua 1	17	19
18	Deut. 1	18	2	18	20
19	2	19	3, 4	19	21
20	3	20	5, 6	20	Ruth 1, 2
21	4	21	7	21	3, 4
22	5	22	8	22	1 Samuel 1
23	6, 7	23	9	23	2
24	8, 9	24	10	24	3
25	10, 11	25	11	25	4
26	12	26	12	26	5, 6
27	13, 14	27	13	27	7, 8
28	15	28	14	28	9
29	16	29	15	29	10
30	17	30	16	30	11, 12
31	18	31	17	31	13

October		November		December	
1	1 Chron. 15	1	2 Chron. 30	1	Esther 9, 10
2	16	2	31	2	Job 1, 2
3	17	3	32	3	3, 4
4	18, 19	4	33	4	5
5	20, 21	5	34	5	6, 7
6	22	6	35	6	8
7	23	7	36	7	9
8	24, 25	8	Ezra 1, 2	8	10
9	26	9	3, 4	9	11
10	27	10	5, 6	10	12
11	28	11	7	11	13
12	29	12	8	12	14
13	2 Chron. 1, 2	13	9	13	15
14	3, 4	14	10	14	16, 17
15	5, 6	15	Nehemiah 1, 2	15	18, 19
16	7	16	3	16	20
17	8	17	4	17	21
18	9	18	5, 6	18	22
19	10, 11	19	7	19	23, 24
20	12	20	8	20	25-27
21	13	21	9	21	28
22	14, 15	22	10	22	29, 30
23	16, 17	23	11	23	31
24	18, 19	24	12	24	32
25	20	25	13	25	33
26	21, 22	26	14	26	34
27	23	27	15	27	35, 36
28	24	28	16	28	37
29	25	29	17	29	38
30	26, 27	30	18	30	39
31	28	31	19	31	40

April		May		June	
1	Proverbs 11	1	Ecclesiastes 10	1	Isaiah 24
2	12	2	11	2	25
3	13	3	12	3	26, 27
4	14	4	Song of Sol.	4	28
5	15	5	1	5	29
6	16	6	2	6	30
7	17	7	3	7	31
8	18	8	4	8	32
9	19	9	5	9	33
10	20	10	6	10	34
11	21	11	7	11	35
12	22	12	8	12	36
13	23	13	9	13	37
14	24	14	10	14	38
15	25	15	11	15	39
16	26	16	12	16	40
17	27	17	13	17	41
18	28	18	14	18	42
19	29	19	15	19	43
20	30	20	16	20	44
21	31	21	17	21	45
22	Ecclesiastes 1	22	18	22	46, 47
23	2	23	19	23	48
24	3	24	20	24	49
25	4	25	21	25	50
26	5	26	22	26	51
27	6	27	23	27	52
28	7	28	24	28	53
29	8	29	25	29	54
30	9	30	26	30	55
			27		
			28		
			29		
			30		
			31		

First portion

Second



Companion

enables you to read the Old Testament through once in a year, and the New Testament twice.

July		August		September	
1	Isaiah 56, 57	1	Jeremiah 22	1	Lament. 2
2	58	2	23	2	3
3	59	3	24	3	4
4	60	4	25	4	5
5	61	5	26	5	Ezekiel 1
6	62	6	27	6	2
7	63	7	28	7	3
8	64	8	29	8	4
9	65	9	30	9	5
10	66	10	31	10	6
11	Jeremiah 1	11	1	11	7
12	2	12	2	12	8
13	3	13	3	13	9
14	4	14	4	14	10
15	5	15	5	15	11
16	6	16	6	16	12
17	7	17	7	17	13
18	8	18	8	18	14
19	9	19	9	19	15
20	10	20	10	20	16
21	11	21	11	21	17
22	12	22	12	22	18
23	13	23	13	23	19
24	14	24	14	24	20
25	15	25	15	25	21
26	16	26	16	26	22
27	17	27	17	27	23
28	18	28	18	28	24
29	19	29	19	29	25
30	20	30	20	30	26
31	21	31	Lament. 1		

January		February		March	
1	Matthew 1, 2	1	Romans 10, 11	1	I Corinth. 14
2	3, 4	2	12	2	15
3	5	3	13	3	16
4	6	4	15, 16	4	2 Corinth. 1, 2
5	7	5	Mark 1	5	3, 4
6	8	6	2	6	5-7
7	9	7	3	7	8, 9
8	10	8	4	8	10, 11
9	11	9	5	9	12, 13
10	12	10	6	10	Luke 2
11	13	11	7	11	2
12	14	12	8	12	3
13	15	13	9	13	4
14	16	14	10	14	5
15	17	15	11	15	6
16	18	16	12	16	7
17	19	17	13	17	8
18	20	18	14	18	9
19	21	19	15, 16	19	10
20	22	20	I Corinth. 1, 2	20	11
21	23	21	3	21	12
22	24	22	4, 5	22	13, 14
23	25	23	6	23	15
24	26	24	7	24	16
25	27	25	8	25	17
26	28	26	9	26	18
27	Romans 1, 2	27	11	27	19
28	3, 4	28	12, 13	28	20
29	5, 6			29	21
30	7, 8			30	22
31	9			31	23

July		August		September	
1	Rev. 21, 22	1	Romans 9	1	I Corinth. 15
2	Matthew 3, 4	2	10, 11	2	16
3	5	3	12	3	2 Corinth. 1, 2
4	6	4	13, 14	4	3, 4
5	7	5	15, 16	5	5
6	8	6	Mark 1	6	6
7	9	7	2	7	7
8	10	8	3	8	8
9	11	9	4	9	9
10	12	10	5	10	10
11	13	11	6	11	11
12	14	12	7	12	12
13	15	13	8	13	13
14	16	14	9	14	14
15	17	15	10	15	15
16	18	16	11	16	16
17	19	17	12	17	17
18	20	18	13	18	18
19	21	19	14	19	19
20	22	20	15	20	20
21	23	21	16	21	21
22	24	22	17	22	22
23	25	23	18	23	23
24	26	24	19	24	24
25	27	25	20	25	25
26	28	26	21	26	26
27	29	27	22	27	27
28	Romans 1, 2	28	23	28	28
29	3, 4	29	24	29	29
30	5, 6	30	25	30	30
31	7, 8	31	26	31	31

October		November		December	
1	Ezekiel 27	1	Daniel 10	1	Jonah 1
2	28	2	11	2	2, 3
3	29	3	12	3	4
4	30	4	Hosea 1	4	Micah 1
5	31	5	2	5	2
6	32	6	3	6	3, 4
7	33	7	4	7	5
8	34	8	5	8	6
9	35	9	6	9	7
10	36	10	7	10	Nahum 1, 2
11	37	11	8	11	Habakkuk 1
12	38	12	9	12	Zephaniah 1
13	39	13	10	13	2
14	40	14	11	14	3
15	41	15	12	15	Zephaniah 2
16	42	16	13	16	2
17	43	17	14	17	3
18	44	18	Joel 1	18	Haggai 1, 2
19	45	19	2	19	Zechariah 1
20	46	20	3	20	2, 3
21	47	21	4	21	4, 5
22	48	22	5	22	6, 7
23	Daniel 1	23	6	23	8
24	2	24	7	24	9
25	3	25	8	25	10
26	4	26	9	26	11
27	5	27	10	27	12
28	6	28	11	28	13, 14
29	7	29	12	29	Malachi 1
30	8	30	Obadiah 1	30	2
31	9	31		31	3, 4

April		May		June	
1	Luke 24	1	Acts 9	1	Hebrews 6, 7
2	Galatians 1, 2	2	10	2	8, 9
3	3, 4	3	11	3	10
4	5	4	12	4	11
5	Ephesians 1, 2	5	14, 15	5	12
6	3, 4	6	16, 17	6	13
7	5, 6	7	18, 19	7	James 1
8	Philippians 1, 2	8	20	8	2
9	3, 4	9	21, 22	9	3, 4
10	John 1	10	23, 24	10	5
11	2	11	25, 26	11	I Peter 1
12	3	12	27	12	2
13	4	13	28	13	3-5
14	5	14	Colossians 1	14	I Peter 1, 2
15	6	15	7	15	3
16	7	16	8	16	I John 1, 2
17	9, 10	17	I Thess. 1, 2	17	3, 4
18	11	18	3, 4	18	5
19	12	19	5	19	2 & 3 John
20	13, 14	20	2 Thess. 1, 2	20	Jude
21	15, 16	21	3	21	Revelation 1, 2
22	17, 18	22	I Timothy 1, 3	22	3, 4
23	19	23	4, 5	23	5, 6
24	20, 21	24	6	24	7-9
25	Acts 1	25	2 Timothy 1	25	10, 11
26	2	26	12, 13	26	12
27	3	27	14	27	13
28	4	28	Titus 1-3	28	14
29	5	29	Philemon 1-3	29	15, 16
30	6	30	Hebrews 1, 2	30	17, 18
31	7	31	3-5	31	19, 20

October		November		December	
1	Luke 24	1	Acts 10	1	Hebrews 6, 7
2	Galatians 1, 2	2	11, 12	2	8, 9
3	3, 4	3	13	3	10
4	5, 6	4	14, 15	4	11
5	Ephesians 1, 2	5	16, 17	5	12
6	3, 4	6	18, 19	6	13
7	5, 6	7	20	7	James 1
8	Philippians 1, 2	8	21, 22	8	2
9	3, 4	9	23, 24	9	3, 4
10	John 1	10	25, 26	10	5
11	2	11	27	11	I Peter 1
12	3	12	28	12	2
13	4	13	29	13	3-5
14	5	14	Colossians 1	14	I Peter 1, 2
15	6	15	2	15	3
16	7	16	I Thess. 1, 2	16	I John 1, 2
17	9, 10	17	3, 4	17	3, 4
18	11	18	5	18	5
19	12	19	2 Thess. 1, 2	19	2 & 3 John
20	13, 14	20	3	20	Jude
21	15, 16	21	I Timothy 1-3	21	Revelation 1, 2
22	17, 18	22	4, 5	22	3, 4
23	19	23	6	23	5, 6
24	20, 21	24	2 Timothy 1	24	7-9
25	Acts 1	25	2	25	10, 11
26	2	26	12, 13	26	12
27	3	27	14	27	13
28	4	28	Titus 1-3	28	14
29	5	29	Philemon 1-3	29	15, 16
30	6	30	Hebrews 1, 2	30	17, 18
31	7	31	3-5	31	19, 20

portion Third portion

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Obadiah

THIS IS A short prophecy, consisting of just one chapter, about Israel's Arab neighbours. It applies particularly to our days, and it has an amazing outcome!

Esau and Jacob

The name Obadiah is Hebrew, meaning 'servant of Yahweh', the God of Israel. Interestingly, the prophecy is about both Israel and Arabs.

The nation of Edom was descended from Esau, who was brother to Jacob the ancestor of Israel. Edom was located south and east of the Dead Sea. Today it is the southern part of the Kingdom of Jordan.

The Edomites were always hostile to Israel, just as their ancestor Esau had been to Jacob (see Genesis 27:41).

When the Babylonians invaded Judah around 586 BC, the Edomites took the opportunity to persecute the Jews (verses 11–14).

Mount Esau and Mount Zion

Mount Esau (vs. 8, 9, 19, 21), sometimes called Mount Seir, is another name for the country of Edom. Mount Zion is at Jerusalem. Here was the capital of God's ancient kingdom, and it is here too that Christ will reign as King when he comes again.

Israel will once again occupy all that territory described in Obadiah verses 19 and 20. All nations, including many of the Arab peoples,

will benefit when, as verse 21 says, "*the kingdom shall be the Lord's*". The prophecy in Isaiah 2:1–4 contains further details.

Norman Owen

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Some interesting links with other parts of the Bible:

- ◆ Obadiah vs. 11–14—see Psalm 137:7.
- ◆ Obadiah v. 17—see Joel 2:32.
- ◆ Obadiah v. 21—see Daniel 2:44; 7:27.



19th Century lithograph—an Arab desert encampment with Mount Seir in the distance

When God Swore Oaths

HELEN WAS complaining to her husband about their son. “He promised faithfully to tidy his room and he hasn’t done a thing!” Dad said nothing, but shrugged his shoulders. “And you’re not much better,” she railed. “You threaten to punish him and don’t. No wonder I can’t believe a word he says.”



Human Oaths

What a different world it would be if everybody always meant what they said! In a court of law, witnesses are usually required to swear an oath or give an affirmation that they are telling the truth—in an attempt to ensure that they really do tell the truth. Because it’s acknowledged that very often, people do not.

‘Your word is your bond’ used to be a popular maxim. It is a principle which is endorsed strongly by the Lord Jesus: “You

have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ But I say to you, do not swear at all... But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one” (Matthew 5:33–37).

God’s Oaths

Swearing oaths was common in Bible times, and was regarded as a serious undertaking. Even God Himself swore oaths. For example:

“For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, ‘Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.’ And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath” (Hebrews 6:13–17, referring to Genesis 22:16–18).

Now without any doubt, God most certainly cannot lie (Titus 1:2). While some of His promises are conditional (that is, God will only fulfil them if the people to whom He has made the promise keep their side of the agreement, for example Deuteronomy 11:13–28), His words are always true. They are His divine and sure guarantee. He

does not need to reinforce what He says by making an oath. Clearly, then, the primary reason for God's swearing is to emphasise to us the gravity and certainty of a promise. It is therefore instructive to look at occasions when God 'swore'.

The Bible phrase 'raised my hand in an oath' is quite common, and so an oath is implied when God raised His hand in a promise, for example Psalm 106:26. The table below shows examples where the words 'swore', 'oath' or 'raised His hand' are used in relation to a promise of God. The brown shaded boxes contain promises of punishment or judgement as opposed to blessing. (The list is not exhaustive, as there are examples where God simply makes a statement and it is later revealed to have been an oath, for example Deuteronomy 4:21 which refers back to Numbers 20:12.)

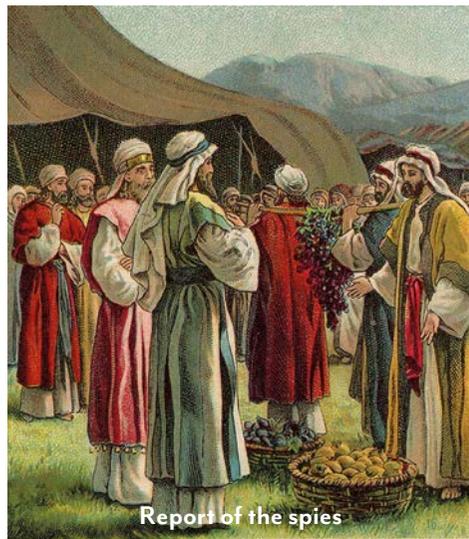
Specific affirming terms used by God are: 'as I live' (this is used more than ten times for punishments; twice in blessing; and once to say that He 'has no pleasure in the death of the wicked', this is Ezekiel 33:11); 'by Myself' (this is used twice in blessing, one of which is quoted twice again, and four times in punishments); 'by My holiness', 'by My great name', 'by the pride of Jacob', 'by God's right hand', 'know certainly', 'it shall stand', 'God will not relent' and 'in truth and will not turn'.

Lessons For Us

There are some very important messages in these examples. Firstly, they show the critical importance of the land of Israel (and hence the Jews) in God's eternal

purpose. Secondly, God used very strong language indicating that the words are not 'empty'.

Numbers chapter 14 is illuminating. Twelve spies had been sent into the Promised Land to investigate how the Israelites could capture it, and ten of them had reported that they did not believe it was possible. They lacked faith in God.



The people were distraught, accused God of cheating them, and started to plot a rebellion and a return to Egypt from which they had recently escaped. God in His anger threatened to disinherit them and to make a nation of Moses instead (vs. 11–12). Moses pleaded for the people, drawing on the oath God swore to the Jewish fathers and on His unchanging character (vs. 15–19). God did forgive, but He then swore by His very existence that despite the faithlessness of His people

Promise with an oath

Bible references

The land of Israel promised to the descendants of the Jewish patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

More than 40 times; repeatedly to Moses in the wilderness, in historical records and prayers, and 19 times in words of God Himself. In at least 12 books.

E.g. Genesis 26:3; Exodus 33:1; Nehemiah 9:15; Ezekiel 20:42; Acts 7:17.

The generation who left Egypt would not enter the promised land

More than ten times in six books as a historical record and as warnings to others.

E.g. Numbers 32:10-11 (two oaths); Psalm 95:11 (quoted in Hebrews 3:11, 18).

The Jews are God's special people

Six times in three books e.g. Deuteronomy 7:8; Ezekiel 20:5; Micah 7:20.

Moses was not allowed into the promised land

Deuteronomy 4:21.

God will keep His covenant

Deuteronomy 4:31.

The kingdoms of Israel/Judah and other nations would be punished

Eight examples in prophets e.g. Judges 2:15; Daniel 9:11; Ezekiel 36:7 & 44:12.

The nation of Israel would be restored after its destruction

Four times in prophets e.g. Isaiah 49:22; Ezekiel 20:42.

The promised seed

Six times: in three psalms (89:3-4; 110:4; 132:11) and Luke 1:73; Acts 2:30; Hebrews 7:21 & 28 (quoting Psalm 110)).

God's lovingkindness to David

Psalm 89:49.

the earth would one day be filled with His glory (v. 21). Then He said that ‘as I live’ that faithless generation would not enter the land which He had sworn to their ancestors (vs. 28–29). There are three oaths in this interchange. The incident shows the potentially terrifying judgement of God on the faithless, but that this was accompanied by an amazing mercy for the faithful, together with the absolute surety of God’s ultimate purpose.

This is exactly how God is. These unchanging characteristics of Almighty God were first demonstrated in the very beginning, when Adam and Eve listened to the lie of the serpent and God punished them for their sin but also promised them a special ‘seed’ who would undo the work of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). Time and time again the Jewish prophets warned God’s people of impending judgement if they did not obey, but with a repeated golden thread of promise that God’s plan of salvation would come to pass and that the earth would eventually be transformed, with the prospect of eternal life for the faithful.

A similar point was made by the Apostle Paul to believers in his day: *“Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off”* (Romans 11:22). His words are a warning to us.

God is not like Helen’s son and husband: His word is sure. His plan of salvation is

absolutely guaranteed, but only for people who both believe in Him and believe Him. This involves believing that He exists, truly believing His word and promises (Hebrews 11:6), repenting and being baptised (Mark 16:16), and resolving with purposeful determination to obey and serve Him to the best of their ability. Thus resolved they can, like the apostles, await the return of Jesus with confident hope (2 Timothy 4:8).

Anna Hart

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The Little Town of Bethlehem

JESUS CHRIST WAS known throughout his life as Jesus of Nazareth (for example Matthew 21:11). He was from a small village in the north of Israel. When the Roman governor put him to death he wrote the accusation on his cross: “*Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews*” (John 19:19).

This might seem inconsequential to us, but it was one reason why many people in Jesus’ day could not accept him as the Messiah (the anointed king). Because the Jews knew that their Messiah would come from Bethlehem:

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

Bethlehem was a town in the south of Israel in the Judean hill country. It was renowned as the birthplace of King David (1 Samuel 17:12). Everybody knew that the Messiah was going to be a descendant of David (Matthew 22:42).

Jesus’ Ancestry

Well over a thousand years before Jesus’ birth, the book of Ruth describes how a Bethlehemite called Elimelech, with his wife Naomi and their two sons, left Israel to escape a famine and settled in neighbouring Moab. Naomi lost her

husband and both sons in Moab but she gained a faithful daughter-in-law, Ruth the Moabitess. When the famine was over Naomi returned to Bethlehem with Ruth. Ruth married an Israelite called Boaz. They became the great grandparents of David, King of Israel. The genealogical records of Jesus show how he was descended from David, both biologically through his mother (Luke 3:23–38) and legally through the royal line with his step-father Joseph (Matthew 1:1–17).

Caesar Augustus was the Roman emperor when Jesus was born. He issued a decree that every man throughout his empire should register for taxation at the town of his ancestors (Luke 2:3). Joseph and Mary were living in Nazareth (Luke 1:26). Joseph travelled down to Bethlehem, and took Mary because they were ‘espoused’ (engaged to be married). She was pregnant with Jesus the Son of God (Luke 1:35), and he was born in Bethlehem—just as the prophet had foretold!

The name Bethlehem means ‘House of bread’. There was a famine in Bethlehem, when the bread ran out. But in God’s good time, from this little town came the “*living bread*” which brings life to the world (John 6:51).

John Kendall



God often refers to Himself as 'Us', for example Genesis 1:26: "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...'" and Genesis 3:22: "Then the LORD God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil...'" The word for God which is used in the original Hebrew Bible is ELOHIM, which is a plural word. Surely this reflects the plurality of the Godhead—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—the Trinity?

LP

God does often refer to Himself in the plural. In the two verses quoted above, it seems He is speaking to the angels. We look like them (Hebrews 13:2). We know they were there at the creation of the world (Job 38:7). They are God's servants who do His work (Psalm 103:20), and so their words and actions are those of God Himself. Sometimes angels are referred to as God, for example in Genesis 18.

It may be that when the Bible uses the word 'Elohim' it is always referring to God and the angels. Another possibility is that it is simply an example of a figure of speech known as 'plural intensive', in which single things are referred to in the plural to emphasise their importance. This occurs in English, for example when the British Queen refers to herself as 'we'. In the Bible, the 'cruel lord' in Isaiah 19:4, the animal 'behemoth' in Job 40:15 and 'wisdom' in Proverbs 1:20 are all actually plural Hebrew nouns, but they're speaking of single things.

The Trinity is the idea that God consists of three co-equal and co-eternal persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is a fundamental teaching of most Christian churches, and it is held very dear—even though few people claim to understand it. Christadelphians do not believe that it is right. What we see in the Bible is the Almighty God, and His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit which is the power of God in action in different ways.

When you set aside the idea of the Trinity, the Bible becomes simpler to understand. You are able to see the God of the Bible the way He really is. You can appreciate the full force of the Gospel message: God gave His Son the Lord Jesus Christ to die to save us from our sins, and Jesus willingly co-operated.

This is of the utmost importance: "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3).

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Ed

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